

Living Aik: Lived Pedagogy, Moral Formation, And Everyday Islamic Learning In Indonesian Modernist Muslim Higher Education

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Abstract.

This article examines Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) as a lived pedagogical process in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Rather than approaching AIK only as a compulsory curriculum or an institutional instrument for transmitting Muhammadiyah values, the article analyzes how AIK is experienced, embodied, negotiated, and sometimes contested in everyday university life. Based on in-depth interviews with nineteen students, AIK lecturers, and institutional actors involved in AIK coordination at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, and Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, the article shows that AIK operates through three interconnected dimensions: classroom pedagogy, embodied pedagogy, and institutional pedagogy. Students encounter AIK through lectures, discussions, worship practices, Qur'anic recitation, Al-Ma'un projects, campus mosques, Baitul Arqam, LazisMu, student organizations, and digital religious media. The findings demonstrate that students do not simply receive AIK as fixed knowledge. They interpret it through prior religious backgrounds, bodily habits, family traditions, institutional expectations, and personal aspirations. For some students, AIK deepens religious understanding and social empathy; for others, it raises questions about authority, ritual difference, and religious standardization. The article argues that AIK is best understood as lived pedagogy: a field of Islamic learning in which students learn, embody, negotiate, and sometimes contest Muhammadiyah values in concrete social worlds.

Keywords: AIK; lived pedagogy; Muhammadiyah higher education; lived religion; moral formation; Islamic education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia provides a distinctive context for examining the relationship between Islam, higher education, and everyday moral formation. Islamic education in Indonesia is not confined to pesantren, madrasah, or faculties of Islamic studies, but also takes shape within universities established by Muslim social movements. These institutions do not merely transmit religious knowledge as an academic subject; they also cultivate ethical dispositions, institutional identities, and forms of public religiosity. Studies of Indonesian Islam have long shown that Muslim organizations play a significant role in shaping civic life, educational reform, and public morality (Hefner, 2000; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Lukens-Bull, 2005). Within this broader landscape, Muhammadiyah occupies a particularly important position.

Muhammadiyah is one of Indonesia's largest Islamic reformist movements. Since the early twentieth century, it has developed extensive networks of schools, universities, hospitals, charities, and social institutions, making education central to its vision of Islamic renewal and social transformation (Alfian, 1989; Nakamura, 2012; Peacock, 1978). Its women's wing, 'Aisyiyah, has also played a major role in women's education, health, social welfare, and community empowerment in Indonesia (Blackburn, 2004; van Doorn-Harder, 2006). Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education institutions are therefore not simply private universities with Islamic affiliation. They are part of a wider religious, educational, and civic infrastructure through which Islamic values are translated into academic life, professional formation, and social engagement.

At the center of this institutional project is Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, commonly abbreviated as AIK. For readers unfamiliar with the term, AIK refers to a set of compulsory courses and educational activities in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education. It introduces students to Islamic teachings, worship practices, ethical conduct, Muhammadiyah history, social responsibility, and the reformist orientation of the movement. AIK differs from general religious education courses because it is not only concerned with Islamic knowledge in a broad sense, but also with the formation of students within the moral and institutional world of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah. In this sense, AIK is both curricular and

cultural: it is formally embedded in university learning, while also participating in the shaping of campus ethos, student discipline, and institutional identity.

The importance of AIK lies in this double role. On the one hand, it is a formal curriculum, organized through syllabi, learning outcomes, lecturers, assignments, examinations, and institutional standards. On the other hand, it is expected to shape how students pray, think, interact, serve society, respond to religious differences, and imagine their future professional lives. This double role becomes especially significant because students in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah universities do not come from a single religious or organizational background. Some are raised in Muhammadiyah families, while others come from Nahdlatul Ulama communities, pesantren, state schools, non-Muhammadiyah Islamic schools, or relatively secular educational environments. Some encounter Muhammadiyah for the first time at university. AIK therefore becomes not merely a site of instruction, but also a space of encounter, comparison, negotiation, and sometimes tension.

This article approaches AIK through the concept of lived pedagogy. This concept draws inspiration from studies of lived religion, which shift attention from religion as doctrine, institution, or official discourse to religion as practiced, embodied, and negotiated in everyday life. McGuire (2008) argues that religion needs to be examined as it is lived through ordinary practices rather than only through formal belief systems. Ammerman (2014, 2021) similarly emphasizes that religion is produced through stories, practices, relationships, bodies, and social settings. Orsi (2005) further reminds us that religious worlds are made through the everyday relations people build with sacred ideas, communities, objects, and places. Building on this literature, this article uses the concept of lived pedagogy to refer to religious learning as it is experienced, embodied, practiced, negotiated, and reworked in everyday educational life.

This conceptual move is also informed by scholarship on pedagogy and ethical formation. Learning is not merely the reception of abstract knowledge, but is situated within practices, communities, bodies, and social relations (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In Islamic contexts, ethical and religious formation often takes shape through repeated practices, embodied discipline, affective attachment, and the cultivation of moral sensibilities (Asad, 1993; Hirschkind, 2006; Mahmood, 2005). These works help us see AIK not only as a subject that students study, but as a pedagogical field in which Islamic and Muhammadiyah values are learned through classroom interaction, prayer practices, field projects, campus rituals, peer discussions, and institutional routines.

