

Ethical Curriculum Development: Insights From Islamic Epistemology Towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Mahmudulhassan¹, Saif Uddin Ahmed Khondoker², Muhammad Abuzar³

¹Department of Islamic Education, Islamic Arabic University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

²Faculty of Islamic Studies, Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

³Department of Psychology, University of Malakand, Pakistan

[¹hassanfaruky@gmail.com](mailto:hassanfaruky@gmail.com), [²ksua1980@gmail.com](mailto:ksua1980@gmail.com), [³abuzarghafari885@gmail.com](mailto:abuzarghafari885@gmail.com)

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to explore the integration of Islamic epistemology in ethical curriculum development to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research focuses on aligning ethical values derived from Islamic teachings with modern educational practices, offering a transformative framework that contributes to global sustainability goals. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating ethical principles, such as justice (adl), beneficence (ihsan), and accountability (amanah), into curriculum design to foster responsible global citizens. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework combines Islamic epistemological principles with the humanistic educational model, illustrating how ethical dimensions can shape pedagogy, learning outcomes, and societal impact. **Literature Review:** The literature review highlights the convergence of ethical frameworks in Islamic education with contemporary educational theories. Key references include works on Islamic epistemology, ethics, and SDG-related educational initiatives. This review identifies gaps in current curriculum models that fail to emphasize ethical values as foundational elements. **Methods:** A qualitative research method was employed, involving content analysis of Islamic epistemological texts, curriculum policies, and case studies from Islamic educational institutions. Data were gathered through document analysis and interviews with curriculum experts, educators, and policymakers. **Results:** The findings reveal that integrating Islamic epistemology into curriculum development fosters holistic education, bridging spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions. Such integration enhances moral responsibility, critical thinking, and sustainable practices among learners. **Implications:** The implications of this study are significant for policymakers and educators seeking to design curricula that align with SDG principles. By emphasizing ethical values, the proposed framework promotes inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and social justice, directly contributing to Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). **Novelty:** The study's novelty lies in offering a structured approach to ethical curriculum development grounded in Islamic epistemology, addressing both spiritual and material dimensions of education. It advocates for a paradigm shift where ethics is not merely an addition but a core component of curriculum design.

Keywords: ethical curriculum, islamic epistemology, sustainable development goals (sdgs), education reform, holistic learning.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in fostering quality education (Goal 4) and promoting peace and justice (Goal 16). However, contemporary curriculum development often prioritizes technical and cognitive skills while neglecting ethical values that are essential for holistic human development. The integration of ethical principles into education is crucial to addressing global challenges, such as inequality, environmental degradation, and moral crises. Islamic epistemology, with its emphasis on justice (*adl*), beneficence (*ihsan*), and accountability (*amanah*), offers a rich framework for embedding ethics into curriculum design. This study examines how insights from Islamic epistemology can contribute to ethical curriculum development aligned with the SDGs [1].

Problem Gap. Despite growing awareness of the importance of ethics in education, existing curriculum models often lack a structured approach to integrating ethical values as core components. Secular frameworks may overlook the spiritual dimensions of ethics, while traditional religious curricula may not adequately address contemporary global challenges. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive model that bridges these divides by integrating Islamic ethical principles with modern educational practices. **Significance of the Theme.** This research is significant as it addresses the urgent need to balance cognitive, spiritual, and moral dimensions in education. By leveraging Islamic epistemology, this study offers a transformative perspective on curriculum development, fostering individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also morally responsible and socially engaged [2].

Conceptual Framework. The study is grounded in the intersection of Islamic epistemology and educational theory. It explores the integration of core ethical principles, such as *tawhid* (oneness of God), *adl*, *ihsan*, and *amanah*, into pedagogical practices. This framework aligns with the SDGs by promoting holistic education that nurtures ethical, intellectual, and social competencies, contributing to sustainable global development.

In today's multicultural and interconnected world, the development of ethical curricula that resonate with diverse perspectives and values is paramount. Within the realm of educational discourse, the integration of ethical principles grounded in Islamic epistemology offers a profound avenue for fostering moral development and nurturing ethical awareness among students. This article embarks on a qualitative exploration of ethical curriculum development, drawing insights from the rich tapestry of Islamic thought and epistemology [1]. Islamic epistemology serves as the cornerstone of knowledge acquisition within Islamic thought, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of knowledge, its sources, and its implications for human conduct. Rooted in the Quranic revelations, Prophetic traditions, and scholarly interpretations, Islamic epistemology offers profound insights into the nature of knowledge and its ethical dimensions. Central to Islamic epistemology is the distinction between revealed knowledge, emanating from divine sources, and acquired knowledge, obtained through human faculties and inquiry [2].

