

# Roles of Student Art Communities in Fostering Islamic Art Creativity

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to explore how campus-based art communities contribute to the revitalization of Islamic art within a modern academic environment. Focusing on the *Ikatan Mahasiswa Pecinta Seni* (IMPAS) organization at IAIN Metro, Lampung, the research investigates how students reinterpret Islamic aesthetics through creative expression, spiritual values, and cultural performance as part of their campus identity formation.

**Method:** The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were collected from student members and organizational leaders of IMPAS to capture their artistic practices, motivations, and socio-religious contexts. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns related to creativity, faith-based expression, and cultural adaptation.

**Findings:** The study reveals that Islamic art activities in IMPAS—such as *hadroh*, calligraphy, *qasidah*, and Islamic theater—serve not only as creative outlets but also as vehicles for moral reflection and spiritual engagement. Students reinterpret traditional Islamic art forms with contemporary styles to make them more relevant to campus culture and youth audiences. Despite limited resources, their initiatives demonstrate a dynamic synthesis between aesthetic innovation and religious devotion.

**Significance:** This research highlights the role of higher education communities in preserving and transforming Islamic cultural heritage. It underscores how campus art organizations can function as agents of cultural sustainability, spiritual education, and creative empowerment among young Muslims. The findings offer insights into integrating art, faith, and education to strengthen cultural identity in Indonesian Islamic universities.

## INTRODUCTION

Art has long been recognized as a universal form of human expression that reflects values, beliefs, and collective identity. Within Islamic civilization, art serves as a visual and performative embodiment of *tawhid*—the oneness of God—and operates as a means to internalize spiritual and ethical dimensions through beauty and creativity (Bigelow, 2021; Shah, 2023). Islamic art extends beyond aesthetic appreciation; it is a symbolic manifestation of divine order expressed through geometric patterns, calligraphy, architecture, and performance. Such expressions demonstrate how faith and creativity coexist harmoniously, generating cultural continuity that links past traditions with present sensibilities (Balzano & Marzi, 2024). However, modern Muslim societies often face the challenge of preserving the spiritual depth of Islamic art amid rapid cultural transformation and globalization. Many youth communities have become detached from the metaphysical meaning of art, perceiving it only as entertainment or performance

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(Banda et al., 2024). This condition calls for renewed engagement between Islamic art and education as a medium for cultural transmission. Therefore, higher education institutions play a crucial role in revitalizing Islamic artistic traditions among students through creative and reflective initiatives.

The university environment represents a microcosm of broader cultural transformation in the Muslim world. As a place for intellectual, moral, and artistic development, the campus provides fertile ground for reinterpreting religious art in contemporary contexts (Sahin, 2018; Thouki, 2019). Student organizations, particularly those focused on arts and culture, serve as dynamic spaces for identity construction and social creativity. In Indonesia, such organizations often become platforms for integrating Islamic values into cultural performance, emphasizing harmony between aesthetic innovation and spiritual devotion (Nursanty & Wulandari, 2023). These student groups are not only artistic collectives but also social laboratories where young Muslims learn to negotiate tradition and modernity. Through activities such as *hadroh*, *qasidah*, and Islamic theater, they reinterpret classical forms of art to address contemporary audiences. This recontextualization bridges cultural heritage with modern sensibilities, demonstrating the adaptability of Islamic art in multicultural settings. Consequently, campus art movements have the potential to sustain religious aesthetics as part of a living, evolving culture.

In the Indonesian context, the intersection of Islam and art is deeply rooted in local traditions and educational settings. Islamic art in Indonesia does not merely imitate Middle Eastern models but synthesizes local cultural expressions with universal spiritual messages (Damayanti et al., 2024; Hillenbrand, 2024). Campus-based art organizations often reflect this syncretic spirit by combining regional artistic forms, such as *tari saman* or *rebana*, with Islamic values of devotion and unity. These creative practices encourage students to appreciate art as both cultural heritage and spiritual practice, thus fostering holistic education. Moreover, the revival of Islamic art on campuses aligns with national cultural preservation policies that recognize the role of youth in sustaining intangible heritage (Saifi, 2021; Selim & Farhan, 2024). The activities of student art communities such as IMPAS at IAIN Metro represent an effort to renew artistic consciousness among Muslim students in an era dominated by digital culture. Through their work, students reinterpret artistic symbols, narratives, and rhythms to communicate Islamic identity in relatable ways. Hence, campus-based revitalization becomes an essential strategy to sustain the aesthetic and ethical legacy of Islam.

