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Reflective–inspirational learning model in teaching research methodology in higher education: An analysis of student reflections

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to describe and analyze the Reflective-Inspirational Learning Model applied in the Research Methodologycourse at the university level. It explores students' learning experiences within a pedagogical approach that integrates reflection, inspiration, and academic ethics to foster conceptual understanding, moral awareness, and motivation toward research engagement.

Design/methods/approach – A descriptive qualitative design with embedded quantitative data was employed. The data were drawn from 30 written reflections of students in the Biology Education Study Program during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Using content analysis, the reflections were coded, categorized, and quantified to identify dominant themes and their frequency. Inter-rater reliability (r = 0.87) was ensured to strengthen coding consistency, and descriptive statistics supported the thematic interpretation.

Findings – The results show that the reflective-inspirational model effectively enhanced students' research competence and ethical consciousness. Quantitatively, 83% of students described the class as inspiring and motivating, 76% emphasized ethical awareness and honesty, and 70% reported increased confidence to conduct research. Thematic analysis revealed four main categories: learning comfort (80%), ethical awareness (70%), research literacy (76%), and reflective self-growth (68%). The most memorable topics were data collection techniques (40%), research ethics and plagiarism awareness (27%), instrument validity and reliability (17%), and problem formulation (10%). These findings confirm that the model fosters conceptual understanding, moral integrity, and academic motivation.

Research implications/limitations – The model can serve as an innovative pedagogy for improving research literacy and ethical sensitivity in higher education. However, its contextual limitation—focused on one study program—calls for further validation through larger and longitudinal studies.

Originality/value – This research contributes original insights by integrating reflective learning and inspirational teaching within research instruction. The combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence demonstrates that humanistic, value-based approaches can holistically strengthen students' research competence, ethics, and self-confidence.

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Introduction

The teaching of Research Methodology occupies a highly strategic position in higher education because it serves as the foundation for developing critical thinking, scientific integrity, and students' academic abilities to generate new knowledge through systematic research processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This course is not merely technical training on research procedures but also a philosophical and moral process that cultivates honesty, accuracy, and reflective awareness of the meaning of knowledge and academic responsibility. Ideally, research methodology learning functions not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape students' research attitudes and holistic epistemological awareness.

However, in practice, students often perceive Research Methodology as a difficult, theoretical, and even intimidating course (Latipah, 2020). Many experience research anxiety—a sense of fear and apprehension toward research—due to teacher-centered approaches that focus primarily on cognitive and procedural aspects. When learning emphasizes techniques and formal steps alone, students tend to become passive recipients of information without opportunities to reflect on meaning, values, or the personal relevance of research activities. Consequently, research is often viewed as a mechanical academic requirement rather than an intellectual and moral journey toward discovering truth.

Empirical findings from the Research Methodology course in the Biology Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (odd semester 2025/2026) reflect this condition. At the beginning of the semester, 73% of students reported that research felt difficult and frightening, while only 10% expressed enthusiasm. After the implementation of the Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model, students' perceptions shifted significantly: 83% described the learning process as inspiring and motivating, 76% emphasized increased ethical awareness and academic honesty, and 70% reported greater confidence in conducting research. Analysis of written reflections from thirty (30) students revealed four dominant themes: learning comfort (80%), ethical awareness (70%), research literacy (76%), and reflective self-growth (68%). These findings indicate that a learning approach fostering reflection, dialogue, and inspiration can reduce research anxiety while strengthening motivation and scientific integrity.

The Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model is designed to address these challenges by integrating two core learning dimensions: learning by reflecting and learning by inspiring. This model harmonizes cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of learning (Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 1995). Through reflection, students reinterpret learning experiences, connect research theories with personal meaning, and develop critical awareness of academic values. Inspiration, meanwhile, emerges through the lecturer's role as a moral–intellectual role model who transmits enthusiasm, honesty, and a love of knowledge. This approach transforms the classroom from a space of information transmission into an arena of dialogue, value formation, and self-transformation.