Existing studies on AIK have tended to emphasize its normative, curricular, and character-forming dimensions. They examine AIK as a required curriculum, a medium for internalizing Islamic and Muhammadiyah values, a model of religious character education, or a framework for strengthening the distinctiveness of Muhammadiyah education (Achmad, 2020; Dacholfany & Iswati, 2021; Ridlo & Hafidz, 2024). More recent studies have also discussed AIK in relation to curriculum development, inclusive learning, constructivist pedagogy, and the need to make AIK more responsive to contemporary educational challenges (Arqam, 2025; Palahuddin, 2025; Zamil, 2025). These studies are important because they clarify what AIK is intended to do institutionally and pedagogically.

However, less attention has been paid to how AIK is actually lived by students and lecturers in everyday campus life. We still know relatively little about how students experience AIK in classrooms, how they embody it through worship practices, how they remember it through field projects, how they encounter Muhammadiyah through campus organizations and social activities, and how they negotiate AIK when Muhammadiyah practices differ from religious habits at home or in their communities. This is the gap this article addresses. Rather than treating AIK only as a curriculum to be implemented or an ideology to be transmitted, this article examines AIK as an everyday pedagogical process that is practiced, felt, negotiated, accepted, questioned, and sometimes contested.

The novelty of this article lies in its ethnographic approach to AIK as lived pedagogy. By using this perspective, the article shifts the analysis from what AIK is supposed to teach to how AIK is actually experienced. This shift allows us to see AIK as operating through three interconnected dimensions. First, it works as classroom pedagogy, where Islamic and Muhammadiyah knowledge is introduced through lectures,

discussions, presentations, case studies, and lecturer-student interaction. Second, it works as embodied pedagogy, where students encounter Islam through prayer, Qur'anic recitation, ritual practice, discipline, and everyday ethical habits. Third, it works as institutional pedagogy, where AIK extends beyond the classroom into field projects, mosque activities, Baitul Arqam, LazisMu, student organizations, and the broader culture of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education.

This article therefore asks: How is AIK lived as pedagogy in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education? More specifically, it addresses three questions. First, how do students experience AIK across classrooms, worship practices, field projects, and campus activities? Second, how do students from different religious and educational backgrounds negotiate Muhammadiyah values and practices? Third, how do lecturers and AIK-related institutions imagine the relationship between formal curriculum, moral formation, and everyday campus life?

The article argues that AIK should not be understood only as a compulsory course or an instrument of organizational value transmission. It is better understood as a lived pedagogical field through which students learn, embody, negotiate, and sometimes contest Islamic and Muhammadiyah values in everyday university life. By framing AIK in this way, the article contributes to the study of Islamic higher education, lived religion, and moral formation by showing that religious education becomes meaningful not only when it is formally taught, but when it is practiced, inhabited, and negotiated in concrete social worlds.

AIK, Lived Religion, and Pedagogy

This article understands AIK not merely as a formal religious education curriculum, but as a lived pedagogical process through which Islamic and Muhammadiyah values are taught, practiced, embodied, negotiated, and sometimes contested in everyday university life. This approach departs from a narrow view of religious education as the transmission of doctrines, norms, and institutional values from lecturer to student. While such a view is useful for explaining the formal aims of AIK, it does not sufficiently capture how students actually encounter AIK in classrooms, worship practices, field projects, campus organizations, mosque activities, and social relations. To understand AIK ethnographically, it is necessary to move from religious instruction as formal delivery toward pedagogy as lived experience.

The framework of lived religion is useful for this shift. Rather than treating religion primarily as doctrine, belief, or institutional membership, lived religion directs attention to how religion is practiced, embodied, narrated, and negotiated in ordinary life. McGuire (2008) argues that religion should be studied as it is lived by ordinary people, often in ways that do not fully correspond to official religious categories. Ammerman (2014, 2021) similarly emphasizes that religion appears through practices, stories, relationships, bodies, objects, spaces, and social contexts. Orsi (2005) also reminds us that religious worlds are made through relationships among persons, communities, sacred ideas, institutions, and places. These perspectives are important for this article because AIK does not exist only in curriculum documents or classroom lectures. It also appears in how students pray, learn Qur'anic recitation, visit orphanages, join Al-Ma'un projects, engage with LazisMu, participate in Baitul Arqam, encounter Muhammadiyah communities, and reflect on religious differences in their own lives.

At the same time, the lived religion approach helps prevent an overly harmonious reading of AIK. Everyday religion is not always coherent, settled, or consensual. It may involve uncertainty, partial acceptance, ambivalence, resistance, and reinterpretation. Schielke's work on everyday Islam is useful here because it cautions against reducing Muslim life to piety, discipline, or doctrinal obedience alone. Religious life is also lived through hesitation, aspiration, contradiction, and practical negotiation (Schielke, 2015). This insight is especially relevant for AIK because students in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah universities come from diverse backgrounds: Muhammadiyah families, Nahdlatul Ulama communities, pesantren, state schools, non-Muhammadiyah Islamic schools, and other educational environments. AIK may therefore be experienced as enlightenment, repetition, moral guidance, institutional obligation, or even pressure toward religious standardization. Such variation is not incidental; it is precisely where AIK becomes ethnographically interesting.