Revelation, comprising the Quran and Hadith, occupies a central position as the primary source of knowledge in Islamic epistemology. The Quran, considered the word of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad, serves as the ultimate guide for believers, offering divine guidance on matters of faith, morality, and conduct. Supplementing the Quran, the Hadith provides supplementary guidance and elucidation of Quranic teachings, forming the foundational sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology [3]. Islamic epistemology acknowledges the importance of reason (*‘aql*) as a secondary source of knowledge, complementing revelation. The synthesis of revelation and reason forms the basis of Islamic ethical epistemology, wherein ethical norms and principles are derived from divine guidance as well as rational deliberation. Grounded in revelation and reason,

Islamic epistemology offers a robust foundation for ethical curriculum development and moral education within Islamic societies [4].

One approach to ethical curriculum development entails the integration of ethical principles across academic disciplines, thereby embedding ethical considerations into all aspects of learning. By infusing ethical content into subjects such as literature, science, history, and mathematics, educators provide students with opportunities to explore ethical dilemmas, analyze moral perspectives, and apply ethical reasoning in real-world contexts [5]. Integrating Islamic values into the curriculum is essential for fostering ethical awareness and moral development among students within Islamic educational contexts. By infusing Islamic values across subject areas and grade levels, educators can create a curriculum that reflects the holistic vision of morality inherent in Islamic teachings. This can be achieved through various approaches, including the incorporation of Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions emphasizing ethical principles, and the exploration of Islamic ethics within specific cultural and historical contexts.

Effective pedagogy plays a crucial role in fostering ethical awareness, moral reasoning, and virtuous behavior among students. Employing appropriate pedagogical strategies, such as experiential learning, cooperative inquiry, and Socratic dialogue, educators can integrate Islamic values into the curriculum and promote ethical development among learners [6]. Incorporating Islamic epistemology into ethical curriculum development presents both challenges and opportunities for educators and educational institutions. Understanding and navigating these challenges while leveraging the opportunities can lead to the creation of more effective and culturally relevant ethical curricula rooted in Islamic principles [7]. Ethical curriculum development informed by Islamic epistemology holds immense potential for nurturing ethical awareness, moral reasoning, and virtuous behavior among students. By integrating Islamic values into the curriculum and employing effective pedagogical strategies, educators can empower students to navigate complex ethical challenges with wisdom, compassion, and integrity [8].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical curriculum development is a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development, as it molds learners into responsible individuals committed to societal and global well-being. Islamic epistemology offers profound insights into this process by integrating ethical and spiritual dimensions with academic content. Grounded in the Qur'anic principles of *Tawhid* (oneness of God), *Adl* (justice), and *Akhlaq* (morality), Islamic epistemology emphasizes the development of holistic education frameworks that nurture intellect and character simultaneously [7].

Incorporating these principles into curricula ensures alignment with SDG goals, such as quality education (SDG 4) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). Islamic teachings advocate for inclusivity, emphasizing the universal accessibility of knowledge (*‘Ilm*) as a divine trust. Furthermore, the integration of ethics and sustainability resonates with SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) by fostering a sense of accountability among learners [7].

Scholars argue that applying *Maqashid Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) to curriculum design aligns educational goals with broader societal needs, ensuring that curricula contribute to eradicating poverty (SDG 1) and promoting peace and justice (SDG 16). Examples of successful implementation demonstrate that when curricula prioritize ethical considerations and community engagement, they create a balance between individual aspirations and collective responsibilities [7].

Thus, insights from Islamic epistemology provide a robust foundation for ethical curriculum development, advancing not only educational excellence but also global sustainability.

