

Legal Education through Creed: Reforming Religious Pedagogy for Pluralistic Societies

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Abstract

Research Objective: This study examines the Center for General Education (CGED) at the International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) and evaluates how compulsory creed-based courses influence non-Shariah students' legal awareness, ethical behavior, and normative understanding. Research Method: A mixed-methods empirical approach was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires, validated religious cognition scales, and semi-structured interviews. The analysis focused on students' internalization of legal norms, theological clarity, and behavioral transformation. **Results:** Students who completed CGED courses demonstrated improved comprehension of Islamic legal principles, stronger ethical reasoning, and greater adherence to civic and religious norms. They also showed an increased ability to distinguish between legitimate religious obligations and cultural misconceptions. Positive spillover effects were reported within families and social circles. Findings and Implications: The integration of classical sources, interactive pedagogy, and digital tools enhanced student engagement and legal literacy. Legally structured creed-based education has broader societal fostering religious moderation legal implications, and consciousness in pluralistic societies. Conclusion: When legally structured and pedagogically sound, creed-based education significantly enhances students' moral and civic development. Islamic legal epistemology remains relevant in modern university contexts, offering a viable model for educational policy reform. **Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence supporting the integration of religious instruction into national university curricula while addressing legal and educational challenges in South Asian Islamic higher education. Limitations and **Suggestions:** The research is limited to a single institution (IIUC), which may restrict generalizability. The focus on non-Shariah students may not fully represent broader populations. Future studies should include multiple institutions and investigate the long-term sustainability of behavioral change.

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Introduction

Islamic education at the tertiary level in South Asia faces not only pedagogical and theological challenges but also significant legal implications concerning the establishment of national education frameworks. In countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, inadequate government funding, insufficient administrative oversight, and inconsistencies in curricula have hindered the effective integration of Islamic teachings, particularly those related to creed (aqidah), into higher education. Legally, this shortfall reflects a failure to fulfill constitutional obligations on educational equity and religious freedom, as well as a neglect of the developmental objectives outlined in national education policies. The fragmented nature of religious and secular educational institutions, which often operate in parallel with limited regulatory collaboration, underscores the need for cohesive legal frameworks. Such structures are essential to ensure alignment, accountability, and the standardization of Islamic education in accordance with both national and international human rights standards.¹

The concept of Sahih Aqidah (*authentic Islamic creed*) is critical in contemporary discussions of Islamic law and education. It is not merely a matter of personal belief; it shapes behavior, values, and legal understanding in Muslim societies. The absence of creed instruction in universities creates a gap that may allow harmful ideologies to proliferate, potentially leading to radicalization, conflict, and violations of both domestic laws and broader norms of peaceful coexistence. Since Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) encompasses all aspects of life, including ethics, governance, and education, its exclusion from university curricula represents a missed opportunity to foster legal awareness and civic responsibility through Islamic legal principles.²

This neglect undermines the state's role as the legal guardian of educational direction. Without clear legal directives or policies emphasizing the importance of Islamic creed education, universities risk becoming arenas for ideological contestation rather than spaces for moral and civic development. While the resulting diversity of belief systems is legally permissible, it often lacks the interpretive safeguards necessary to prevent normative misrepresentation or social fragmentation. In this context, scholars of Islamic legal theory have called for the integration of religious education into secular legal systems to ensure that creed instruction aligns with the principles of moderation, legal pluralism, and the common good (*maslahah*).³

¹ Musleh Harry et al., "Examining the Provision of Legal and Religious Education to Islamic Families to Safeguard the Rights and Well-Being of Women and Children: A Case Study Conducted in Malang Regency, East Samarah: *Iurnal* Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum 2024. https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i3.19566; Finsa Adhi Pratama et al., "Imposing Sanctions on School Students in East Kolaka, Indonesia: Perspectives of Islamic Law and Islamic Education," Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam, 2024, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.21898; Muhammad Shabir U, M Burga, and Muljono Damopolii, "The Phenomenon of Punishment at Pesantren in South Sulawesi: An Islamic Law and Islamic Education Approaches," Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam, 2023, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.18207.

² Qolbi Khoiri and Anisyah Rahmadania, "Problem Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Journal on Education*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i2.1117; PhD Engku Alwi and Engku Ahmad Zaki, "The Creed of Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamā'ah in Islamic Law Framework," *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i28s.4402; Muhammad Afif Ananta et al., "Peran Penting Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Membentuk Karakter Pribadi Yang Islami," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.47134/pjpi.v1i2.115.

