

The Influence of Islamic Studies Education on Professional Identity among Muslim University Graduates in the Southern Philippines

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Abstract

Background: Islamic Studies education plays a vital role in shaping the values, ethics, and professional conduct of Muslim graduates. While previous studies have focused on graduate employability and curriculum effectiveness, limited research has examined how Islamic Studies education contributes to the development of professional identity among Muslim university graduates in the Southern Philippines.

Objectives: This study examined the influence of Islamic Studies education on the professional identity of Muslim graduates of Mindanao State University Maguindanao. Specifically, it assessed the relevance of Islamic knowledge in professional practice, identified challenges in aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings, and explored curriculum enhancements that may strengthen professional identity formation.

Methods: A quantitative-descriptive research design was employed involving 50 graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program of Mindanao State University–Maguindanao from 2020 to 2025. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and weighted mean.

Results: The results show that by encouraging accountability, honesty, moral behavior, and wise decision-making, Islamic Studies education greatly influenced graduates' professional identities. Despite obstacles including work obligations, a lack of institutional support, and time limits, participants thought Islamic knowledge was very relevant to workplace ethics and communication. They suggested career-oriented learning, ethics-focused training, and ongoing professional development.

Conclusion: Islamic Studies education significantly contributes to the formation of professional identity among Muslim graduates by fostering ethical values, professional responsibility, and faith-based decision-making. Strengthening practical and career-oriented components of the curriculum may further enhance graduates' professional development and workplace relevance.

A. Introduction

Higher education is expected not only to develop students' knowledge and skills but also to shape their professional identity. Professional identity refers to the values, beliefs, ethical orientations, and self-

concepts that individuals develop in relation to their professional roles. It influences how graduates perceive their responsibilities, make decisions, and engage with society. Contemporary higher education literature emphasizes that professional identity formation is a lifelong developmental process that begins during university education and continues throughout professional practice (Cornett et al., 2023; Pach et al., 2025; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019).

In Islamic higher education, the formation of professional identity is closely connected to the integration of knowledge, faith, and ethical conduct. Islamic Studies education encompasses disciplines such as Qur'anic studies, Hadith, Shari'ah, Islamic history, and Islamic ethics, which collectively aim to cultivate intellectually competent and morally responsible individuals. Unlike purely vocational preparation, Islamic education seeks to develop graduates who are capable of applying Islamic principles in both personal and professional contexts. Recent studies have highlighted that Islamic education contributes significantly to identity formation by strengthening religious values, moral awareness, and social responsibility among learners (Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025). Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions continue to adapt their curricula to contemporary realities while preserving their foundational religious values, thereby enabling graduates to navigate increasingly complex professional environments (Malizal, 2025).

Islamic education also plays a significant role in character formation and ethical decision-making. Recent evidence from higher education institutions indicates that reflective and values-based Islamic learning strengthens students' religious character, responsibility, and commitment to ethical conduct (Abdullah et al., 2019; Rafi et al., 2025). These outcomes are particularly important in contemporary workplaces where professionals are expected to demonstrate integrity, accountability, and social responsibility. Through the internalization of Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *sidq* (honesty), and *adl* (justice), graduates are better equipped to navigate ethical challenges and contribute positively to their organizations and communities.

Despite the growing literature on Islamic education and identity formation, limited empirical evidence exists on how Islamic Studies education influences professional identity among Muslim university graduates. Existing studies have primarily focused on curriculum development, religious identity, teacher professionalism, and graduate employability, while the influence of Islamic educational experiences on graduates' professional identity remains underexplored (Succarie, 2024). Moreover, research in the Philippine context has concentrated primarily on madrasah education, Islamic curriculum implementation, and educational policy, leaving a notable gap regarding the long-term professional outcomes of Islamic Studies graduates.

This gap is particularly evident in the Southern Philippines, where Islamic higher education institutions serve an important role in preparing graduates for careers in education, public service, religious leadership, and community development. In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), graduates are expected to contribute not only to economic development but also to peacebuilding, ethical leadership, and community engagement. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how Islamic Studies education influences their professional identity, workplace values, and professional experiences after graduation.

Given this gap, the present study examines the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity among Muslim university graduates in the Southern Philippines. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which Islamic education shapes professional values and ethical orientations, identifies the Islamic knowledge and competencies perceived as relevant to professional practice, explores challenges encountered in integrating Islamic teachings into workplace responsibilities, and proposes curriculum enhancements that may strengthen professional identity formation among future graduates. By addressing these concerns, the study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic higher education and provides evidence-based insights for curriculum development and quality improvement initiatives in Islamic Studies programs.

B. Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to examine the influence of Islamic Studies education on the professional identity of Muslim university graduates in the Southern Philippines. Quantitative descriptive research is appropriate for systematically describing existing conditions, attitudes,

perceptions, and characteristics of a population through numerical data and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2026). The design was deemed suitable because the study sought to measure graduates' perceptions regarding the influence of Islamic Studies education, the relevance of Islamic knowledge in professional practice, challenges encountered in applying Islamic teachings in the workplace, and potential curriculum enhancements.

The study was conducted at Mindanao State University–Maguindanao (MSU–Maguindanao), a public higher education institution located in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines. The university offers a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program that aims to develop graduates equipped with Islamic knowledge, ethical values, and professional competencies.

The respondents consisted of graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program from Academic Years 2020–2025. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met the inclusion criteria of being graduates of the program and willing to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is appropriate when respondents possess specific characteristics that are directly relevant to the objectives of the research (Campbell et al., 2020; Etikan & Bala, 2017). A total of 50 graduates participated in the study.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire based on the objectives of the study and relevant literature on Islamic education and professional identity formation. The instrument consisted of five sections: (1) demographic profile, (2) influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity, (3) relevance of Islamic knowledge in professional practice, (4) challenges in aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings, and (5) proposed curriculum enhancements.

Responses to Sections II–V were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by experts in Islamic Studies and educational research to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Comments and recommendations from the validators were incorporated prior to the administration of the survey instrument.

The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by experts in Islamic Studies and educational research to ensure the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the items. Revisions were made based on the validators' comments and recommendations. To establish reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested among graduates who were not included in the final sample. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating good internal consistency and reliability of the instrument for measuring the constructs included in the study (Taber, 2018).

Prior to data collection, permission was secured from relevant university authorities. The researchers obtained a list of graduates from the concerned academic unit and established contact with potential respondents through alumni networks, social media platforms, electronic mail, and personal referrals.

Data were collected through both online and face-to-face survey administration. Respondents were provided with information regarding the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were checked, organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was employed to determine the level of influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity, the relevance of Islamic knowledge in professional practice, challenges encountered in applying Islamic teachings in professional settings, and proposed curriculum enhancements.

The weighted mean was interpreted using predetermined scale ranges to facilitate the analysis of respondents' perceptions. Descriptive statistics are widely utilized in survey research to summarize quantitative data and identify patterns and trends within a population (Mertler, 2021).

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the objectives of the study, their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and the intended use of the data for academic and research purposes only.

To protect respondents' privacy, no personally identifiable information was disclosed in the presentation of results. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and were used solely for research purposes. Data were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. The study adhered to the principles of

respect for persons, beneficence, and confidentiality in accordance with accepted research ethics standards in social science research (Resnik, 2020).

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity among Muslim university graduates in the Southern Philippines. The presentation begins with the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by the analysis of the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity, the relevance of Islamic knowledge in professional practice, challenges encountered in aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings, and proposed curriculum enhancements.

1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age is an important demographic characteristic that provides insight into the maturity and career stage of the respondents. The age profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
20–25	23	46%
26–30	23	46%
31–35	4	8%
36 and above	0	0%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were between 20–25 years old (46%) and 26–30 years old (46%), while only 8% belonged to the 31–35 age group. No respondents were aged 36 years and above. These findings indicate that most participants were young adults who recently completed their studies and were in the early stages of their professional careers.

The age distribution suggests that the study captured graduates who are actively transitioning from academic life to professional practice, making them appropriate respondents for assessing the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity. Future studies may include graduates from earlier cohorts to determine whether the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity differs across age groups and career stages.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender distribution provides information on the representation of male and female graduates who participated in the study. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Male	17	34%
Female	33	66%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 shows that female respondents constituted the majority of the participants, accounting for 66% of the total sample, while male respondents comprised 34%.

The findings indicate a higher representation of female graduates in the study. This distribution reflects the composition of the available graduates from the Islamic Studies program during the identified period and suggests a strong female presence within the program. Future research may consider a more proportionate gender distribution to explore potential differences in professional identity formation between male and female graduates.