Table 1. Ethical Curriculum Development: Insights From Islamic Epistemology Towards SDGs

Aspect	Insights From Islamic Epistemology	Relevance to SDGs
Core Principles	<i>Tawhid</i> (Oneness of God): Unity of knowledge and purpose.	Supports holistic education (SDG 4).
	<i>Adl</i> (Justice): Equity and fairness in access to education.	Reduces inequalities (SDG 10).
	<i>Akhlaq</i> (Morality): Focus on character-building and ethical conduct.	Promotes peace and justice (SDG 16).
Knowledge Accessibility	<i>‘Ilm</i> (Knowledge): Knowledge as a divine trust accessible to all.	Ensures inclusivity in education (SDG 4).
	Emphasis on lifelong learning as a duty for personal and societal development.	Encourages lifelong learning opportunities (SDG 4).
Ethical Integration	Combining spiritual and academic knowledge to nurture responsible global citizens.	Enhances responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).
Maqashid Shariah Framework	Aligning educational objectives with the preservation of faith, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth.	Contributes to eradicating poverty (SDG 1) and ensuring well-being (SDG 3).
Community Engagement	Encouraging collaboration and shared responsibility in education development.	Builds partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17).
Practical Applications	Case studies show ethical curriculum fosters societal contributions and professional integrity.	Empower individuals to promote justice, equality, and sustainability (SDGs 5, 10, 16).

This table highlights the alignment of Islamic epistemological insights with the global vision of sustainable development, emphasizing the role of ethical curriculum development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining literature review and content analysis, to explore ethical curriculum development within an Islamic context. The research begins with a comprehensive literature review, synthesizing diverse sources like research papers, books, Hadith, and the Quran to understand ethical curriculum practices in Islamic education thoroughly. Subsequently, content analysis is employed to analyze textual content, identifying core themes and principles relevant to ethical curriculum development [7].

Through rigorous analysis of these sources, the study aims to elucidate the ethical frameworks and methodologies inherent in integrating Islamic values into educational curricula. Findings from both literature review and content analysis are then integrated to develop a comprehensive understanding of ethical considerations and practices in curriculum development within Islamic education [8].

Methodological rigor is maintained throughout the research process to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. Ethical considerations, particularly in the interpretation of sacred texts, are carefully observed to respect cultural sensitivities and religious beliefs, thereby upholding the ethical integrity of the research [8].

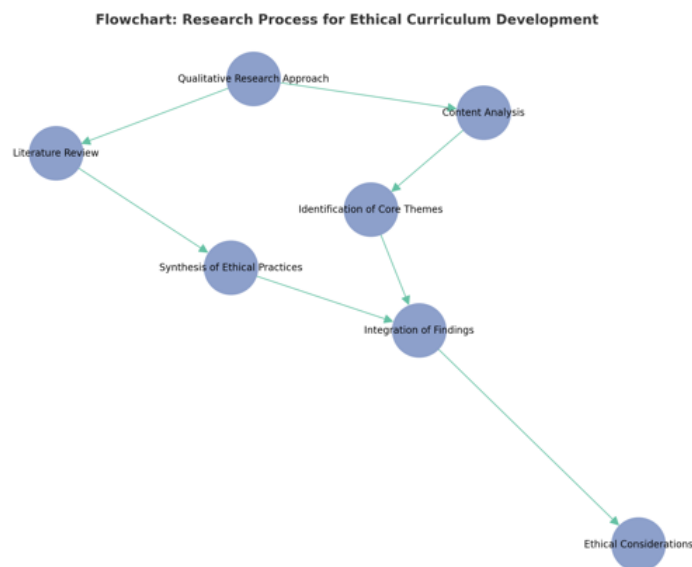


Figure 1. Flowchart Format

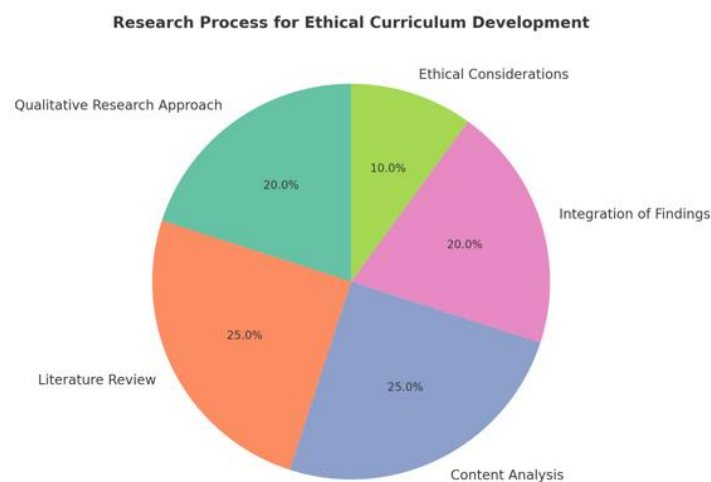


Figure 2. Research Process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic epistemology: foundations of knowledge

Islamic epistemology serves as the cornerstone of knowledge acquisition within Islamic thought, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of knowledge, its sources, and its implications for human conduct. Rooted in the Quranic revelations, Prophetic traditions, and scholarly interpretations, Islamic epistemology offers profound insights into the nature of knowledge and its ethical dimensions. There are two main types of knowledge accepted by many Islamic scholars: revealed knowledge and derived knowledge. The first type of knowledge, also known as *al-wahyu*, can be further broken into two more types; instinctive knowledge and the knowledge revealed to us through the Prophet (pbuh).