Within this broader framework of reflective learning, reflective writing—particularly through reflective journals—has gained increasing attention in higher education as a pedagogical strategy to deepen learning and foster students' self-awareness. Research by Bruno and Dell'Aversana (2018) demonstrates that reflective journal writing, supported by meaningful feedback, enables students to connect theoretical knowledge with personal and professional experiences while simultaneously processing emotional and ethical dimensions of learning. Reflective journals thus function not only as cognitive tools, but also as spaces for moral reflection and identity development. Similarly, Alt, Raichel, and

Naamati-Schneider (2020) found that reflective journal writing plays a significant role in developing lifelong learning skills, including critical thinking, self-regulation, and continuous learning orientation. Their findings suggest that reflective writing supports students' ability to evaluate their learning processes and internalize meaningful learning goals.

Previous studies have also provided valuable insights into reflective learning, inspirational teaching, and research pedagogy more broadly. Reflective learning has been widely recognized for its contribution to metacognition, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning (Schön, 1983; Rodgers, 2002; Zimmerman, 2002), while inspirational or humanistic teaching has been shown to enhance motivation, emotional engagement, and positive learning climates (Bandura, 1986; Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Research on Research Methodology instruction itself, however, has largely emphasized technical mastery and cognitive outcomes, such as research design competence and procedural accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to examine reflective writing, inspirational teaching, and research learning as separate pedagogical constructs. There remains a limited number of empirical studies that integrate reflective learning and inspirational modeling simultaneously within the teaching of Research Methodology. Moreover, ethical awareness and moral internalization in research learning are often treated as formal compliance issues rather than as lived experiences shaped through reflective writing and inspirational pedagogical processes. As a result, students' subjective meaning-making, ethical consciousness, and identity formation as novice researchers remain underexplored.

In addition, within the context of Islamic higher education, discussions on value-based education—particularly those inspired by the Curriculum of Love (Kurikulum Cinta) promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2025)—have largely remained conceptual and normative. Empirical classroom-based studies that operationalize this framework through concrete practices such as reflective writing, dialogical learning, and inspirational teaching in Research Methodology courses are still scarce. Consequently, how compassion, reflection, and ethical values are experienced and internalized by students in actual research learning contexts has not been sufficiently documented.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers a distinctive contribution by empirically examining the implementation of a Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model in a Research Methodology course within an Islamic higher education setting. By foregrounding students' written reflections as reflective writing artifacts, this study explores how the integration of reflection and inspiration—framed within the Curriculum of Love—shapes students' perceptions, ethical awareness, and research competencies. In doing so, the study demonstrates why this inquiry matters: it shows that Research Methodology learning can move beyond technical instruction to become a humanistic, ethical, and transformative educational process that nurtures intellectually competent, morally grounded, and reflective future researchers.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a content analysis design to examine students' written reflections. This approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of students' meanings, perceptions, and experiences,

yielding a rich understanding of their learning processes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis focused on students' narratives containing impressions, values, and knowledge gained throughout the Research Methodology course.

The research population consisted of 42 students, as recorded in the official attendance list of the Research Methodology course in the Biology Education Study Program, Faculty of Science and Technology, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. From this population, thirty (30) students were selected as research participants through purposive sampling. The selection was based on the completeness and depth of their individually written reflections after completing the course. Therefore, the chosen sample was considered representative of students' authentic learning experiences.

The research instrument was an open-ended reflection sheet administered at the end of the course. The sheet was explicitly designed to address two main guiding questions: (1) How did students perceive and experience the Research Methodology learning process when taught using the Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model? (2) Which learning materials were perceived as the most meaningful by students, and what reasons underpinned these perceptions? The reflections were handwritten without any length limitation to preserve the originality and authenticity of students' expressions. This open-ended format allowed students to express their learning experiences freely and reflectively.

Data collection was conducted through documentation of students' written reflections, which were submitted during the final face-to-face session. All data were then digitized and systematically analyzed following the content analysis procedures developed by Mayring (2000). The process began with repeatedly reading the reflections to grasp contextual meanings, identifying frequently occurring keywords with specific thematic content, then grouping similar meanings into categories (coding), and synthesizing them into main themes representing students' learning experiences.

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first stage, initial coding, involved identifying recurring terms and ideas such as ethics, inspirational, easy to understand, motivation, and reflection. The second stage, categorizing, involved organizing these meanings into four major themes representing aspects of reflective–inspirational learning. The third stage, interpreting, consisted of examining inter-theme relationships to construct a conceptual model explaining how reflective–inspirational learning contributes to strengthening students' research understanding, values, and attitudes.