Civil Status of the Respondents

Civil status provides information regarding the respondents' personal circumstances and social responsibilities. The distribution is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Civil Status

Civil Status	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Single	43	86%
Married	7	14%
Widowed	0	0%
Separated	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 reveals that the majority of the respondents were single (86%), while 14% were married. No respondents reported being widowed or separated.

These findings indicate that most graduates were unmarried, which is consistent with the relatively young age profile of the respondents. The results suggest that many graduates are currently focused on establishing their careers and professional identities. Future studies may examine whether family responsibilities and marital status influence the application of Islamic values in professional settings.

Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational attainment describes the highest academic qualification obtained by the respondents. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Bachelor's Degree	50	100%
Master's Degree	0	0%
Doctorate Degree	0	0%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 4, all respondents (100%) reported holding a Bachelor's Degree. None had completed postgraduate studies at the master's or doctoral level.

The findings indicate that the respondents represent graduates whose professional experiences are primarily based on their undergraduate Islamic Studies education, making them suitable participants for assessing the influence of the program on professional identity. Future research may include graduates who have pursued postgraduate studies to assess the continuing influence of Islamic Studies education across higher levels of academic attainment.

Year Graduated of the Respondents

The distribution of respondents according to year graduated is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Year Graduated

Year Graduated	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
2020–2021	8	16%
2021–2022	8	16%
2022–2023	11	22%
2023–2024	1	2%
2024–2025	22	44%
Total	50	100%

Table 5 shows that the largest proportion of respondents graduated during Academic Year 2024–2025 (44%), followed by 2022–2023 (22%). The smallest proportion graduated during 2023–2024 (2%).

The results indicate that most participants were recent graduates. Their recent educational experiences may contribute to clearer recollections regarding the influence of Islamic Studies education on their professional development and identity formation. Future studies may include a broader range of graduating cohorts to examine how professional identity evolves over time.

Current Professional Engagement of the Respondents

Current professional engagement provides information regarding the employment status and occupational involvement of the respondents. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents by Current Professional Engagement

Employment Sector	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Government Employee	13	26%
Private Employee	18	36%
Religious Worker	9	18%
Educator	2	4%
Volunteer	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Table 6 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents were employed in the private sector (36%), followed by government employment (26%) and religious work (18%). A smaller proportion were involved in volunteer activities (16%) and educators (4%).

The findings suggest that Islamic Studies graduates are engaged in diverse professional sectors. The presence of graduates in government, private, religious, and educational fields demonstrate the applicability of Islamic Studies education across various occupational settings and provides a meaningful context for examining its influence on professional identity. Future studies may employ sector-specific analyses to compare how Islamic Studies education influences professional identity across different employment contexts.

2. Influence of Islamic Studies Education on Professional Identity

Islamic Studies education is expected to contribute to the development of graduates' professional values, ethical conduct, responsibility, and decision-making. Examining the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity provides insight into how graduates integrate Islamic principles into their professional lives. The respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of Islamic Studies education on their professional identity are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Mean Distribution of the Respondents by Influence of Islamic Studies Education on Professional Identity

Statement Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. My Islamic Studies education has shaped my professional values.	4.62	Strongly Agree
2. I apply Islamic principles in my workplace.	4.32	Strongly Agree
3. My education strengthened my sense of responsibility and integrity.	4.66	Strongly Agree
4. Islamic teachings influence my decision-making in my profession.	4.58	Strongly Agree
5. My identity as a professional is guided by Islamic ethics.	4.56	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.55	Strongly Agree

The interpretation scale used to classify the respondents; ratings for the influence of Islamic Studies education on professional identity is presented in Table 7a.

Table 7a. Interpretation Scale

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 7 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of Islamic Studies education on their professional identity. The overall mean of 4.55, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicates that the respondents perceive Islamic Studies education as having a substantial influence on the development of their professional values, ethical orientation, responsibility, integrity, and decision-making practices.

Among the indicators, the statement *"My education strengthened my sense of responsibility and integrity"* obtained the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.66$), suggesting that Islamic Studies education contributes significantly to the development of personal accountability and ethical conduct. This finding implies that graduates perceive Islamic education not merely as a source of religious knowledge but also as a foundation for professional character and responsible behavior. The emphasis on integrity and responsibility reflects the Islamic concepts of *amanah* (trustworthiness) and accountability, which are essential qualities in professional practice.