The concept of “revitalization” implies more than mere preservation; it involves reinterpretation, innovation, and creative adaptation to new cultural realities. Scholars have argued that revitalization in art requires the transformation of traditional meanings into forms that resonate with contemporary sensibilities while maintaining their ethical core (Foster & Martusewicz, 2018; Juneja, 2018). In the case of Islamic art, revitalization demands engagement between faith-based values and modern artistic discourse. This engagement challenges students to think critically about how spirituality can inform creativity without losing authenticity. Within the campus context, revitalization manifests through workshops, performances, and exhibitions that encourage dialogue between tradition and modernity. These activities transform the university into a living cultural ecosystem where art becomes a form of spiritual inquiry. By doing so, student artists

reassert Islamic aesthetics as a means of understanding divine beauty in the contemporary world (Feldman & Scheid, 2022). Such initiatives show how art education can cultivate ethical awareness alongside creative skills.

However, the revitalization of Islamic art on campuses faces structural and cultural challenges. Limited institutional support, lack of funding, and minimal recognition of art as an integral part of religious education often hinder sustainability (H. Marshall, n.d.; K. Marshall, 2018). In many Islamic universities, artistic activities are marginalized, considered extracurricular rather than pedagogical. As a result, student initiatives often rely on voluntary efforts and personal enthusiasm rather than systemic backing. This condition restricts innovation and reduces opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration between art, theology, and education. Furthermore, the commercialization of art and the influence of global media can distort the sacred dimension of Islamic creativity (Nader, 2023). When art is treated purely as spectacle, its spiritual and moral functions tend to diminish. Therefore, revitalization must also address the institutional and epistemological barriers that separate art from faith-based learning. Strengthening the role of student organizations such as IMPAS can bridge this gap by integrating creativity into religious and educational discourse.

IMPAS (*Ikatan Mahasiswa Pecinta Seni*) at IAIN Metro Lampung exemplifies how student art organizations function as catalysts for cultural and spiritual renewal. The organization promotes artistic activities rooted in Islamic values, such as *hadroh*, calligraphy, Islamic theater, and *qasidah*, to nurture students' creative potential. These practices not only develop artistic competence but also cultivate communal solidarity and moral reflection among members. IMPAS positions art as a vehicle of *da'wah*, expressing faith through rhythm, performance, and aesthetics. The group's initiatives reveal how artistic expression can coexist with Islamic ethics in ways that are engaging and youth-oriented. Moreover, IMPAS's programs demonstrate how localized expressions of Islamic art contribute to the broader discourse of cultural identity in Indonesia. By situating their creative practices within campus culture, IMPAS students transform art into a dialogical space between religion, education, and modern life. This approach allows art to become a bridge connecting faith with social engagement.

Empirical studies on youth participation in Islamic art show that aesthetic creativity can foster moral resilience and collective empowerment. Research by Zaken & Walsh (2023) found that involvement in art-based Islamic organizations enhances students' sense of belonging, self-discipline, and ethical awareness. Similarly, Susanti & Nukman (2024) and Yusmaliana et al. (2024) emphasizes that aesthetic education rooted in Islamic values strengthens emotional intelligence and empathy among university students. These findings indicate that art functions as a transformative medium for character formation in young Muslims. When students engage with artistic performance as a form of worship and reflection, they internalize moral principles in experiential ways. Thus, art becomes both a pedagogical and spiritual practice that enriches human consciousness. Within this framework, campus-based art activities can be seen as laboratories for moral and creative education. IMPAS, in this context, provides a concrete example of how the integration of art and faith contributes to personal and communal transformation.

From a broader theoretical perspective, the revitalization of Islamic art intersects with discussions on cultural sustainability and creative education. The integration of spirituality into artistic pedagogy aligns with contemporary models of holistic learning that emphasize emotional, moral, and aesthetic development (Tao et al., 2024; Yang, 2024). In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), education should not only transmit knowledge but also foster cultural awareness and creative competence. Islamic art revitalization embodies this ideal by merging creativity with ethical reflection, making learning an act of devotion and self-realization. Moreover, it strengthens intercultural dialogue by presenting Islam through beauty rather than dogma. By positioning Islamic art within the modern campus ecosystem, educators and students can counter stereotypes and promote pluralism through cultural production. This approach transforms Islamic art into a form of soft diplomacy that communicates universal values of peace, compassion, and creativity (He et al., 2024). Hence, the study contributes to global conversations on faith, art, and education.