The concept of lived pedagogy developed in this article builds on these insights but places greater emphasis on learning. It refers to the ways religious education becomes meaningful through practice, embodiment, social interaction, institutional routines, affective experience, and everyday negotiation. This concept is informed by theories of situated learning, especially Lave and Wenger's (1991) argument that learning is not simply the acquisition of abstract knowledge, but participation in social practices. Wenger (1998) further shows that learning is tied to identity formation within communities of practice. Applied to AIK, this means that students do not only learn about Islam and Muhammadiyah by listening to lecturers. They learn by participating in a campus environment where Muhammadiyah values are enacted through classes, rituals, discussions, organizations, social service, and institutional expectations.

AIK as lived pedagogy is also a process of embodied and ethical formation. In Islamic education, learning is not merely cognitive; it is also bodily, habitual, and affective. Students learn through repeated practices such as salat, wudhu, tahsin, Qur'anic recitation, fasting, charity, and participation in collective religious activities. Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition highlights how religious subjects are shaped through authoritative knowledge, discipline, and practice (Asad, 1993). Mahmood's analysis of ethical self-formation further shows that religious formation takes place through bodily practices and cultivated dispositions, not simply through belief or intellectual agreement (Mahmood, 2005). Hirschkind's work on Islamic listening likewise demonstrates how religious practices can cultivate ethical sensibilities (Hirschkind, 2006). These approaches help us understand that AIK is not only about what students know, but also about what they repeatedly do, how they discipline themselves, and how they gradually inhabit certain moral and religious sensibilities.

This framework also requires attention to institutional culture. Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah universities do not teach AIK only through formal courses. They also teach through campus mosques, Baitul Arqam, LazisMu, student organizations, field assignments, social projects, and everyday expectations about discipline, worship, ethics, and service. Practice theory helps clarify this point by showing that social life is organized through routinized activities, bodily habits, material arrangements, and shared understandings (Bourdieu, 1977; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002). In this sense, AIK is not located in a single classroom or textbook. It is distributed across the institutional ecology of the university. The campus becomes a moral and religious environment in which students observe, practice, negotiate, and sometimes question Muhammadiyah values.

Based on this theoretical framework, this article analyzes AIK through three interconnected dimensions: classroom pedagogy, embodied pedagogy, and institutional pedagogy. Classroom pedagogy refers to lectures, discussions, presentations, case studies, and lecturer-student interaction. Embodied pedagogy refers to prayer, Qur'anic recitation, ritual discipline, worship habits, and ethical self-cultivation. Institutional pedagogy refers to the wider ecology of AIK beyond the classroom, including Al-Ma'un projects, Baitul Arqam, LazisMu, mosque activities, student organizations, and Muhammadiyah social institutions. Together, these dimensions allow us to understand AIK not simply as curriculum, ideology, or religious instruction, but as lived pedagogy: a process through which students learn, embody, negotiate, and sometimes contest Islamic and Muhammadiyah values in everyday campus life.

II. METHODS

This article is based on an ethnographic qualitative study of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Rather than evaluating AIK against predetermined learning outcomes, the study examines how AIK is experienced, practiced, negotiated, and made meaningful in everyday university life. Its ethnographic orientation follows the view that educational practices should be understood not only through formal institutional designs, but also through the interactions, meanings, routines, and social worlds in which learning takes place (Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In this sense, the study approaches AIK as a lived pedagogical field rather than merely as a formal course.

The research was conducted in three Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyiah universities in Yogyakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), and Universitas 'Aisiyiah Yogyakarta (UNISA Yogyakarta). These institutions were selected because they represent important sites of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyiah higher education and provide rich contexts for examining how AIK is taught, institutionalized, and experienced by students from diverse religious and educational backgrounds. The focus is not on comparing the three universities as separate institutional cases, but on tracing how AIK is lived across different campus settings, study programs, religious backgrounds, and student experiences.

The primary data consist of in-depth interviews with nineteen students, AIK lecturers, and institutional actors involved in AIK coordination and implementation. The student participants included six students from UNISA Yogyakarta, ten students from UAD, and three students from UMY. The lecturer and institutional participants provided perspectives on curriculum design, teaching strategies, institutional expectations, student diversity, and the broader role of AIK in campus life. The interviews were conducted between February and June 2026 and lasted approximately 60–100 minutes each. They followed a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to use a common set of guiding questions while also giving participants space to narrate their own experiences in detail. Student participants represented a range of study programs, including health sciences, social sciences, humanities, Islamic studies, engineering, communication, management, banking, informatics, and public administration. They also came from different semesters, regions of origin, and religious-educational backgrounds. Some participants had been raised in Muhammadiyah families or had studied in Muhammadiyah schools; others came from Nahdlatul Ulama communities, pesantren, state schools, Islamic schools outside Muhammadiyah, or more general religious educational environments. One participant was a convert to Islam. This diversity is central to the analysis because AIK is not encountered by a homogeneous student body. Students bring different religious memories, ritual habits, family traditions, organizational affiliations, and expectations into the AIK classroom.

Interviews with lecturers and institutional actors were used to contextualize the student narratives and to understand how AIK is imagined, organized, and taught from the perspective of those responsible for its implementation. These interviews explored the aims of AIK, curriculum design, teaching strategies, student responses, institutional expectations, generational challenges, the role of digital media, and the relationship between formal instruction, moral formation, and everyday campus culture.