³ Ummi Hanifaa and Meyniar Albina, 'Religious Moderation and Basic Rights in Education According to Islamic Perspective', *MAQOLAT: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2025 https://doi.org/10.58355/maqolat.v3i2.128; M Wahyudi and others, 'Optimizing the Advancementent of Islamic Education From the Lens of Islamic Law Philosophy', *ISTIFHAM: Journal Of Islamic Studies*, 2023 https://doi.org/10.71039/istifham.v1i2.26.

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Simultaneously, students in secular university settings often experience a form of legal disempowerment. They encounter conflicting normative systems without clear guidance on how to reconcile these with their religious obligations. The legal ramifications of this identity conflict are considerable, as they affect the absorption of law, the authority of religious norms, and the promotion of law-abiding citizenship.⁴ Research indicates that access to organized religious education, particularly when integrated into legal and civic programs, can enhance students' ethical judgment and reduce their susceptibility to unlawful conduct or extremist beliefs. Consequently, legal systems have a vested interest in supporting educational initiatives that harmonize personal convictions with the public legal framework.⁵

This study addresses the legal dimensions of creed-based education by examining the curricular innovations of the International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC), specifically through its Center for General Education (CGED). The university's institutionalization of Sahih Aqidah instruction through compulsory coursework functions not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a quasi-legal reform aimed at restoring normative clarity and integrity. The CGED courses, Basic Principles of Islam, Sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic Political Thought, and Life and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), serve as soft legal mechanisms, transmitting core values that align with the $maq\bar{a}sid$ al-shar \bar{i} 'ah (objectives of Islamic law), including justice, wisdom, and social cohesion.

Existing literature in both Islamic jurisprudence and comparative legal studies suggests that educational interventions grounded in authentic Islamic creed can mitigate legal fragmentation and foster a more cohesive, rights-conscious society. However, there is a notable lack of empirical research assessing the impact of such interventions on students' legal consciousness, ethical decision-making, and commitment to social norms. This study seeks to address that gap by evaluating the practical outcomes of CGED courses, framing Islamic creed education not only as a religious imperative but also as a legal strategy for cultivating responsible citizenship within a pluralistic legal environment.

The research aims to determine the extent to which CGED courses at IIUC promote legal and moral alignment with Sahih Aqidah among non-Shariah students. By examining how these courses address theological misconceptions, encourage normative behavior, and enhance broader social and legal awareness, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship at the intersection of Islamic theology, educational law, and policy. It advances the proposition that legally structured creed education can play a transformative role in strengthening both personal piety and civic virtue.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining legal analysis with empirical data collection to substantiate theoretical claims with observable outcomes. The focus on non-Shariah faculties is intentional, highlighting the universal relevance of creed education across academic disciplines. Ultimately, this research advocates for the legal institutionalization of Sahih Aqidah instruction as a means of fulfilling both religious and constitutional objectives, ensuring that higher education in Muslim societies produces graduates

⁴ Michael J. Broyde, "Religious Values in Secular Institutions?," *Journal of Law, Religion and State* 10, no. 1 (September 14, 2022): 53–85, https://doi.org/10.1163/22124810-10010002.

⁵ Hanifaa and Albina, "Religious Moderation and Basic Rights in Education According to Islamic Perspective"; Ivan Dodlek, "Values in Narratives: Religious Education as an Exercise in Emotional Rationality," *Religions*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101283; Ibrahim El-Sayed Ebaid, "Ethics and Accounting Education: Does Teaching Stand-Alone Religious Courses Affect Accounting Students' Ethical Decisions?," *Society and Business Review*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1108/sbr-07-2021-0102; F Alshehri, M Fotaki, and Saleema Kauser, "The Effects of Spirituality and Religiosity on the Ethical Judgment in Organizations," *Journal of Business Ethics* 174 (2020): 567–93, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04614-1.

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who are not only knowledgeable but also legally aware and ethically grounded.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods legal-empirical research design to assess the normative and behavioral implications of the Center for General Education (CGED) courses on students' understanding and embodiment of Sahih Aqidah within the framework of Islamic legal education at the International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC). The research integrated both quantitative and qualitative techniques to evaluate how the Islamic creed functioned as a foundation for legal consciousness and civic engagement. Moving beyond traditional normative legal analysis, this investigation emphasized empirical legal studies (ELS), focusing on the practical influence of legal-normative teachings embedded within the CGED curriculum. This approach captured the formation of belief and examined how Islamic legal obligations derived from Sahih Aqidah were interpreted and potentially enacted by students.