In Islamic epistemology, revelation occupies a central position as the primary source of knowledge. The Quran, considered the word of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad, serves as the ultimate guide for believers, offering divine guidance on matters of faith,

morality, and conduct. Additionally, the Hadith, comprising the sayings and actions of the Prophet, provides supplementary guidance and elucidation of Quranic teachings. Together, the Quran and Hadith form the foundational sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology, offering comprehensive guidance for believers seeking to navigate the complexities of life. Islamic scholars have extensively studied the Quran and Hadith to derive legal rulings (fiqh), theological doctrines (aqidah), ethical principles (akhlaq), and insights into various fields of knowledge. The interpretive tradition within Islam, known as tafsir, involves rigorous textual analysis and hermeneutical interpretation to extract meanings and principles relevant to contemporary contexts. Through tafsir, scholars explore the layers of meaning embedded within the Quranic text, unveiling its timeless wisdom and ethical imperatives [9].

Furthermore, Islamic epistemology acknowledges the importance of reason ('aql) as a secondary source of knowledge, complementing revelation. While revelation provides divine guidance, reason serves as a tool for critical inquiry, rational reflection, and ethical discernment. Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), and Al-Ghazali elaborated on the compatibility between reason and revelation, advocating for the harmonious integration of both faculties in the pursuit of knowledge and ethical conduct [10], [11]. The synthesis of revelation and reason forms the basis of Islamic ethical epistemology, wherein ethical norms and principles are derived from divine guidance as well as rational deliberation. Islamic ethics encompasses a holistic vision of morality, addressing individual conduct, interpersonal relationships, social justice, and environmental stewardship. By grounding ethical knowledge in revelation and reason, Islamic epistemology offers a robust foundation for ethical curriculum development and moral education within Islamic societies.

The second type of knowledge is acquired knowledge. This type of knowledge is also from Allah - but Humans are supposed to use Islamic Methodology and the faculties given by Allah to acquire this knowledge. Through their senses, research, and deep thinking, can they conceptualize, acquire, comprehend, and search for this type of knowledge. Again, sincerity in the search is an important prior. There are two types of Knowledge in the Qur'an. They are a) Ilm (knowledge) which belongs to God wherein there is no question of 'zan' (conjecture) (Q:4:157). b) Ilm (knowledge) which progresses from raib to yaqin.

Ethical curriculum development: principles and approaches

One approach to ethical curriculum development is the integration of ethical principles across academic disciplines, thereby embedding ethical considerations into all aspects of learning. By infusing ethical content into subjects such as literature, science, history, and mathematics, educators provide students with opportunities to explore ethical dilemmas, analyze moral perspectives, and apply ethical reasoning in real-world contexts [12]. For instance, in a literature class, students may examine literary works that raise ethical questions or depict moral dilemmas, prompting discussions on empathy, justice, and ethical decision-making. Similarly, in science education, students may explore the ethical implications of technological advancements, environmental sustainability, and biomedical research, fostering critical thinking about ethical responsibilities and consequences [13], [14].

By integrating ethical principles across disciplines, educators cultivate a holistic understanding of ethics that transcends disciplinary boundaries, preparing students to navigate complex ethical challenges in their personal and professional lives [15].

Integrating Islamic values into the curriculum

Integrating Islamic values into the curriculum is essential for fostering ethical awareness and moral development among students within Islamic educational contexts.

Islamic values, derived from the Quran, Hadith, and scholarly interpretations, provide a framework for ethical conduct and guide individuals in their personal, social, and professional lives. By infusing Islamic values across subject areas and grade levels, educators can create a curriculum that reflects the holistic vision of morality inherent in Islamic teachings.