Student interviews explored their first encounters with AIK, classroom experiences, perceptions of teaching methods, memorable topics, field projects, worship practices, participation in activities outside the classroom, digital media use, and reflections on the relevance of AIK for everyday life. Particular attention was given to concrete experiences rather than general opinions: how students remembered specific classes, how they responded to differences in religious practice, how they experienced projects such as Al-Ma'un, and how they connected AIK with their family backgrounds, religious habits, social environments, and future professional aspirations. The lecturer interview explored the aims of AIK, teaching strategies, student responses, generational challenges, the role of media and internet, AIK beyond the classroom, and the relationship between curriculum, institutional culture, and moral formation.

The data were analyzed thematically and interpretively. The analysis did not begin from an assumption that AIK is either successful or unsuccessful. Instead, it traced recurring patterns in how participants described AIK as meaningful, repetitive, inspiring, disciplinary, practical, confusing, or contested. Following an inductive approach to qualitative analysis, the interview materials were read repeatedly to identify themes related to classroom pedagogy, embodied religious practice, field-based learning, moral formation, institutional culture, digital religious encounters, and negotiation of religious difference (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Charmaz, 2014). These themes were then interpreted through the theoretical framework of lived pedagogy developed in the previous section.

Ethical considerations were central to the research process. Because some students discussed sensitive experiences related to religious difference, classroom discomfort, lecturer authority, and

institutional expectations, all student names are anonymized in the article. Identifying details are minimized where necessary, especially when a participant's comments could expose discomfort with particular lecturers, classroom practices, or institutional expectations. The aim of the analysis is not to judge individual lecturers, students, or universities, but to understand the complexity of AIK as an everyday pedagogical process. By focusing on lived experience rather than institutional evaluation, the study shows how AIK is taught, practiced, embodied, negotiated, and sometimes contested within the moral ecology of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education.

Findings

Across the interviews, students and lecturers describe AIK not simply as a formal course, but as a set of pedagogical experiences that move across classrooms, worship practices, field projects, student organizations, mosque activities, and wider campus culture. The findings are organized into five interrelated themes. The first examines how classroom instruction becomes meaningful when it is connected to students' lived realities. The second explores Al-Ma'un projects as a pedagogy of social care. The third shows how AIK is embodied through worship, discipline, and everyday religious practice. The fourth examines how students from diverse religious backgrounds negotiate Muhammadiyah values and practices. The fifth discusses how AIK extends beyond the classroom into the broader institutional ecology of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education. Together, these themes show that AIK is not merely transmitted as knowledge, but lived as a pedagogical process through which students learn, embody, interpret, and sometimes contest Islamic and Muhammadiyah values.

Classroom Pedagogy: From Instruction to Situated Learning

The interviews show that students do not experience AIK simply as a formal course delivered through lectures. AIK begins in the classroom, but the classroom functions as an entry point into a broader process of religious and moral learning. Students describe AIK classes through a range of pedagogical modes: lectures, PowerPoint presentations, group discussions, student presentations, case studies, question-and-answer sessions, practical demonstrations, and fieldwork preparation. This variation matters because students' sense of whether AIK is meaningful depends strongly on how lecturers translate religious and Muhammadiyah values into concrete learning experiences.

Several students reported that AIK became more engaging when lecturers connected the material to everyday life. A UAD student from an engineering faculty, for example, described the class as comfortable because the lecturer combined material explanation, practice, and discussion; the student also noted that case studies encouraged students to participate because they "had to" discuss the issue together. For this student, the most accessible AIK material was not abstract doctrine, but material connected to daily religious practice, such as tahsin, fiqh of worship, behavior, and social life. Similarly, a UNISA student described AIK as meaningful when the lecturer used group discussions and presentations, allowing students to formulate arguments, present them to classmates, and ask questions.

At the same time, classroom pedagogy was also a site of dissatisfaction. Some students felt that AIK became less effective when it was delivered mainly through one-way lectures. A UNISA midwifery student described some AIK classes as dominated by lectures or PowerPoint reading, which made students sleepy, although she also noted that discussion became lively when the topic related closely to her field, such as reproduction, parenting, family guidance, domestic violence, and early marriage. This suggests that AIK becomes lived learning when it is not presented as general religious knowledge alone, but is connected to students' professional trajectories and everyday concerns.

The lecturer interviews confirm this pedagogical range. Several AIK lecturers described their teaching as moving between conventional lectures, question-and-answer sessions, group discussion, jigsaw activities, role play, problem-based learning, student presentations, field assignments, visits to Muhammadiyah sites, and interviews with Muhammadiyah leaders. From the lecturers' perspective, AIK cannot be taught only as doctrinal content or organizational history. It needs to be contextualized through students' study programs, everyday moral concerns, and professional aspirations. Some lecturers emphasized that AIK begins with basic Islamic values, but these values must be connected to disciplinary knowledge and

concrete social life. In this sense, the classroom is not merely a place where AIK content is transmitted. It is a pedagogical threshold where students first encounter Muhammadiyah values, test them against prior knowledge, and begin to connect them with social and professional life.

Al-Ma'un in Practice: Social Care as Moral Formation

The most recurring theme in the student interviews is that AIK becomes memorable when it moves beyond the classroom. Students repeatedly described field projects, especially Al-Ma'un projects, as among the most meaningful parts of AIK. These projects transformed AIK from a set of teachings into direct engagement with people, communities, and social responsibilities. In these accounts, Al-Ma'un was not remembered merely as a Qur'anic chapter or a theological concept, but as a practical pedagogy of empathy and social care.