The participant pool comprised undergraduate students from non-Shariah faculties at IIUC who had completed at least one CGED course. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to reflect the diverse range of legal reasoning and ethical responses among students from various academic disciplines. Thirty participants were carefully selected, with attention given to gender, faculty affiliation, and academic level, thereby ensuring representation in line with the principles of legal pluralism and educational inclusivity commonly endorsed in legal-pedagogical research.

Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' comprehension of legal-normative concepts rooted in the Islamic creed, their ethical decision-making aligned with Islamic law, and their perceived duties under religiously informed legal frameworks. The questionnaire items were adapted from validated scales, specifically the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) and the Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM), and subsequently modified to reflect legal cognition.

For qualitative data collection, open-ended interviews and narrative prompts encouraged participants to elaborate on the legitimacy of Islamic norms, their interplay with formal legal concepts, and their reflections on the moral imperatives of Islamic law. All research instruments underwent review and validation by legal scholars specializing in Islamic jurisprudence to ensure normative and legal consistency. Conceptual references for these tools included instruments such as the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ-SF) and the Christian Ethical Beliefs Scale, which informed the operationalization of constructs such as normative authority, motivation for compliance, and ethical reasoning from a legal perspective.

Quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics and comparative tabulation to identify patterns in students' receptiveness to Islamic legal values, with particular attention to variables such as gender and faculty background. Qualitative data were systematically coded using socio-legal themes, including "legal norm internalization," "compliance behavior," and "perceived juridical legitimacy." The cross-analysis of both data types enabled triangulated interpretations, thereby strengthening the study's legal-research integrity.

Legal-ethical compliance was a cornerstone of this investigation. All participants received comprehensive information regarding their rights, including anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Given the inherent overlap between religious identity and legal self-conception, specific safeguards were implemented to respect theological sensitivity while upholding empirical neutrality, a practice consistent with Islamic legal-empirical methodology.

Despite these measures, certain methodological limitations persisted. The absence of a control group and the reliance on subjective self-reporting limited the scope for causal inference. Furthermore, the study's focus on a single institution may have restricted the broader applicability of its findings. Additionally, legal interpretations of Sahih Aqidah may exhibit regional variations. Nonetheless, these limitations were mitigated through data triangulation and the application of a focused legal-educational framework.

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Results and Discussions

Knowledge Enhancement and Legal Literacy Development

To evaluate students' knowledge development regarding Sahih Aqidah through CGED courses at IIUC, a range of recognized assessment tools was employed to capture the multidimensional nature of religious knowledge acquisition and its implications for legal understanding. These included self-assessments, structured questionnaires, and qualitative reflections, aligned with scholarly models such as the Religious Schema Scale (RSS) and experiential, character-based scoring systems designed to measure jurisprudential comprehension.

Students demonstrated significant cognitive growth in their understanding of Islamic knowledge, particularly in the areas of legal reasoning and jurisprudence. Seventy percent of respondents reported that the CGED courses substantially enhanced their grasp of core Islamic principles, especially those forming the basis of Islamic legal theory. Another 30% expressed moderate agreement with this finding, and none disagreed. These results confirm that organized and compulsory Islamic education exerts a considerable influence on student learning, particularly in building the foundational knowledge required for legal interpretation and application. This outcome is consistent with earlier research highlighting the role of formal religious education in fostering moral growth and legal reasoning.⁶

Digital media has also played an increasingly important role in the integration of legal education. Students reported supplementing course materials with online legal resources and fatwa databases, indicating the emergence of a hybrid learning model that combines traditional instruction with contemporary legal applications. The blending of classical Islamic disciplines with modern legal technologies has broadened access to legal precedents and jurisprudential discussions, effectively bridging the gap between traditional Islamic law and contemporary legal practice. The incorporation of digital tools, such as simulations, case studies, and virtual court proceedings, has further enhanced student engagement, practical skill development, and satisfaction, while fostering digital literacy and adaptability among future legal professionals.