Similarly, the statement *"My Islamic Studies education has shaped my professional values"* received a high weighted mean ($M = 4.62$), indicating that respondents strongly associate their educational experiences with the development of workplace values and professional standards. The findings suggest that Islamic Studies education provides graduates with a moral framework that guides their professional interactions and conduct.

The statement *"Islamic teachings influence my decision-making in my profession"* obtained a weighted mean of 4.58, while *"My identity as a professional is guided by Islamic ethics"* recorded a weighted mean of 4.56. These findings demonstrate that Islamic teachings continue to shape graduates' professional judgments and workplace behavior beyond their university years. The results indicate that respondents integrate religious values into their professional roles, supporting the notion that professional identity among Muslim graduates is influenced by both occupational expectations and faith-based commitments.

Although still interpreted as Strongly Agree, the statement *"I apply Islamic principles in my workplace"* received the lowest weighted mean ($M = 4.32$). This finding may indicate that while graduates strongly value Islamic teachings, practical challenges within professional environments may affect the consistent application of Islamic principles in workplace settings.

This interpretation is further supported by the findings in Table 9, where respondents agreed that workplace demands, social and cultural pressures, limited institutional support, and time constraints pose challenges to aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings. These workplace realities may explain why the practical application of Islamic principles received a slightly lower rating than the internalization of responsibility and integrity. This suggests that although graduates develop strong ethical convictions through Islamic Studies education, the consistent application of these values in the workplace is influenced by organizational culture, institutional support, and the demands of professional practice.

The findings are consistent with recent studies emphasizing the role of Islamic education in shaping ethical identity and professional conduct. (Fahmi et al., 2024; Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025) found that Islamic education contributes significantly to the formation of Muslim identity by strengthening moral values, religious commitment, and social responsibility. Similarly, (Amirudin et al., 2026; Munawir et al., 2024) reported that Islamic educational experiences foster ethical awareness, character development, and responsible behavior among learners.

The results also support the work of (Adriani et al., 2026; Succarie, 2024), who argued that Islamic educational experiences contribute to professional identity formation by integrating ethical reasoning, reflective practice, and value-based professional engagement. The strong agreement among respondents suggests that Islamic Studies education continues to influence professional behavior long after graduation. Furthermore, (Noviani et al., 2021; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019) emphasized that professional identity develops through the interaction between educational experiences and workplace realities, a process evident in the respondents' integration of Islamic values into their professional lives.

The findings provide support for Professional Identity Formation Theory, which posits that professional identity develops through the internalization of knowledge, values, beliefs, and experiences acquired during educational and professional socialization processes (Reissner et al., 2024; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019). The strong influence of Islamic Studies education on professional values, responsibility, and ethical decision-making suggests that professional identity among Muslim graduates is shaped not only by occupational experiences but also by religious and educational foundations.

The results also align with Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals derive part of their identity from their membership in social and cultural groups. In this context, Islamic Studies education

serves as an important mechanism through which graduates internalize Islamic values and incorporate them into their professional self-concept. The findings demonstrate that religious identity and professional identity are not separate constructs but are integrated components of graduates' overall professional development.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was limited to graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program at Mindanao State University–Maguindanao, which may limit the generalizability of the results to graduates from other institutions or regions. Second, the findings were based on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and personal interpretation. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow for the examination of changes in professional identity over time.

Future studies may expand the sample to include Islamic Studies graduates from multiple universities within and outside the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies involving graduates from different academic disciplines may also provide deeper insights into the unique contribution of Islamic Studies education to professional identity formation. Additionally, longitudinal research may be conducted to examine how professional identity evolves throughout graduates' careers and how workplace experiences interact with Islamic educational foundations over time. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews and case studies, may further enrich understanding of how graduates apply Islamic values in diverse professional contexts.

3. Relevance of Islamic Knowledge in Current Profession

Islamic Studies education provides graduates with knowledge and competencies that may extend beyond religious understanding and contribute to professional practice. Examining the relevance of Islamic knowledge in graduates' current professions offers insights into how educational experiences support workplace performance, ethical conduct, and professional development. The respondents' perceptions regarding the relevance of Islamic knowledge in their current professions are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Mean Distribution of the Respondents by Relevance of Islamic Knowledge in Current Profession

Statement Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Knowledge of Qur'an and Hadith is relevant to my profession.	4.40	Highly Relevant
2. Understanding of Islamic law (<i>Shari'ah</i>) is useful in my work.	4.28	Highly Relevant
3. Islamic ethics and values are applicable in my professional tasks.	4.48	Highly Relevant
4. Communication skills learned in Islamic Studies are relevant.	4.56	Highly Relevant
5. Knowledge of Islamic history and culture supports my profession.	4.22	Highly Relevant
Overall Mean	4.38	Strongly Agree

The interpretation scale used to classify the respondents' ratings for the relevance of Islamic knowledge in their current profession is presented in Table 8a.