A UNISA student recalled that one of the most memorable aspects of AIK was the implementation of classroom material through the Al-Ma'un project and visits to Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah local branches. The project required students to interview local leaders and connect classroom learning with the lived reality of Muhammadiyah communities. The same student also reported that field-based AIK helped build confidence because she had to speak with leaders of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah branches, a task that trained her to speak publicly and engage with the community. Another UNISA student similarly described the Al-Ma'un project as an experience of going directly into society, particularly to an orphanage, while also noting that AIK became relevant through everyday practices such as prayer recitation and wudhu. Lecturers and institutional actors also framed Al-Ma'un as one of the clearest examples of AIK's pedagogical distinctiveness. For them, Al-Ma'un is not simply a topic in Islamic theology or Muhammadiyah history, but a practical entry point for introducing students to Muhammadiyah's social orientation. Several lecturers emphasized that students understand AIK more deeply when they encounter poverty, orphan care, community service, and local Muhammadiyah activism directly. These field-based experiences allow students to see that Muhammadiyah's religious vision is inseparable from organized social care. In this sense, Al-Ma'un functions as a bridge between classroom learning, institutional identity, and public responsibility.

Other students framed the Al-Ma'un project explicitly as moral formation. One UNISA student explained that the project cultivated empathy toward orphans and encouraged students to visit children, offer encouragement, and become more socially aware. Another student stated that the implementation of Surah Al-Ma'un in society nurtured empathy and motivated her to share with others and invite people around her to give more regularly to those in need. A nursing student described AIK as different from ordinary religious lessons because it required students not only to understand theory but also to practice values in everyday life, for example through visiting orphanages and supporting orphans and the poor.

These accounts show that field projects function as what may be called a moral laboratory. Students are asked to test religious concepts through practical engagement. They learn care, empathy, and public responsibility not only by hearing about them, but by performing them. This is why some students asked for more field projects in the future. A UNISA nursing student suggested that AIK projects should be conducted more than once in a semester because they allow students to enter society more often and make Muhammadiyah values more visible and beneficial to the public. In this sense, Al-Ma'un becomes a lived pedagogy of social care: it connects classroom knowledge, Muhammadiyah social ethics, and embodied participation in community life.

Embodied AIK: Worship, Discipline, and Habit Formation

AIK is also lived through the body. Many students described changes or negotiations in relation to prayer, wudhu, Qur'anic recitation, tahsin, fasting, mosque attendance, and everyday discipline. These embodied practices reveal that AIK is not only a matter of intellectual understanding. It also shapes how students move, recite, worship, and organize daily religious routines.

Several students reported adopting Muhammadiyah-style prayer recitations or worship practices after taking AIK. A UNISA student stated that after studying AIK she began to apply the prayer procedures and recitations she had learned in class, and also came to understand Muhammadiyah's way of determining

the beginning of fasting and Eid. Another student said that she now used prayer recitations taught by AIK lecturers and became more diligent in prayer and Qur'anic reading. A different student explained that after joining AIK and related activities, she began following Muhammadiyah prayer recitations and fasting practices.

Tahsin and Qur'anic recitation also appeared as important embodied components of AIK. A UAD student noted that tahsin was highly relevant because correct recitation matters for daily worship, while fiqh of worship was relevant to both behavior and religious practice. Another UAD student remembered AIK most strongly through tahsin because it involved direct practice and evaluation, while another described the anxiety of being tested directly in front of examiners. These accounts show that embodied learning is not always comfortable; it may include discipline, correction, anxiety, and repetition. Yet these experiences are central to how AIK becomes lived.

From the lecturers' perspective, embodied practice is central to AIK because religious learning cannot be reduced to conceptual understanding. Lecturers described worship practice, tahsin, Qur'anic recitation, and prayer discipline as ways of cultivating religious habits rather than merely assessing students' knowledge. Institutional actors similarly emphasized that AIK should shape not only what students know about Islam and Muhammadiyah, but also how they organize time, discipline the body, participate in collective worship, and form ethical habits in everyday campus life. This helps explain why AIK is often connected to campus routines such as congregational prayer, mosque activities, and religious mentoring.

Embodied AIK also appears in institutional routines. A UNISA student described how campus learning stops when prayer time arrives, with teaching temporarily paused so that students can pray together at the campus mosque before classes resume. For this student, this routine marks a distinctive feature of AIK's values in campus life: worship interrupts and organizes academic time. Another student connected AIK with greater regularity in performing the five daily prayers, improved manners toward parents, and more active participation in society. These accounts suggest that AIK works as embodied pedagogy: it educates through recitation, gesture, discipline, repetition, and the moral organization of everyday time.

Negotiating Difference: AIK, Religious Diversity, and Student Agency

The interviews also show that AIK is a space where students encounter religious difference. Students bring with them diverse backgrounds: Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, pesantren, state schools, Islamic schools, local religious communities, and, in one case, the experience of being a convert to Islam. AIK therefore does not address a homogeneous audience. It becomes meaningful precisely because students compare what they learn in AIK with what they have previously practiced at home, in pesantren, in local mosques, or in their communities.