Students also demonstrated a heightened awareness of the compatibility between Islam

⁶ Budi Johan, Fathan Faqih Ali, and Muhammad Ali, "Learning Media in Islamic Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.47134/pjpi.v1i4.810; Devi Melani, "THE USE OF INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: IMPACT ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION, PARTICIPATION, AND UNDERSTANDING," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.v1i2.128; Desti Widiani and Lilik Istiqomah, "The Influence of Learning Motivation and Intellectual Intelligence on Learning Achievement in Islamic Religious Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i2.15273.

⁷ Gautami Chakravarty, Aranya Nath, and Srishti Roy Barman, "Transforming Legal Education Through Experiential Learning: Integrating Intellectual Property Simulations and Digital Copyright Case Studies into the Law School Curriculum," *Asian Journal of Legal Education*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1177/23220058251334749; C McGrath and Christine Storr, "In Search of the Evidence: Digital Learning in Legal Education, a Scoping Review," *The Law Teacher* 57 (2023): 119–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2022.2133212; She Min, "Research on the Application Strategy of New Media Technology in Modern University Law Teaching," *Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.3233/IIFS-219122.

⁸ T Judd, Erika Smith, and R Kahlke, "Not Just Digital Natives: Integrating Technologies in Professional Education Contexts," *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.5689; Thorsten Lauterbach et al., "A Study of University Law Students' Self-Perceived Digital Competences," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 54 (2021): 751–69, https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006211048004.

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and various legal systems and constitutional frameworks. This represents a corrective to earlier misconceptions that positioned religious law and secular legal systems as inherently incompatible. Several students observed that the CGED materials presented Islamic jurisprudence as both intellectually rigorous and historically influential in the evolution of legal thought. This finding reflects broader curriculum reforms in diverse global contexts that aim to integrate religious legal principles with modern jurisprudence. Central to these reforms are the theory of al-ma-sla/a/a/a (objectives of Islamic law), which enable Islamic law to address contemporary societal needs while aligning with universal legal values.

Normative Clarification and Legal Interpretation

The impact of CGED courses on students' belief clarification, particularly their understanding of Sahih Aqidah and its legal implications, was significant in fostering sound jurisprudential reasoning. Fifty percent of respondents reported that these courses had greatly clarified their understanding of Islamic legal principles, with an additional 43% expressing moderate agreement. This finding confirms that structured Islamic education facilitates both theological and legal clarification, particularly when courses emphasize foundational doctrines that underpin legal interpretation.

A pre-course analysis indicated that misunderstandings about legal concepts often coexisted with theological misconceptions. Some students struggled to grasp the nuanced legal implications of $tawh\bar{\imath}d$, leading them to adopt beliefs associated with bid'ah, which in turn produced flawed legal reasoning, often shaped by popular culture or non-scholarly sources. These observations are consistent with existing literature highlighting misconceptions about the role of religious principles in legal development, as well as the foundational ethical and jurisprudential teachings of Islamic law. 10

The most effective strategies for addressing these misconceptions emphasized the use of legal case studies and jurisprudential analysis. Students valued class discussions centered on legal scenarios, along with multimedia resources examining historical legal rulings and contemporary Islamic legal issues through a case-based framework. Such methods align with those used in comparative legal education, which promotes learning by engaging with real legal challenges, analyzing precedents, and participating in collaborative legal reasoning.¹¹

Furthermore, the diversity of student backgrounds had a measurable influence on legal understanding. Students from faculties with a more humanistic orientation (e.g., English, Law) displayed greater openness to jurisprudential inquiry and critical legal thinking, whereas students from technical faculties initially exhibited greater rigidity in legal interpretation. These

⁹ Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi and Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Al-Mashlahah and Reinterpretation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Context," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 3 (October 17, 2024): 1818, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i3.24918.

¹⁰ M Choudhury, "A Critique of Shari'ah Perspectives Contra Tawhid as Law: Terminologies," 2020, 7–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49087-4_2; M Choudhury, "Tawhid as Law Contra 'Shari'Ah-Compliance' in Malaysian Advisory Commission," 2020, 97–126, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49087-4_6; M Choudhury, "Tawhid as Law Contra Shari'ah in Standardizing a Theory of Islamic Financial Economy," 2020, 87–96, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49087-4_5; Arlis Arlis, Ahmad Bakhtiar Jelani, and Arif Taufiq, "Integrating the Principle of Monotheism Into Constitutional Law," *El -Hekam*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.31958/jeh.v8i1.8227.