Result

1. Students' Perceptions of Reflective–Inspirational Learning

The implementation of the reflective–inspirational learning model in the Research Methodology course demonstrated a significant shift in the way students perceived the process of learning research. What was once regarded as a difficult, rigid, and intimidating subject was now experienced as an enjoyable, inspiring, and intellectually as well as emotionally engaging journey that opened new horizons of understanding. Students began to view research not merely as an academic obligation, but as a journey toward discovering the meaning of knowledge, the self, and the social realities being studied.

In this learning model, the lecturer no longer acted solely as a transmitter of theory, but as a facilitator and inspirer who created a warm, dialogical classroom atmosphere enriched with contextual examples from real research experiences. This humanistic

approach fostered emotional engagement among students and established a conducive environment for the exploration of ideas and values. Within such an atmosphere, students were encouraged to think critically, express their ideas confidently, and cultivate intrinsic motivation to conduct research with academic honesty.

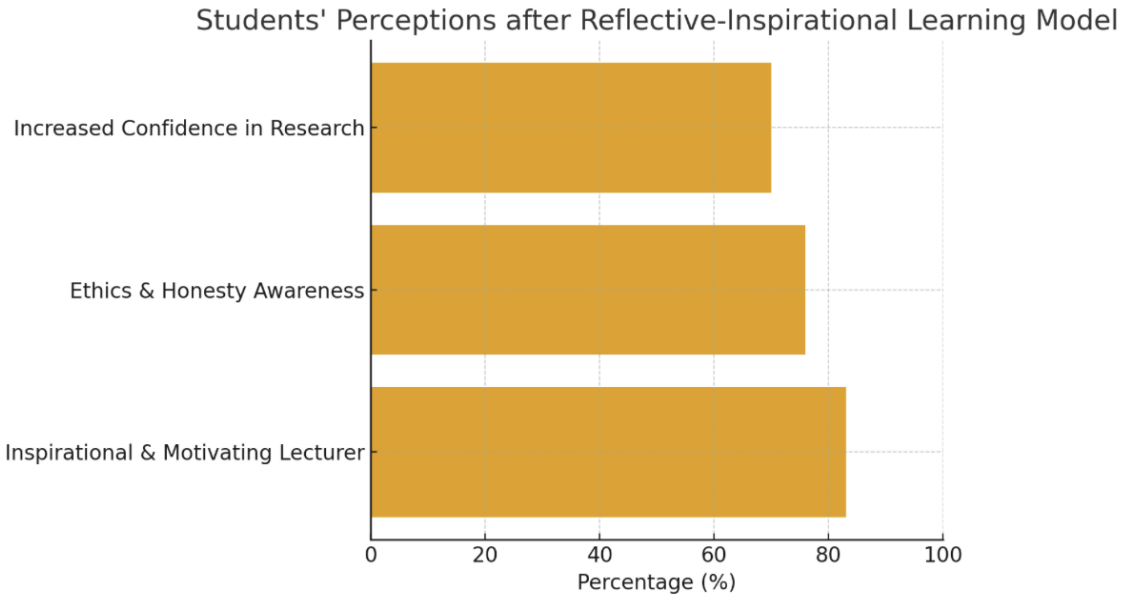
One student wrote in her reflection, "The teaching method doesn't only focus on theory, but includes inspiring stories that broaden our perspective" (MH). This statement illustrates a transformation in students' perceptions of research—from something tense and tedious into an activity that is challenging, motivating, and meaningful. Reflective–inspirational learning created a participatory classroom climate, where every student felt that their contribution mattered and experienced a learning process that touched cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions simultaneously.

These qualitative findings were reinforced by survey results from thirty students who participated in the course. As many as 83% described the lecturer as an inspiring and motivating figure in conducting research. 76% noted that ethical values and academic honesty were integral to the learning process, and 70% reported increased confidence in carrying out research. These data suggest that the implementation of the reflective – inspirational model successfully reached beyond the mere transfer of research methodology— it fostered the integration of knowledge, values, and scientific character.

Through this approach, students learned that research is not only about mastering techniques and scientific procedures but also about the courage to think critically and the honesty to pursue truth. They came to understand that every step of the research process embodies moral values and academic responsibility. When learning is infused with inspiration and reflection, research is no longer perceived as an administrative task, but as a spiritual–intellectual activity that leads students toward self-transformation. Thus, the application of the reflective–inspirational learning model has proven effective in cultivating young researchers who are not only methodologically competent but also ethically grounded and deeply reflective.