Incorporating Quranic Verses and Prophetic Traditions

One approach to integrating Islamic values into the curriculum is the incorporation of Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions (Hadith) emphasizing ethical principles such as justice, compassion, honesty, and humility [16]. These sacred texts serve as primary sources of guidance for Muslims, offering timeless wisdom and moral guidance relevant to contemporary issues. Educators can select relevant Quranic verses and Hadiths that align with the themes and topics covered in various subjects, thereby infusing ethical content into the curriculum [17].

For example, in a social studies class discussing principles of justice and equity, educators may incorporate Quranic verses emphasizing the importance of fairness and impartiality in decision-making (Quran 4:135). Similarly, in a language arts class focused on empathy and compassion, educators may introduce Hadiths that highlight the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on kindness and empathy towards others.

Exploring Islamic Ethics in Context

Another approach to integrating Islamic values into the curriculum is the exploration of Islamic ethics within specific cultural and historical contexts [18]. By examining ethical dilemmas, moral exemplars, and ethical debates within Islamic civilization, students gain a deeper understanding of the practical application of Islamic values in diverse contexts. Educators can incorporate case studies, historical narratives, and biographical accounts that illustrate ethical decision-making and moral virtues from Islamic perspectives [19].

For instance, in a history class studying the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, students may explore the ethical principles underlying scientific advancements, cultural achievements, and political governance during that period [20]. By examining the lives of Muslim scholars, rulers, and philanthropists who exemplified Islamic virtues such as wisdom, generosity, and justice, students gain insights into the lived experiences of individuals guided by Islamic values [21].

Pedagogical strategies for ethical education

Effective pedagogy plays a crucial role in fostering ethical awareness, moral reasoning, and virtuous behavior among students. In the context of ethical education within Islamic frameworks, employing appropriate pedagogical strategies is essential for engaging students in critical reflection, ethical inquiry, and ethical decision-making [22]. This section explores various pedagogical strategies that can be utilized to integrate Islamic values into the curriculum and promote ethical development among learners.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning engages students in hands-on experiences that allow them to apply ethical principles in real-life situations. By immersing students in authentic scenarios and ethical dilemmas, educators provide opportunities for active participation, critical reflection, and moral growth [23]. Through activities such as role-playing, simulations, and service-learning projects, students develop empathy, ethical reasoning skills, and a deeper understanding of ethical responsibilities.

For example, in an Islamic studies class, students may engage in a service-learning project that involves volunteering at a local soup kitchen or organizing a fundraiser for a charitable cause. Through this experience, students learn about the importance of compassion, generosity, and social responsibility in Islam, while also developing practical skills for addressing societal needs [24].

Cooperative Inquiry

Cooperative inquiry involves collaborative learning experiences in which students work together to explore ethical questions, analyze moral dilemmas, and construct shared understandings of ethical issues. By engaging in dialogue, debate, and collective problem-solving, students develop critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication skills, and a sense of ethical community. Cooperative inquiry encourages active participation, peer interaction, and mutual respect among learners, fostering a supportive learning environment conducive to ethical development [25]. In a classroom setting, cooperative inquiry can take various forms, such as group discussions, debates, case studies, and collaborative projects. For example, students may form small groups to discuss ethical dilemmas presented in Islamic texts or contemporary issues facing Muslim communities. Through structured dialogue and reflection, students deepen their understanding of Islamic values and their application in everyday life [26].

Socratic Dialogue

Socratic dialogue, inspired by the teaching methods of the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, involves asking probing questions, challenging assumptions, and engaging students in critical reflection on ethical issues. By facilitating open-ended discussions and encouraging students to articulate their beliefs, values, and reasoning processes, educators stimulate intellectual curiosity, moral inquiry, and self-awareness. Socratic dialogue encourages active engagement, intellectual autonomy, and intellectual humility, fostering a culture of inquiry and dialogue conducive to ethical education [27], [28]. In an Islamic ethics class, educators may employ Socratic dialogue to explore foundational concepts such as justice, mercy, and wisdom in Islam. Through thought-provoking questions and guided discussions, students deepen their understanding of Islamic values and grapple with complex ethical dilemmas. Socratic dialogue encourages students to examine their beliefs critically, consider alternative perspectives, and develop reasoned judgments informed by Islamic principles [29].

Challenges and opportunities

Incorporating Islamic epistemology into ethical curriculum development presents both challenges and opportunities for educators and educational institutions. Understanding and navigating these challenges while leveraging the opportunities can lead to the creation of more effective and culturally relevant ethical curricula rooted in Islamic principles [30].