Table 8a. Interpretation Scale

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Relevant
4	3.41 – 4.20	Relevant
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Relevant
2	1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Relevant
1	1.00 – 1.80	Not Relevant

Table 8 reveals that the respondents perceived Islamic knowledge acquired through their academic training as highly relevant to their current professions, as reflected by the overall mean of 4.38. The findings suggest

that Islamic Studies education equips graduates with knowledge, values, and competencies that remain applicable across various professional settings.

Among the indicators, “*Communication skills learned in Islamic Studies are relevant*” obtained the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.56$), indicating that respondents strongly recognize the practical value of communication competencies acquired through their academic training. This finding suggests that Islamic Studies education contributes not only to religious literacy but also to the development of interpersonal and communication skills necessary for effective professional engagement. Communication is a critical competency across occupational sectors, enabling professionals to collaborate effectively, convey ideas clearly, and maintain productive workplace relationships.

The statement “*Islamic ethics and values are applicable in my professional tasks*” recorded the second highest weighted mean ($M = 4.48$). This finding demonstrates that graduates perceive Islamic ethical principles as directly relevant to their daily professional responsibilities. The result suggests that values such as honesty, accountability, fairness, and social responsibility continue to guide graduates in performing their professional duties.

Similarly, “*Knowledge of Qur'an and Hadith is relevant to my profession*” obtained a weighted mean of 4.40, indicating that respondents continue to draw guidance from foundational Islamic sources in their professional lives. The findings suggest that religious knowledge remains a meaningful reference point for workplace behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions.

The statement “*Understanding of Islamic law (Shari'ah) is useful in my work*” received a weighted mean of 4.28, indicating that graduates perceive knowledge of Islamic legal principles as beneficial in professional contexts. This finding may reflect the role of Shari'ah principles in shaping ethical judgment, social responsibility, and professional conduct, particularly among graduates working in Muslim communities and institutions.

Although still interpreted as highly relevant, “*Knowledge of Islamic history and culture supports my profession*” received the lowest weighted mean ($M = 4.22$). This result may indicate that respondents perceive historical and cultural knowledge as less directly applicable to everyday workplace responsibilities compared to communication skills and ethical principles. Nevertheless, the finding suggests that knowledge of Islamic civilization and cultural heritage continues to contribute to graduates' broader understanding of society and professional engagement.

The findings support previous studies emphasizing the practical relevance of Islamic education in contemporary professional environments. (Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025) found that Islamic education contributes to the development of religious identity, ethical awareness, and social responsibility, all of which remain relevant beyond formal education. Likewise, (Amirudin et al., 2025) reported that Islamic educational experiences strengthen character formation and value-based decision-making among learners.

The strong relevance attributed to communication skills aligns with findings by (Aguelo, 2024) who identified communication competence as one of the most important employability skills valued in professional environments. Furthermore, (Budiman & Isnaeni, 2025; Succarie, 2024) argued that Islamic educational experiences contribute to professional identity formation by integrating ethical values, reflective practice, and workplace competencies. The present findings suggest that Islamic Studies education provides graduates with both religious knowledge and transferable skills applicable to diverse occupational contexts.

The findings support Professional Identity Formation Theory, which posits that professional identity develops through educational experiences that shape values, competencies, and professional self-understanding (Simon, 2024; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019). The high relevance assigned to Islamic ethics, communication skills, and religious knowledge suggests that Islamic Studies education contributes to graduates' professional development beyond disciplinary knowledge alone.

The findings also reinforce the principles of Social Identity Theory, which proposes that individuals derive part of their identity from membership in social and cultural groups. The continued relevance of Qur'anic knowledge, Islamic ethics, and Shari'ah principles indicates that graduates maintain a strong connection between their Islamic identity and their professional roles. This suggests that Islamic educational experiences remain influential in shaping workplace behavior and professional self-concept even after graduation.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by individual experiences and subjective interpretation.