For some students, AIK generated a more tolerant understanding of difference. One UNISA student explained that AIK helped her understand that Muhammadiyah and other Islamic organizations differ in "method and perspective" rather than in their basic Islamic identity. She also said that AIK made her "more mature" in responding to differences among Muhammadiyah, NU, and other groups. Another student, who had initially thought Muhammadiyah was different from other Islamic organizations, later concluded that "Muhammadiyah is not opposed to Islam" and that the difference lay mainly in prayer recitations and certain ritual practices. For these students, AIK did not erase difference, but made difference more intelligible.

For students from pesantren or Muhammadiyah backgrounds, AIK could feel repetitive or basic. One UMY student who had studied in Muhammadiyah educational institutions and pesantren described AIK as "repetitive," explaining that much of the material felt like a repetition of what she had already learned. Yet she also observed that students from non-Muhammadiyah backgrounds often needed such introductory explanations. In this case, AIK functioned differently for different students: as reinforcement for those already familiar with Muhammadiyah, and as introduction for those encountering it for the first time.

For other students, however, religious difference produced discomfort. One student from a non-Muhammadiyah background described his first encounter with AIK as "slightly pressuring" because the material felt "very black-and-white" in discussing bid'ah. He had expected a space for cross-madhab discussion, but instead felt that the class moved toward "standardizing" religious understanding. He recalled

that discussions of *tahayul*, *bid'ah*, and *churafat* often became tense when practices such as *tahlilan* or *qunut* were described as lacking strong guidance.

This student's account is especially important because it shows that negotiation does not mean simple rejection. He did not dismiss AIK altogether. He acknowledged that the most valuable part of AIK for him was Muhammadiyah's emphasis on "discipline and professionalism," especially its strong work ethic and well-organized institutional management. At the same time, he chose not to adopt Muhammadiyah ritual practices, explaining that in matters of worship he continued to hold to his inherited religious principles. His experience reveals a selective mode of learning: students may accept organizational and ethical values while resisting ritual standardization.

The same student also described AIK as creating a distance between classroom learning and home-based religious practice. He stated that there was "a very wide gap" between what was taught in class and what he practiced at home, particularly regarding *tahlilan* and *qunut*. His most memorable experience was not a successful moment of clarification, but a painful classroom encounter. When he asked about the scriptural basis of his family's religious practices, he felt that the lecturer's response was dismissive and treated those practices as habits that did not need to be maintained. He described this experience as making him feel like "a guest."

Yet this discomfort also pushed him to seek religious arguments more actively. Rather than making him abandon his inherited practices, AIK encouraged him to search independently for the basis of those practices so that his convictions would not be easily shaken. Digital media became part of this process: he used online spaces to find comparative religious arguments, and he felt safer discussing religious difference with friends through WhatsApp than in the classroom. His suggestion for AIK was therefore not to remove Muhammadiyah perspectives, but to make the learning process more inclusive by opening equal dialogical space for different religious perspectives. He hoped AIK could become "a bridge of *ukhuwah*" rather than a tool of separation, while giving students space to maintain their own ritual principles.

The lecturer interviews confirm that this tension is also visible from the teaching side. Several AIK lecturers acknowledged that students come from diverse religious backgrounds and that some initially perceive AIK as an attempt to "Muhammadiyah-ize" them. Lecturers described this perception as one of the central pedagogical challenges of AIK: they are expected to introduce Islam from a Muhammadiyah perspective, while also teaching students who may already be deeply attached to NU, pesantren, local, or family-based religious traditions. From the lecturers' perspective, this requires careful pedagogical mediation. AIK must present Muhammadiyah positions clearly, especially in matters of worship, ethics, and organizational identity, but it also needs to create space for students to ask questions, compare practices, and understand difference without feeling that their inherited religious worlds are being dismissed. The finding here is not that AIK fails because it produces tension, but that AIK is lived through such tension. Difference is not outside AIK; it is one of the key conditions through which AIK becomes pedagogically significant.

Beyond the Classroom: Institutional and Digital Ecologies of AIK

AIK does not remain inside the classroom. The interviews show that students encounter AIK through an institutional ecology that includes Baitul Arqam, pesantren mahasiswa, LazisMu, IMM, campus mosques, pengajian, asrama, mentoring, field visits, and digital media. These spaces extend AIK beyond formal instruction and embed it in the broader moral environment of the university.

UNISA students repeatedly described activities outside the classroom as important to their understanding of AIK. Some joined pesantren mahasiswa, pengajian, or Naswiatul Aisyiyah activities; others became LazisMu volunteers, IMM participants, musyirif in student dormitories, or media volunteers. One student said that through activities in the dormitory, LazisMu, and Muhammadiyah volunteer networks, he became closer to the Muhammadiyah environment and more active in activities related to AIK values. Another student explained that pesantren mahasiswa, mosque pengajian, Ramadan activities, and LazisMu deepened his understanding and allowed him to practice AIK values in daily life.

For some students, these extracurricular spaces were more accessible than formal classes. The UMY student who felt uncomfortable in class reported that religious study activities outside the classroom felt

more open to non-Muhammadiyah students and therefore safer for learning AIK. This suggests that institutional ecology does not always simply reinforce classroom pedagogy; it may also provide alternative spaces where students negotiate AIK more comfortably.