¹¹ Philip Kretsedemas, "Explaining Asylum Law Using Qualitative Comparative Analysis," *Laws* 13, no. 4 (August 14, 2024): 53, https://doi.org/10.3390/laws13040053; Daniel Green and Cornelia Eißler, "A Reflective Essay on Piska's Casebook–Einführung in Die Rechtswissenschaften: Strategische Anleitung Und Arbeitsbuch/Casebook–Introduction to Legal Studies: Strategic Guide and Workbook (Facultas 2019)," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale de Sémiotique Juridique* 37, no. 4 (July 5, 2024): 1431–45, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-024-10111-9.

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differences align with international findings showing that the development of legal reasoning often correlates with prior educational exposure and the broader intellectual-legal environment.

Behavioral Impact and Legal Compliance

The study found strong evidence of behavioral transformation among students following their participation in CGED courses, with significant implications for legal compliance and ethical conduct. Sixty-seven percent of respondents strongly affirmed that the courses had made them more committed to Islamic practice in daily life, including adherence to legal and ethical norms. An additional 27% agreed, while only a small minority (7%) remained neutral or skeptical.

This behavioral shift manifested in ways that reflected enhanced legal consciousness: increased participation in prayer, ethical conduct aligned with legal principles, modest dress consistent with legal requirements, and a heightened interest in Islamic legal scholarship beyond the curriculum. These changes suggest that CGED instruction extends beyond cognitive learning, activating students' moral and legal behavioral frameworks.

The internalization of Islamic legal and moral norms aligns with theories in Islamic legal epistemology, where belief $(\bar{\imath}m\bar{a}n)$ and action ('amal) are intrinsically connected to legal compliance. Such findings provide empirical support for the concept of $fiqh\ al\ akbar$ (greater jurisprudence), wherein creed forms the basis of all legal obligations and underpins legal reasoning and application.¹²

Family and Social Influence on Legal Culture

A significant finding of this study was the reported impact of CGED courses on students' families and their understanding of legal principles. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that their learning had positively influenced the legal consciousness and religious behavior of family members, while another 43% agreed moderately. Only 14% disagreed.

This outcome supports claims in contemporary Islamic educational literature that religiously and legally educated students act as transmitters of legal value systems within their households. Theological education serves as a means of passing down religious knowledge and values from one generation to the next, thereby strengthening legal and ethical convictions in families and communities. This process requires both explicit instruction and implicit modeling of Islamic legal norms to support ongoing character development and create a positive societal impact. Students shared anecdotal evidence of encouraging family adherence to legal principles, challenging legally questionable practices (e.g., shrine veneration), and promoting $Sah\bar{h}$ Aq \bar{h} alongside proper legal understanding in community discussions.

The ripple effect observed here underscores the vital social role of university-level religious education in shaping legal and moral standards within communities. It reinforces the university's role as a catalyst for grassroots legal reform and promotes a more nuanced understanding of Islamic law. In light of the growing prevalence of legal misconceptions and extreme ideological interpretations in South Asia, this student-centered approach to religious and

¹² Antiga Pashayeva, "Religion and Law: The Ratio of Law and Morality in Islam," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 22, no. 1 (December 1, 2022), https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.22.2022.236; Sami Al-Daghistani, "The Foundation of Norms in Islamic Jurisprudence and Theology," *Journal of Law and Religion* 37, no. 1 (January 18, 2022): 207–9, https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2021.75.

¹³ Syarifah Rahmah and Muhammad Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture," *Development: Studies in Educational Management and Leadership* 1, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 39–54, https://doi.org/10.47766/development.v1i1.644; Yahya Obaid et al., "Revealing Identity to Form Student Character: Application of the Hidden Curriculum in Islamic Legal Education," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 3 (October 9, 2024): 1782, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i3.24061.

¹⁴ Andrey Orekhov et al., "Theological Education as a Way to Reproduce 'Religious Capital' (Philosophical and Legal Aspects)," *Journal Of Advanced Pharmacy Education And Research* 11, no. 2 (2021): 119–23, https://doi.org/10.51847/fxrhpJLM3p.