Given these considerations, this research aims to analyze how the IMPAS organization at IAIN Metro Lampung revitalizes Islamic art within campus culture. The study examines students' roles, motivations, and creative strategies in developing faith-based artistic practices. Using qualitative descriptive methods, it explores the intersections of art, spirituality, and education in shaping cultural identity among young Muslims. The findings are expected to illuminate how university art communities function as mediators of tradition and innovation in Islamic aesthetics. By situating the case within the context of cultural sustainability, this research contributes to understanding how faith-inspired creativity adapts to modern educational settings. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for integrating artistic development into Islamic education policy and curriculum. The study thus positions art not merely as adornment but as a living expression of divine consciousness. Through the case of IMPAS, it envisions art as a pathway toward holistic human development in Islamic higher education.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design with a case study approach, focusing on the *Ikatan Mahasiswa Pecinta Seni* (IMPAS) organization at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Metro, Lampung. The qualitative design was selected to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings behind students' engagement with Islamic art within the context of campus culture (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The study emphasizes the interpretive understanding of social reality, where art serves as both a cultural and spiritual practice. By employing a descriptive framework, the research explores how students' creative expressions contribute to the revitalization of Islamic aesthetics, highlighting the interplay between faith, creativity, and education. The case study design allows for in-depth exploration of a bounded system—IMPAS—as a microcosm of Islamic art revival in higher education settings.

### **Participant**

Participants were 12 active members of the IMPAS student organization, consisting of both male and female students aged between 19 and 24 years, representing various

divisions such as *hadroh*, *theater*, *calligraphy*, and *qasidah*. Selection was conducted using purposive sampling, emphasizing members with at least one year of active involvement in organizational activities. Additional information was gathered from two senior advisors (lecturers) who oversee the organization's religious and artistic programs. This combination provided a balanced perspective between students' creative experiences and institutional support systems. Participation was voluntary, and ethical consent was obtained prior to data collection.

### **Instrument**

Data collection employed three qualitative instruments:

1. Semi-structured interviews

Conducted to explore participants' perceptions of creativity, spirituality, and artistic practice within Islamic art. Each interview lasted between 45–60 minutes, recorded and transcribed verbatim.

2. Non-participant observations

Observations focused on rehearsals, performances, and meetings to understand the dynamics of artistic creation and group collaboration in natural settings.

3. Document analysis

Involved reviewing organizational archives, performance scripts, event posters, and photographs to triangulate data and contextualize the artistic process (Bowen, 2020).

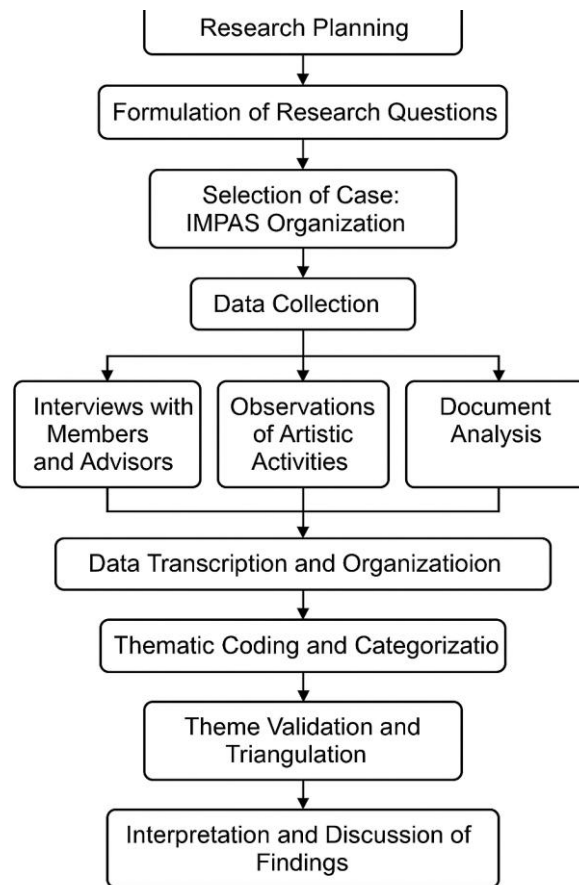
All instruments were designed to elicit rich, descriptive data regarding how Islamic values are embedded in artistic practices and organizational culture.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase model:

- (1) familiarization with data,
- (2) generation of initial codes,
- (3) searching for themes,
- (4) reviewing themes,
- (5) defining and naming themes, and
- (6) producing the final report.