Digital media also formed part of this ecology, although unevenly. Some students followed Instagram accounts of LazisMu, campus mosques, IMM, TikTok content, Facebook LensaMu, or Muhammadiyah-related content. Others said they did not pay much attention to such content, or that access to social media was limited due to dormitory life. For one UMY student, digital media became a space to search for comparative religious arguments after feeling that classroom discussion was too rigid. He felt safer discussing difference through WhatsApp with friends than in class. Meanwhile, the UMY lecturer identified social media as a major challenge for AIK teaching because students increasingly learn religion through short, instant online content, sometimes without tabayun or deeper verification.

Lecturers also saw digital media as a double-edged pedagogical space. On the one hand, social media exposes students to fragmented, instant, and sometimes decontextualized religious claims. On the other hand, it also provides opportunities for extending AIK beyond the classroom through Muhammadiyah-affiliated content, campus mosque accounts, LazisMu activities, and online discussions. For this reason, several lecturers emphasized the need for AIK to cultivate students' capacity for tabayun, critical filtering, and ethical engagement with digital religious content.

Lecturers and institutional actors explicitly rejected the idea that AIK happens only in class. They described AIK as an institutional project that must be enlivened across the entire academic community. In their accounts, formal courses are only one component of a broader ecology that includes Baitul Arqam, mosque studies, student orientation, mentoring programs, LazisMu, IMM, dormitory life, program-level activities, and other campus-based religious practices. Several lecturers emphasized that AIK becomes effective when students encounter the same values repeatedly across different spaces: in classrooms, in worship routines, in social service, in organizational participation, and in everyday interactions with lecturers and peers. This institutional view resonates with students' accounts: AIK is learned through a network of spaces rather than a single course. The campus becomes a moral ecology in which students encounter Muhammadiyah through lectures, worship, projects, organizations, digital media, social service, and everyday institutional routines.

Taken together, these findings show that AIK is not experienced as a single, uniform pedagogical process. It is lived across multiple sites: classrooms, worship practices, field projects, student organizations, campus mosques, dormitories, digital media, and encounters with Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah communities. Across these sites, students do not merely receive Islamic and Muhammadiyah values as fixed knowledge. They interpret them through prior religious backgrounds, bodily habits, social relations, institutional expectations, and personal aspirations. For some students, AIK becomes a source of moral reflection, social empathy, and deeper religious understanding. For others, it raises questions about difference, authority, repetition, and the boundaries between institutional identity and personal religious inheritance. These varied experiences suggest that AIK operates most powerfully not when it simply transmits doctrine, but when it becomes a lived pedagogical field in which students learn, embody, negotiate, and sometimes contest what it means to study Islam within Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education.

III. DISCUSSION

The findings of this article extend existing studies of AIK by shifting attention from curriculum, implementation, and character education to the everyday processes through which AIK is lived by students. Previous scholarship has often treated AIK as a formal instrument for strengthening Islamic and Muhammadiyah values, moral character, and institutional identity (Achmad, 2020; Dacholfany & Iswati, 2021; Ridlo & Hafidz, 2024; Zamil, 2025). This article does not reject that view, but it shows that AIK's pedagogical significance cannot be fully understood from its formal aims alone. AIK becomes meaningful when students encounter it in concrete situations: classroom discussions, ritual practice, Al-Ma'un projects, mosque routines, student organizations, digital media, and negotiations with prior religious backgrounds.

The concept of lived pedagogy therefore helps explain AIK not simply as a curriculum to be delivered, but as a pedagogical field in which religious knowledge, institutional identity, bodily discipline, social care, and student agency come together.

The first contribution of this article is to show that AIK is not merely transmitted; it is interpreted. Students are not passive recipients of Muhammadiyah values. They compare AIK materials with what they have learned at home, in pesantren, in local mosques, in Muhammadiyah schools, in NU communities, or through digital religious media. Some students adopt Muhammadiyah prayer recitations, deepen their worship discipline, or become more confident in explaining religious differences. Others appreciate Muhammadiyah's discipline, professionalism, and social ethics while maintaining inherited ritual practices such as qunut or tahlilan. This selective reception is analytically important. It shows that AIK works not by producing uniform religious subjects, but by generating moments of comparison, clarification, acceptance, hesitation, and reinterpretation. In this sense, AIK is less a one-directional process of institutional transmission than a site of religious negotiation.

This negotiation is especially visible in students' responses to Muhammadiyah distinctiveness. For some students, AIK provides a clearer understanding of Muhammadiyah as a reformist Islamic movement and helps them see religious difference more maturely. For others, the same distinctiveness can be experienced as pressure, especially when Muhammadiyah positions on ritual matters are presented in a rigid or "black-and-white" way. This ambivalence matters for Muhammadiyah studies. It suggests that Muhammadiyah's educational strength lies not only in maintaining doctrinal clarity or organizational identity, but also in how that identity is pedagogically communicated to students who do not share the same religious inheritance. AIK's challenge, therefore, is not whether Muhammadiyah perspectives should be taught. They should. The more important question is how those perspectives can be taught in ways that are intellectually clear, ethically careful, and dialogically open.

The findings also complicate the relationship between inclusion and institutional identity. In Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah universities, AIK is expected to form students within a particular moral and religious tradition. At the same time, these universities educate students from multiple Islamic backgrounds and, in some cases, from limited or different religious experiences. The classroom thus becomes a space where institutional identity meets religious plurality. When AIK is taught through open discussion, practical examples, professional relevance, and field-based learning, students often experience it as meaningful and transformative. When it is taught as one-way correction or as a simple distinction between right and wrong practice, students may experience it as standardization. The issue, then, is not distinctiveness versus inclusivity, but how distinctiveness can be made pedagogically hospitable.