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legal engagement offers a sustainable pathway for enhancing legal literacy and addressing misunderstandings within the legal system. 15

Rejection of Superstition, Fanaticism, and Legal Extremism

A central hypothesis of this research was that CGED courses would help eradicate irrational beliefs, religious fanaticism, and extreme legal interpretations. Seventy percent of students confirmed this, stating that their exposure to Sahih Aqidah corrected previously held superstitions and enhanced their ability to distinguish between authentic Islamic teachings and cultural distortions, while also strengthening their legal reasoning skills. The remaining 30% were less certain, citing the need for greater curricular depth in legal applications.

The phenomenon of shrine worship, intercession through saints (tawaṣṣul), and related legal misconceptions emerged as recurring concerns. Many students reported being previously unaware of the contested legal status of such practices in Islamic jurisprudence. Through coursework, they were introduced to primary legal sources (Qur'an, Hadith, and classical legal texts) that clarified the limits of tawhid and the legal implications of shirk, while developing their capacity for independent jurisprudential reasoning.

These findings align with broader educational reform efforts, which emphasize that integrating critical religious and legal content into the curriculum can dismantle inherited misconceptions and promote balanced legal thinking. The effectiveness of CGED courses in this regard parallels pedagogical successes in countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria, where curriculum designs that foreground creed, ethics, and legal principles have been shown to reduce extremist tendencies and foster sound legal understanding.¹⁶

This study underscores the significant legal and educational benefits of creed-based instruction, particularly the teaching of *Sahih Aqidah*, in fostering *fiqh* consciousness among university students. Consistent with earlier research, the structured delivery of Sahih Aqidah within the academic environment of IIUC not only clarified theological doctrine but also deepened students' understanding of the legal foundations of Islamic practice. This supports the university's mission to produce graduates grounded in both moral virtue and legal compliance.

A key theme emerging from this research is students' enhanced ability to distinguish between authentic Islamic jurisprudential norms and culturally embedded misconceptions. This shift highlights the pedagogical potency of creed-based education as a legal corrective. Participants consistently reported gaining clearer insight into the boundaries between *shar'i* obligations and unlawful innovations, reflecting the corrective role of creed in legal discourse. This supports the argument that religious education strengthens resistance to pseudo-legal superstitions and fosters moral-legal rectitude.¹⁷ Within this framework, Islamic epistemology functions as a safeguard against cultural practices that distort the core principles of *sharī'ah*. Therefore, Sahih Aqidah should not be regarded merely as a set of dogmatic assertions but as a vital legal-educational resource for enhancing jurisprudential competence.¹⁸

This study also supports the long-standing jurisprudential claim that correct belief

¹⁵ Orekhov et al.; Alexey Ovchinnikov and I Kozhokar, "Legal Theology in Interdisciplinary Discourse," *WISDOM*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.24234/wisdom.v1i1.671.

 $^{^{16}}$ Obaid et al., "Revealing Identity to Form Student Character: Application of the Hidden Curriculum in Islamic Legal Education."

¹⁷ Oleg T. Slanov, "THE PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON THE LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF A STUDENT," *Russian Journal of Education and Psychology* 15, no. 1 (February 29, 2024): 7–31, https://doi.org/10.12731/2658-4034-2024-15-1-431.

¹⁸ Muhammad Nazir Alias et al., "SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AS THE BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪ'AH CONCEPT AND PRINCIPLES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 12, no. 2 (August 12, 2024): 350–63, https://doi.org/10.33102/mjsl.vol12no2.568; Joseph E. B. Lumbard, "Islam and the Challenge of Epistemic Sovereignty," *Religions* 15, no. 4 (March 26, 2024): 406, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040406.

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informs correct practice, a central tenet of classical Islamic legal theory (*fiqh al-akbar*). Students who engaged deeply with CGED content reported enhanced observance of obligatory rituals such as prayer and fasting, improved ethical awareness, and greater alignment with normative Islamic legal behavior.¹⁹ These outcomes affirm that Islamic education fosters both ethical and legal accountability. Notably, the affective and psychomotor dimensions of religious learning play a vital role in shaping individuals who are not only morally conscious but also legally responsible. Within this framework, the intrinsic connection between belief and action, fundamental to Islamic legal epistemology, receives empirical support.²⁰

The legal impact of creed-based education extends beyond individual transformation to influence family and community contexts. Numerous respondents indicated that their enhanced understanding of Islamic law had positively affected their family environments, leading to a reduction in practices deemed unlawful, such as grave veneration and intercessory rituals. This indirect legal influence exemplifies a form of informal jurisprudential outreach, or da'wah, initiated through formal education. Similar patterns have been observed in faith-based public interventions, where institutional education has prompted broader behavioral change. In this light, religious education, when institutionally structured, can serve as a powerful tool for communal regulation and legal awareness. Within the Islamic framework, this aligns with the contemporary application of al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar (commanding right and forbidding wrong) through legal-pedagogical approaches.²²