Second, the respondents were drawn exclusively from one institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to graduates from other Islamic Studies programs. Third, the study did not examine differences across occupational sectors, which may influence the perceived relevance of specific forms of Islamic knowledge.

Future studies may investigate how the relevance of Islamic knowledge varies across different professional sectors, including education, government service, private employment, religious institutions, and non-government organizations. Comparative research involving graduates from multiple universities may also provide a broader understanding of the contribution of Islamic Studies education to professional practice. Additionally, qualitative studies may explore how graduates apply Islamic knowledge in real workplace situations and how such knowledge influences ethical decision-making, leadership, and professional performance over time.

4. Challenges in Aligning Professional Responsibilities with Islamic Teaching

The integration of Islamic values into professional practice is an important aspect of professional identity among Muslim graduates. However, workplace realities and professional demands may create challenges in consistently applying Islamic teachings. Examining these challenges provides insight into the barriers graduates encounter as they seek to align their professional responsibilities with their religious principles. The respondents' perceptions regarding these challenges are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Mean Distribution of the Respondents by Challenges in Aligning Professional Responsibilities with Islamic Teachings

Statement Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Workplace demands sometimes conflict with Islamic values.	3.96	Agree
2. There is limited support for practicing Islamic principles at work.	3.68	Agree
3. Lack of continuous Islamic education affects my professional practice.	3.68	Agree
4. Social and cultural pressures influence my professional decisions.	3.90	Agree
5. Time constraints hinder the application of Islamic teachings.	3.82	Agree
Overall Mean	3.80	Agree

The interpretation scale used to classify the respondents' ratings for the challenge in aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings is presented in Table 9a.

Table 9a. Interpretation Scale

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 9 shows that the respondents generally agreed that they encounter challenges in aligning their professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings, as reflected by the overall mean of 3.80. The findings suggest that although Islamic Studies education provides a strong ethical and religious foundation, graduates may face practical constraints when attempting to consistently apply Islamic principles within professional environments.

Among the indicators, “*Workplace demands sometimes conflict with Islamic values*” obtained the highest weighted mean ($M = 3.96$), indicating that respondents frequently experience situations in which organizational expectations, workplace practices, or professional obligations may not fully align with their religious beliefs. This finding suggests that graduates often navigate tensions between professional

requirements and personal religious commitments. Such situations may require individuals to balance organizational expectations with ethical considerations rooted in Islamic teachings.

The statement *“Social and cultural pressures influence my professional decisions”* recorded a weighted mean of 3.90, indicating that external social expectations and workplace culture may affect professional decision-making. This finding suggests that graduates operate within diverse professional environments where prevailing norms and expectations may influence how Islamic values are expressed or practiced.

Similarly, *“Time constraints hinder the application of Islamic teachings”* obtained a weighted mean of 3.82, indicating that busy work schedules and professional obligations may limit opportunities to fully implement religious practices and ethical reflections in daily work activities. The finding highlights the practical challenges associated with maintaining religious commitments in demanding professional environments.

The statements *“There is limited support for practicing Islamic principles at work”* and *“Lack of continuous Islamic education affects my professional practice”* both recorded weighted means of 3.68. These findings suggest that some graduates perceive insufficient institutional support for the practice of Islamic values in workplace settings and recognize the importance of continuing religious and professional development after graduation. The results indicate that maintaining the influence of Islamic education may require ongoing learning opportunities and supportive organizational environments.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that while Islamic Studies education contributes positively to professional identity formation, graduates continue to face challenges related to workplace expectations, organizational culture, social influences, and professional demands. These factors may affect the extent to which Islamic principles are consistently integrated into professional practice.

The findings support previous studies highlighting the challenges faced by Muslim professionals in integrating religious values into workplace environments. (Memon et al., 2024; Succarie, 2024) emphasized that professional identity formation within Islamic educational contexts involves continuous negotiation between personal values and professional expectations. As graduates enter diverse workplaces, they may encounter situations where organizational norms differ from their religious convictions.

Similarly, (Berger et al., 2017; Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025) noted that globalization and changing workplace environments create new challenges for maintaining Islamic identity and values in professional contexts. Their findings suggest that Muslim professionals often navigate complex social and organizational settings that require balancing faith-based commitments with professional responsibilities.

The results are also consistent with the findings of (Abdullah et al., 2019; Chupradit et al., 2022), who reported that Islamic Studies graduates frequently encounter workplace conditions that affect the application of Islamic principles and ethical values. Furthermore, (Amirudin et al., 2026) argued that continuous religious learning and reflective practice are essential for sustaining ethical behavior and professional integrity in contemporary work environments.