Challenges

Curricular Alignment

One of the primary challenges is aligning the ethical curriculum with national or international educational standards while integrating Islamic values. Balancing the requirements of mainstream educational frameworks with the unique perspectives of Islamic epistemology may require careful negotiation and adaptation.

Teacher Training and Capacity Building

Educators tasked with implementing an ethical curriculum grounded in Islamic epistemology may require specialized training and support. Building the capacity of teachers to understand and effectively integrate Islamic values into their teaching practices is essential but may pose logistical and resource-related challenges [31], [32].

Resource Constraints

Access to appropriate educational resources, including textbooks, teaching materials, and technology, may be limited, particularly in under-resourced schools or regions. Developing high-quality, culturally sensitive resources that reflect Islamic values and principles can be time-consuming and costly [33], [34].

Cultural Sensitivity

Ethical curriculum development within Islamic contexts must navigate diverse cultural norms, values, and interpretations of Islamic teachings. Ensuring cultural sensitivity and inclusivity while promoting Islamic ethical principles requires a nuanced understanding of local contexts and community perspectives [35], [36].

Opportunities

Cultivating Ethical Awareness

Ethical curriculum development grounded in Islamic epistemology provides an opportunity to cultivate ethical awareness and moral reasoning among students. By integrating Islamic values into the curriculum, educators can foster a deeper understanding of ethical principles and their relevance to personal and societal well-being [37].

Promoting Social Cohesion

Ethical education rooted in Islamic epistemology has the potential to promote social cohesion and harmony within diverse communities. Emphasizing justice, compassion, and empathy can foster a sense of shared identity and mutual respect among individuals from different backgrounds [38], [39].

Strengthening Identity and Belonging

For Muslim students, an ethical curriculum informed by Islamic epistemology can serve as a source of identity reinforcement and spiritual nourishment. Integrating Islamic values into the curriculum helps students connect their faith with their academic studies, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose [40].

Fostering Global Citizenship

Ethical curriculum development from an Islamic epistemological perspective can contribute to the cultivation of global citizenship values such as empathy, solidarity, and environmental stewardship. By instilling a sense of moral responsibility towards humanity and the planet, educators can empower students to become ethical leaders and change agents in their communities and beyond [41], [42].

Navigating the challenges and opportunities inherent in ethical curriculum development rooted in Islamic epistemology requires collaboration, creativity, and commitment from educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. By addressing challenges such as curricular alignment, teacher training, resource constraints, and cultural sensitivity

while leveraging opportunities to cultivate ethical awareness, promote social cohesion, strengthen identity, and foster global citizenship, educational institutions can develop ethical curricula that reflect the timeless wisdom of Islamic teachings and prepare students to navigate complex ethical challenges in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of integrating Islamic epistemology into ethical curriculum development to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The findings demonstrate that embedding core Islamic ethical principles, such as tawhid (oneness of God), adl (justice), ihsan (beneficence), and amanah (accountability), into educational frameworks fosters a holistic approach to learning. This approach nurtures intellectual competence, moral responsibility, and social consciousness among learners, directly contributing to the global agenda for sustainable development. By addressing both spiritual and material dimensions, such a curriculum prepares individuals to tackle contemporary challenges, including social inequality, environmental degradation, and moral crises, through an ethical and responsible lens. However, the study also reveals significant gaps in current educational practices, where ethical values are often treated as peripheral rather than integral components of curriculum design. Secular models tend to focus on technical and cognitive outcomes, while religious curricula may lack alignment with global and contemporary issues. This underscores the urgent need for a paradigm shift in curriculum development that prioritizes ethics as a foundational element. Recommendations. Policy Integration: Policymakers should incorporate ethical principles derived from Islamic epistemology into national and institutional education policies to ensure alignment with SDG goals. Curriculum Design: Educators and curriculum developers should design learning frameworks that integrate ethics across disciplines, emphasizing holistic development. Teacher Training: Training programs should equip educators with the skills to teach ethical principles effectively, connecting them to real-world applications. Collaborative Research: Further studies should explore how Islamic epistemology can be adapted and integrated into diverse educational systems worldwide, fostering inclusivity and mutual respect. Community Engagement: Schools and institutions should collaborate with communities to contextualize ethical values in education, addressing local and global challenges.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper, some are as chairman, member, financier, article translator, and final editor. All authors read and approved the final paper.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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