The process combined inductive and deductive reasoning to interpret patterns emerging from field observations and interviews. To ensure credibility, the study applied triangulation of sources (students, advisors, documents) and technique triangulation (interview, observation, documentation). Peer debriefing with academic supervisors was also conducted to validate interpretations and enhance analytical rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).



**Figure 1.** Research flow of qualitative descriptive study on Islamic art revitalization through campus culture

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The study investigated the revitalization of Islamic art through campus culture within the *Ikatan Mahasiswa Pecinta Seni* (IMPAS) organization at IAIN Metro Lampung. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis from 12 student participants and 2 faculty advisors. The findings revealed four primary aspects that characterize the revitalization process: (1) artistic practices as expressions of faith, (2) creativity and adaptation of traditional Islamic art, (3) institutional and structural constraints, and (4) educational and social contributions of the organization.

The members of IMPAS consistently emphasized that their artistic practices—such as *hadroh*, *qasidah*, *calligraphy*, and Islamic theater—are rooted in spiritual devotion. Every artistic activity begins with prayer and recitation of the Quran. Participants stated that these practices were intended not only to entertain but to spread Islamic messages through beauty and creativity. The performance content often includes moral narratives on themes such as humility, gratitude, and community harmony. Documentation from campus events confirmed that most performances incorporate religious symbolism and Arabic calligraphy as visual design elements. The group’s motto, “Art as Worship,” was visibly displayed in several performance posters and event brochures.

The data show that IMPAS members have developed various creative adaptations of traditional Islamic art to suit contemporary student audiences. *Qasidah* and *hadroh* performances are arranged with modern rhythms and instruments such as guitar,

keyboard, and digital percussion. The group also integrates bilingual lyrics (Arabic–Indonesian) to enhance accessibility. Observations during the “Art for Da’wah Week” event recorded hybrid performances combining theater, music, and multimedia visuals. Documentation analysis revealed that IMPAS regularly produces new artistic scripts with Islamic themes related to social issues like environmental awareness and youth ethics. These activities show continuous experimentation while maintaining adherence to Islamic ethical boundaries regarding performance decorum and gender interaction.

Field data indicated that the revitalization of Islamic art within the university is conducted under several institutional constraints. IMPAS operates primarily on voluntary student participation with limited financial support from the institution. Rehearsals are often conducted in open spaces due to the absence of a dedicated art studio. Several interviewees expressed that art activities are sometimes undervalued compared to academic achievements. Nevertheless, the organization receives occasional support from the Faculty of Tarbiyah in the form of venue access and minor logistical assistance. The advisory lecturers noted that IMPAS continues to sustain activities through self-funding, collaboration with local communities, and participation in inter-campus competitions.

The collected data indicate that participation in IMPAS contributes to members’ personal development and community engagement. Students reported improved communication skills, self-confidence, and teamwork through collaborative performances. The organization also conducts training sessions for new members focusing on both technical and moral aspects of art. Several outreach programs were documented, including performances in local schools and religious events, designed to promote Islamic values among youth audiences. Based on observation notes, IMPAS events typically attract large campus audiences and are frequently featured in the university’s cultural calendar. Photographic documentation and performance archives demonstrate that the group has become a cultural ambassador for Islamic art within the local academic community.

**Table 1.** Summary of major findings from qualitative data.

Category	Key Findings	Evidence Source
Art as Faith Expression	Art viewed as worship and spiritual practice.	Interview transcripts, performance observations.
Creative Adaptation	Integration of modern instruments, bilingual lyrics, multimedia design.	Observation notes, event recordings.
Institutional Challenges	Limited resources and recognition, voluntary management.	Interviews with members and advisors.
Educational & Social Impact	Growth in soft skills, moral awareness, and community engagement.	Interview data, documentation analysis.