One of the most salient legal outcomes of the CGED courses was the eradication of superstitious and unlawful religious practices. Students developed sharper legal discernment regarding prohibited acts such as shrine worship and the use of *wasīlah* (intercessory agents) in

¹⁹ Kamel Essabane, C Sterkens, and P Vermeer, "The Relationship between Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship Education in Liberal Democracies," *Religious Education* 118 (2023): 297–311, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2023.2262888; Adnan Zulfiqar, "Belief as Status: Premodern Islamic Law, Duties, and the Martyr Conundrum," *American Journal of Legal History*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/ajlh/njad022; Novita Mayasari Angelia et al., "Maḥāsin Al-Syarī'ah on The Implementation of Mahḍah Worship: Overview of Islamic Legal Philosophy," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.12394; Mohammad Hosseini, "An Argument About the Realism of Legal Propositions Based on Islamic Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 0 (2025), https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2025.a957083; Ezieddin Elmahjub, "Islamic Jurisprudence as an Ethical Discourse: An Enquiry into the Nature of Moral Reasoning in Islamic Legal Theory," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/0JLR/RWAA023.

²⁰ Muhammad Rivaldi and Narendra Jumadil Haikal Ramadhan, "CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS THROUGH ISLAMIC EDUCATION LEADERSHIP," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (June 29, 2024): 80–89, https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.v2i2.270; Obaid et al., "Revealing Identity to Form Student Character: Application of the Hidden Curriculum in Islamic Legal Education"; Fella Lahmar, "Islamic Education: An Islamic 'Wisdom-Based Cultural Environment' in a Western Context," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (August 7, 2020): 409, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080409.

²¹ Piotr Roszak and Weronika Kudła, "Faith-Based Education in Polish Public Schools – From Battleground to Common Ground," *International Journal of Educational Development* 99 (May 2023): 102773, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102773.

²² Nada Benajiba et al., "Mosques and Public Health Promotion: A Scoping Review of Faith-Driven Health Interventions," Health Education Behavior 51 (2024): & https://doi.org/10.1177/10901981241252800; B Aboul-Enein et al., "A Narrative Review of Ethnic Minority Studies for Faith-Based Health Promotion Interventions with Special Reference to the Contemporary Christian Nurse," Journal of Religion and Health 60 (2021): 1375-87, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01150-0; Patrik Flammer et al., "Engaging Religious Institutions and Faith-Based Communities in Public Health Initiatives: A Case Study of the Romanian Orthodox Church COVID-19 Pandemic," Frontiers in Public Health https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.768091; Roszak and Kudła, "Faith-Based Education in Polish Public Schools - From Battleground to Common Ground."

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impermissible forms. These outcomes align with the objectives of cultural legal reform within Islamic da'wah, which seeks to replace illegitimate practices with legally sound, evidence-based doctrine.²³ Furthermore, the findings underscore the necessity of adapting Islamic legal instruction to the digital and socio-cultural realities of modern Muslim societies. This was particularly evident in students' use of multimedia and mobile learning tools to enhance their understanding of legal content, suggesting that digital integration is not only relevant but essential for the future of Islamic legal pedagogy in higher education.²⁴

The pedagogical strategies employed in CGED instruction proved essential for the internalization of both normative and legal content. Students responded positively to multimodal teaching approaches that integrated classical sources with contemporary media, case-based learning, and peer-led discussions. These methods align with pedagogical research indicating that interactive and context-sensitive instruction significantly enhances engagement with Islamic texts.²⁵ Furthermore, grounding legal education in Qur'anic principles and enriching it through technological innovation fosters deeper conceptual understanding. Student feedback consistently underscored the importance of qualified instructors, with both instructor competence and the classroom environment identified as key factors influencing legal comprehension.²⁶

Themes of tolerance and coexistence emerged as significant legal considerations. CGED courses help students navigate the intricate relationship between theological conviction and cultural diversity. This reflects the vision of an Islamic education model that preserves legal and normative integrity while promoting harmonious social engagement. At IIUC, the CGED curriculum appears to achieve this balance effectively, cultivating an ethically informed student body capable of upholding Islamic legal values while interacting respectfully in a diverse society. This dual capability enhances both the university's reputation and the legal literacy of its graduates, reinforcing the premise that higher education should nurture ethically grounded, globally minded citizens.