The findings provide support for Professional Identity Formation Theory, which suggests that professional identity develops through the interaction between educational experiences and workplace realities (Mpangeva & Braine, 2024; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019) Although Islamic Studies education contributes to the development of ethical values and professional commitments, the challenges identified in the study indicate that professional identity continues to evolve as graduates interact with organizational structures, social expectations, and workplace cultures.

The findings also align with Social Identity Theory, which proposes that individuals derive their identity from membership in social and cultural groups. The challenges reported by respondents suggest that professional environments may sometimes create competing expectations that require graduates to negotiate between their religious identity and professional roles. This process reflects the dynamic nature of identity formation and the influence of contextual factors on professional behavior.

Future studies may explore the specific workplace factors that facilitate or hinder the application of Islamic values in professional settings. Comparative research involving graduates from different academic disciplines and employment sectors may provide deeper insights into variations in workplace experiences. Additionally, qualitative studies using interviews or focus group discussions may offer a richer understanding of how Muslim professionals navigate ethical dilemmas, workplace expectations, and religious commitments in diverse professional environments. Longitudinal studies may also examine how these challenges evolve throughout different stages of professional development.

5. Proposed Curriculum Enhancement

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Curriculum enhancement is essential to ensure that academic programs remain responsive to graduates' professional needs and evolving workplace demands. In the context of Islamic Studies education, curriculum improvement can strengthen the integration of Islamic values, professional competencies, and practical experiences that contribute to professional identity formation. The respondents' perceptions regarding proposed curriculum enhancements are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Mean Distribution of the Respondents by Proposed Curriculum Enhancement

Statement Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Islamic Studies curriculum should include more practical application.	4.40	Strongly Agree
2. Internship or practicum aligned with Islamic principles should be strengthened.	3.70	Agree
3. Courses integrating professional ethics and Islamic teachings should be added.	4.44	Strongly Agree
4. Career-oriented training should be included in the curriculum.	4.30	Strongly Agree
5. Continuous learning programs for graduates should be developed.	4.66	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.29	Strongly Agree

The interpretation scale used to classify the respondents' ratings for the proposed curriculum enhancement is presented in Table 10a.

Table 10a. Interpretation Scale

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 10 shows that the respondents strongly supported various curriculum enhancement initiatives, as reflected by the overall mean of 4.29, interpreted as Strongly Agree. The findings suggest that while graduates recognize the positive influence of Islamic Studies education on their professional identity, they also perceive opportunities for improving the curriculum to better address contemporary professional and societal demands.

Among the indicators, “*Continuous learning programs for graduates should be developed*” obtained the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.66$). This finding indicates that respondents strongly value lifelong learning opportunities that extend beyond formal university education. The result suggests that graduates recognize the importance of continuous professional and religious development in maintaining the relevance of Islamic knowledge and adapting to changing workplace environments. Continuous learning programs may provide graduates with opportunities to strengthen professional competencies, update their knowledge, and reinforce Islamic values throughout their careers.

The statement “*Courses integrating professional ethics and Islamic teachings should be added*” received the second highest weighted mean ($M = 4.44$). This finding demonstrates the graduates' desire for stronger integration between Islamic teachings and professional practice. Respondents appear to recognize the importance of preparing students to address ethical challenges in contemporary workplaces through a curriculum that explicitly connects Islamic principles with professional responsibilities.

Similarly, “*Islamic Studies curriculum should include more practical application*” obtained a weighted mean of 4.40, indicating strong support for experiential and application-based learning. The finding suggests that graduates perceive value in educational activities that allow students to apply Islamic knowledge in real-life contexts rather than focusing solely on theoretical instruction.

The statement “*Career-oriented training should be included in the curriculum*” recorded a weighted mean of 4.30, indicating that respondents support initiatives that enhance employability, workplace readiness, and career development. This finding reflects the increasing expectation that higher education institutions prepare students not only for religious and intellectual growth but also for successful participation in professional environments.

Although still interpreted as Agree, “*Internship or practicum aligned with Islamic principles should be strengthened*” obtained the lowest weighted mean ($M = 3.70$). While respondents generally supported the enhancement of internship opportunities, the relatively lower score may suggest differences in perceptions regarding the availability, relevance, or implementation of such programs. Nevertheless, the finding highlights the importance of providing structured professional experiences that allow students to apply Islamic values within workplace settings.