## Discussion

The revitalization of Islamic art in the IMPAS organization reflects a broader shift in how young Muslims reinterpret religiosity within contemporary educational environments. The findings show that art is not merely aesthetic expression but a spiritual act rooted in the Islamic concept of *ihsan*, or doing good with beauty. This is consistent with Zahra & Shahir (2022) assertion that Islamic aesthetics function as the visual articulation of divine unity and order. By framing artistic creativity as a form of worship, students transform performance into a moral and spiritual dialogue with their audience.

This approach challenges the dichotomy between sacred and secular creativity that often dominates modern art education. The reorientation of art toward faith-based values affirms that spirituality can coexist harmoniously with innovation and modern techniques. Therefore, Islamic art revitalization within campus culture serves as an avenue for integrating beauty, morality, and devotion in youth identity formation.

Creativity within IMPAS demonstrates the dynamic negotiation between tradition and modernity that defines contemporary Islamic art. The students' incorporation of digital media, bilingual lyrics, and performance theater aligns with Konior et al. (2020) notion that revitalization requires reinterpretation rather than imitation. These artistic innovations reveal that the younger generation seeks relevance and resonance without compromising spiritual integrity. The creative adaptations observed, such as hybrid performances and thematic collaborations, illustrate how Islamic art remains responsive to the cultural needs of modern audiences. This process also mirrors what Dein (2022) describes as "spiritual modernism," where Islamic artists use modern tools to preserve sacred messages. By situating these activities within a campus environment, the students bridge traditional religious values with the communicative aesthetics of the digital age. Thus, creativity becomes both a tool for da'wah and a means of sustaining cultural continuity amid rapid social change.

The institutional challenges faced by IMPAS highlight the structural limitations that often hinder the integration of art into religious education systems. Limited funding, inadequate facilities, and low institutional recognition reduce the sustainability of art-based initiatives. This aligns with Lahmar (2020) and Memon et al. (2024) critique that Islamic universities often fail to position art as a pedagogical pillar within moral and intellectual formation. Nevertheless, the persistence of IMPAS members to continue their artistic programs despite minimal support reflects a strong sense of agency and collective resilience. Such agency embodies what Rayburn & Ochieng (2022) describe as "cultural self-determination" in qualitative contexts, communities sustaining creativity despite institutional neglect. The self-organized structure of IMPAS transforms artistic practice into an act of empowerment, where students not only create but also manage and preserve their cultural capital. Therefore, revitalization in this context is not institutional reform but grassroots cultural activism grounded in faith.

The educational and social outcomes of Islamic art revitalization confirm that creativity grounded in spirituality can enhance both moral and cognitive development. As Amin (2024) observed, engagement in faith-based art nurtures empathy, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence among young Muslims. The IMPAS experience supports this view by showing how artistic collaboration fosters teamwork, leadership, and community service. Through art, students internalize Islamic virtues such as humility, cooperation, and sincerity, values that extend beyond the performance stage into daily life. Moreover, the integration of art into academic and community spaces strengthens cultural dialogue and promotes pluralism within Islamic education (Sahin, 2018). In this sense, Islamic art revitalization contributes to the goals of sustainable education by merging creativity with moral consciousness. Ultimately, the IMPAS case demonstrates that art, when rooted in faith, is not peripheral but central to holistic human development within Islamic higher education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the revitalization of Islamic art through campus culture represents a multidimensional process that intertwines faith, creativity, and education. The findings from the IMPAS organization at IAIN Metro Lampung reveal that Islamic art can serve simultaneously as a medium of spiritual devotion, cultural preservation, and youth empowerment. Students in IMPAS reinterpret traditional Islamic art forms, such as *hadroh*, *qasidah*, calligraphy, and Islamic theater, through innovative and contextualized approaches while maintaining theological authenticity. Despite structural and financial constraints, the organization's activities demonstrate how artistic creativity can thrive as a form of *da'wah* and moral education. The research underscores the need for universities to integrate art into their religious and educational systems as a legitimate dimension of intellectual and ethical formation. Revitalization, in this sense, is not limited to reproducing tradition but reimagining it to meet the aspirations of modern Muslim youth. Consequently, Islamic art within campus settings becomes a living expression of identity, spirituality, and cultural resilience in the contemporary world.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Imam Nurkholis conceived and designed the research framework, collected and analyzed all qualitative data, and authored the manuscript.

Basri contributed to data interpretation, language refinement, and validation of the study's contextual relevance to Islamic education.

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