This point has wider implications for Islamic higher education in Indonesia. Islamic universities are not only sites for teaching religious content; they are also spaces where students learn how to inhabit Islam in relation to modern professions, civic responsibility, social diversity, and institutional life. AIK demonstrates this clearly. Students encounter Islam not only as doctrine, but also as social care through Al-Ma'un projects, as bodily discipline through worship and tahsin, as institutional participation through Baitul Arqam, LazisMu, IMM, and campus mosques, and as ethical reflection through discussions of family, profession, gender, social media, and community life. AIK therefore shows how Islamic higher education forms students through an ecology of practices rather than through classroom instruction alone.

The Al-Ma'un projects are particularly important in this regard. Students repeatedly remembered them as moments when AIK moved from religious lesson to social encounter. Visiting orphanages, interviewing Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah local leaders, volunteering through LazisMu, or engaging community issues allowed students to understand Islamic values as public responsibility. This finding suggests that AIK's most powerful contribution may lie in its capacity to connect Muhammadiyah's theological and organizational legacy with concrete forms of social care. Al-Ma'un becomes not only a symbol of Muhammadiyah social theology, but also a pedagogical practice through which students learn empathy, confidence, responsibility, and public engagement.

The digital dimension further expands the field in which AIK operates. Students do not encounter religious authority only through lecturers and campus institutions. They also learn from Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp groups, online preachers, and peer networks. This means that AIK now functions within a plural field of religious authority. Its authority is no longer secured simply by institutional position; it must be made persuasive through relevance, clarity, dialogue, and lived example. Digital media can challenge AIK when students use it to question classroom teaching, but it can also extend AIK when students follow LazisMu, campus mosque accounts, Muhammadiyah media, or online religious discussions. The issue is therefore not whether digital religion threatens AIK, but how AIK can prepare students to navigate competing religious claims with critical, ethical, and dialogical capacities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that AIK should be evaluated not only by whether students master AIK content or adopt Muhammadiyah practices, but by whether AIK helps them develop religious maturity. Such maturity includes the ability to understand Muhammadiyah perspectives, practice Islam with ethical seriousness, engage religious difference without contempt, connect faith with social responsibility, and reflect critically on religious authority in both offline and digital spaces. This does not weaken AIK's Muhammadiyah identity. On the contrary, it may strengthen AIK by making Muhammadiyah values more intelligible, embodied, and ethically compelling for students with diverse backgrounds.

The article therefore contributes to three fields of study. For AIK studies, it offers the concept of lived pedagogy as an alternative to approaches that focus mainly on curriculum implementation and character education. For Islamic higher education studies, it shows how religious learning is produced through the interaction of curriculum, embodiment, institutional culture, social projects, and digital media. For Muhammadiyah studies, it highlights a central tension in contemporary Muhammadiyah education: how to sustain reformist distinctiveness while educating religiously diverse students in an inclusive and dialogical way. AIK's future pedagogical strength will depend on its ability to hold these elements together: clarity without rigidity, identity without exclusion, practice without coercion, and social ethics without reducing religion to moral instruction alone.

In this sense, AIK matters because it reveals how Islamic education becomes meaningful beyond formal teaching. It becomes meaningful when students pray, discuss, hesitate, compare, volunteer, question, remember, and carry particular ethical habits into their everyday lives. AIK is therefore neither merely an ideological apparatus nor simply a neutral academic subject. It is a lived pedagogical field in which Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education forms students through repeated encounters with knowledge, practice, difference, institution, and social responsibility.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan (AIK) should be understood not only as a compulsory curriculum or an institutional vehicle for transmitting Muhammadiyah values, but as a lived pedagogical field. In everyday university life, AIK becomes meaningful through classroom interaction, embodied worship, field-based social engagement, campus organizations, mosque activities, digital encounters, and students' negotiations with their prior religious backgrounds.

The concept of lived pedagogy allows this article to move beyond approaches that treat AIK mainly as curriculum implementation, character education, or ideological transmission. It shows that religious learning is not simply delivered from institution to student, but is practiced, felt, interpreted, questioned, and reworked in concrete social settings. In this sense, AIK contributes to broader discussions on lived religion, Islamic higher education, and moral formation by showing how religious education takes shape through embodied practice, institutional culture, and everyday negotiation.

Empirically, the article has shown that students experience AIK in diverse and uneven ways. For some, AIK deepens religious understanding, strengthens worship discipline, cultivates social empathy, and introduces Muhammadiyah as a reformist Islamic tradition. For others, it raises questions about authority, repetition, ritual difference, and the boundaries between institutional identity and inherited religious practice. These varied responses do not indicate a simple success or failure of AIK. Rather, they reveal AIK as a

dynamic pedagogical space in which students actively compare, adopt, reinterpret, or contest what they learn.

The future strength of AIK therefore lies in its ability to remain distinctively Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah while becoming more dialogical, contextual, and practice-based. AIK need not weaken its institutional identity in order to be inclusive. Its pedagogical promise depends on presenting Muhammadiyah perspectives with clarity, while also giving students space to ask questions, engage difference, connect religious learning with social responsibility, and carry ethical reflection into their everyday lives beyond the classroom.

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