²³ Azhar Azhar, "Islamic Law Reform in Indonesia from the Perspective of Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah: Kerinci's Intellectual Views," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (May 11, 2024): 750, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.15051.

²⁴ Mulyadi, "Grasping The Management Of Islamic Education Amidst The Digital Era," *International Journal of Public Health*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.62951/ijph.v1i2.24; Khairil Umami, Soleh Hasan Wahid, and Yudhi Achmad Bashori, "MAQASID SHARIAH-BASED DIGITAL ECONOMY MODEL: INTEGRATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.33102/mjsl.vol12no2.647; lhsan Mustofa et al., "LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE USE OF E-LEARNING FOR ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.v2i1.181; Muhamad Husni Hasbulah et al., "Mobile Learning of Islamic Studies: A Comprehensive Review," *Journal of Advanced Research in Applied Sciences and Engineering Technology*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.37934/araset.48.2.211224; Laras Agustin and Fajarwati, "PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.v1i2.230.

²⁵ Rachana Rao Umashankar, "The Multisensory Engagement with the Qur'an: Teaching the Qur'an Word," Written Teaching Theology and Religion (2020): https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12569; Asma Ahmed, "Improving the Pedagogy of Islamic Religious Education in Secondary Schools: The Role of Critical Religious Education and Variation Theory by Ayse Demirel Ucan (Review)," Journal of Education in Muslim Societies 5 (2024): 145-49, https://doi.org/10.2979/jems.00008; Hanif Cahyo Adi Kistoro, N Burhan, and Eva Latipah, "Probing Experiential Learning Approach in Islamic Religious Education," Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 2023, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v9i2.24374; I Suddahazai, "Reflecting on Teaching Practice: Adopting Islamic Liberatory Pedagogies within Muslim Institutes of Higher Education in UK (MIHEUK)," Religions, 2023, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020223.

²⁶ Rouhollah Khodabandelou et al., "A Systematic Review on University Instructors' Roles and Competencies in Online Teaching Environments," *Interactive Learning Environments*, December 6, 2022, 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2152057.

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The implications of these findings for institutional policy, public perception, and student morale are considerable. When religious–legal instruction is coherent and competently delivered, it not only enhances individual moral clarity but also strengthens institutional credibility. Character development is a cornerstone of Islamic pedagogy, and when this development includes legal awareness, it fosters trust in and respect for Islamic educational institutions. Moreover, curricular coherence in Islamic legal education contributes to student satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being, all of which were evident in the student testimonies analyzed in this study.

In conclusion, integrating Sahih Aqidah into university curricula addresses theological and ethical objectives while also meeting important legal and civic needs. The findings of this study support the establishment of creed-based education as a core component of Islamic higher education. Rather than serving as a supplementary element, such education equips Muslim students with a unified framework encompassing belief, legal knowledge, and civic responsibility. The broader implications point toward fostering a legally informed, ethically responsible, and spiritually robust Muslim community, an outcome closely aligned with the $maq\bar{a} \dot{s} id \ al-shar\bar{i}' ah$ (the primary objectives of Islamic law).

Conclusions

This study illustrates the transformative impact of creed-based education, particularly through the CGED curriculum at the International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC). It strengthens students' theological clarity, legal awareness, and moral conduct. Structured instruction in Ṣaḥīḥ 'Aqīdah not only deepens their understanding of Islamic jurisprudence but also cultivates civic responsibility and ethical integrity. The integration of digital learning tools and context-sensitive pedagogy further enhances the effectiveness of legal-religious education. Significantly, the findings reveal that these benefits extend beyond the classroom, positively influencing families and communities while fostering a culture of legal literacy and religious moderation. By empirically validating the pedagogical and social outcomes of creed instruction, this research makes a substantial contribution to the interdisciplinary fields of Islamic education and legal studies. Future research could explore longitudinal impacts, conduct comparative analyses with other institutions, and examine the role of emerging technologies in advancing Islamic legal education.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Mr. Marsudur Rahman: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing-original Draft. Supervision, Methodology, Writing - review & editing, **Md. Amjad Hossain Shipon**: Methodology, Writing - review & editing,

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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