Overall, the results indicate that graduates advocate for a more practice-oriented, ethically grounded, and career-responsive curriculum that supports both professional competence and Islamic identity formation. The findings are consistent with recent literature emphasizing the need for Islamic education curricula to adapt to contemporary professional and societal challenges. (Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025; Lahmar, 2020) argued that Islamic education should balance religious foundations with practical competencies to ensure graduates remain relevant in a globalized environment. Similarly, (Khovi et al., 2024; Malizal, 2025) emphasized that Islamic educational institutions must continuously reform curricula to address changing social, technological, and professional demands while preserving core Islamic values.

The strong support for integrating professional ethics into the curriculum aligns with the findings of (Succarie, 2024), who emphasized that Islamic education plays an important role in developing ethically grounded professionals capable of navigating complex workplace environments. Furthermore, (Amirudin et al., 2026; Bz et al., 2024; Ritonga et al., 2025) found that Islamic educational experiences are most effective when students are provided with opportunities to apply values-based learning in practical and professional contexts.

The emphasis on career-oriented training and continuous learning also supports the observations of (Abdullah et al., 2019; Musthan & Laksono, 2026), who highlighted the importance of employability skills, professional development, and lifelong learning among Islamic Studies graduates. Their study suggested that graduates benefit from educational experiences that combine disciplinary knowledge with workplace competencies and professional preparation.

The findings support Professional Identity Formation Theory, which emphasizes that professional identity develops through educational experiences, practical engagement, and continuous professional learning (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2019). The respondents’ strong support for practical applications, ethics integration, and lifelong learning suggests that professional identity formation is an ongoing process that extends beyond graduation and requires continuous reinforcement through educational and professional experiences.

The findings also reinforce Experiential Learning Theory, which proposes that meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively apply knowledge in real-world contexts. The respondents’ support for internships, practical applications, and career-oriented training indicates the importance of experiential learning opportunities in strengthening the connection between Islamic knowledge and professional practice.

Future studies may evaluate the effectiveness of specific curriculum interventions designed to strengthen professional identity formation among Islamic Studies students. Comparative research involving multiple universities may provide broader evidence regarding curriculum practices and graduate outcomes. Additionally, future research may explore the perspectives of employers, faculty members, and educational administrators regarding the competencies required of Islamic Studies graduates in contemporary workplaces. Longitudinal studies may also examine how curriculum reforms influence graduates’ professional identity, employability, and career progression over time.

Limitations

This study was conducted among 50 graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program at Mindanao State University–Maguindanao using purposive sampling. Consequently, the findings reflect the experiences and perceptions of graduates within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and should not be generalized to all Muslim university graduates in the Philippines. Future

studies involving multiple higher education institutions and larger, more diverse samples are recommended to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

D. Conclusion

This study found that Islamic Studies education had a significant influence on the professional identity of Muslim university graduates in the Southern Philippines. The findings revealed that graduates perceived their Islamic Studies education as instrumental in shaping professional values, strengthening their sense of responsibility and integrity, guiding ethical decision-making, and fostering adherence to Islamic principles in their professional lives.

The study further found that the knowledge and competencies acquired through Islamic Studies education remained highly relevant to graduates' current professions. In particular, Islamic ethics and values, communication skills, knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith, and understanding of Shari'ah continued to support professional practice and workplace engagement across various occupational settings.

The findings also revealed that graduates encountered challenges in aligning professional responsibilities with Islamic teachings. Workplace demands, social and cultural pressures, limited institutional support, lack of continuous Islamic learning opportunities, and time constraints were identified as factors that affected the consistent application of Islamic values in professional environments.

Furthermore, the respondents expressed strong support for curriculum enhancement initiatives, including the integration of more practical learning experiences, professional ethics courses grounded in Islamic teachings, career-oriented training, strengthened internship opportunities, and continuous learning programs for graduates.

Overall, the study demonstrated that Islamic Studies education contributes substantially to professional identity formation by integrating religious knowledge, ethical values, and professional competencies. These findings suggest that strengthening practice-oriented and professionally responsive components of the curriculum can further enhance graduates' ability to apply Islamic principles effectively in diverse professional contexts.

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Any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

F. Author Contribution Statement

HMU, SLT, RAG, and SML contributed to the preparation, revision, and finalization of the manuscript. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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