Figure 1

Students' Perceptions of the Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model



Description: The graph illustrates three main dimensions of students' perceptual changes after participating in the reflective–inspirational learning process.

2. Themes of Students' Reflections

Analysis of thirty students' written reflections revealed four major themes that represent the dynamics of their learning experiences during the Research Methodology course using the reflective–inspirational model. These four themes are learning comfort, ethical awareness, research literacy, and reflective self-growth. Each theme embodies affective, cognitive, and moral dimensions that intertwine within a humanistic and meaningful research learning process.

The learning comfort theme shows that students felt comfortable, relaxed, and unpressured while studying research due to an open, friendly, and empathetic classroom atmosphere. The lecturer was perceived as capable of creating a psychologically safe environment in which students could express opinions, ask questions, and discuss their difficulties without fear of judgment. This sense of security nurtured intrinsic motivation to learn and reduced the research anxietyoften associated with methodology courses.

The ethical awareness theme reflects an emerging consciousness about the importance of scientific honesty, anti-plagiarism attitudes, and moral responsibility at every stage of the research process. Students not only understood ethical concepts cognitively but also internalized them as personal commitments guiding their academic behavior. In their reflections, honesty, responsibility, and good intentions were frequently mentioned as the "soul" of genuine research.

The research literacy theme indicates a significant improvement in students' ability to comprehend methodological aspects of research, ranging from proposal writing, problem formulation, and data collection techniques to instrument validity and reliability. Students realized that research is not merely a technical task but a systematic thinking process that demands precision, patience, and scientific creativity.

Meanwhile, the reflective self-growth theme highlights students' growing awareness of their personal development throughout the research process. They began connecting theoretical knowledge with life experiences and personal spirituality. For some, conducting research was no longer just an academic requirement but a process of self-discovery and character formation as holistic learners.

Collectively, these four themes provide a comprehensive picture that research learning integrating reflection and inspiration not only enhances intellectual ability but also strengthens humanistic and spiritual values. The model successfully cultivates students who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and character-driven.

Table 1.

Themes of Students' Reflections in Reflective–Inspirational Learning

No	Reflection Theme	Key Findings Focus	Illustrative Student Quotation	Learning Implications
1	Learning Comfort	Students felt comfortable, unafraid of making mistakes, and enjoyed the learning process because of an open, warm, and	"I'm no longer afraid of making mistakes, because the lecturer always says that research is a learning process, not an exam".	A psychologically safe environment increases intrinsic

No	Reflection Theme	Key Findings Focus	Illustrative Student Quotation	Learning Implications
		empathetic classroom atmosphere.		motivation and reduces research anxiety.
	Ethical Awareness	A new awareness emerged regarding the importance of honesty, anti-plagiarism, and moral responsibility in research.	"Now I realize that copying without citing the source is not only academically wrong but also dishonest to myself".	Academic ethics become an internalized value rather than merely a formal rule.
	Research Literacy	Improved methodological understanding—from problem formulation to data analysis—through reflective and contextual approaches.	"At first I was confused about validity, but after it was explained through real research examples, I understood and became confident".	Reflective learning strengthens cognitive aspects while fostering research self-confidence.
	Reflective Self-Growth	Students experienced personal growth through the research process; understanding the connection between theory, life experience, and spiritual values.	"Research has helped me know myself better, be more patient, and realize why learning must come from sincere intentions".	Research learning becomes a medium for self-transformation toward becoming a holistic lifelong learner.

3. Learning Aspects Most Meaningful to Students

The analysis of students' written reflections revealed four learning aspects that were most memorable during their participation in the Research Methodology course using the reflective–inspirational model. These four aspects reflect learning experiences that are not only cognitive but also practical and ethical—together forming a holistic understanding of research.

The aspect mentioned most frequently by students was data collection techniques (40%). This part was considered the most engaging because it provided direct, hands-on experience in field research. Students felt that learning about research became more alive when they were actively involved in real interviews, observations, or questionnaire distribution. These activities fostered self-confidence and communication skills while strengthening their understanding of the relationship between theory and empirical reality.

The second aspect, discussed by 27% of students, was research ethics and anti-plagiarism. Students viewed this aspect as not only academically important but also morally meaningful. They learned that scientific integrity is not merely about adhering to

citation rules but also about honesty, responsibility, and personal honor as a researcher. These ethical values form the foundation of a civilized and dignified academic culture.

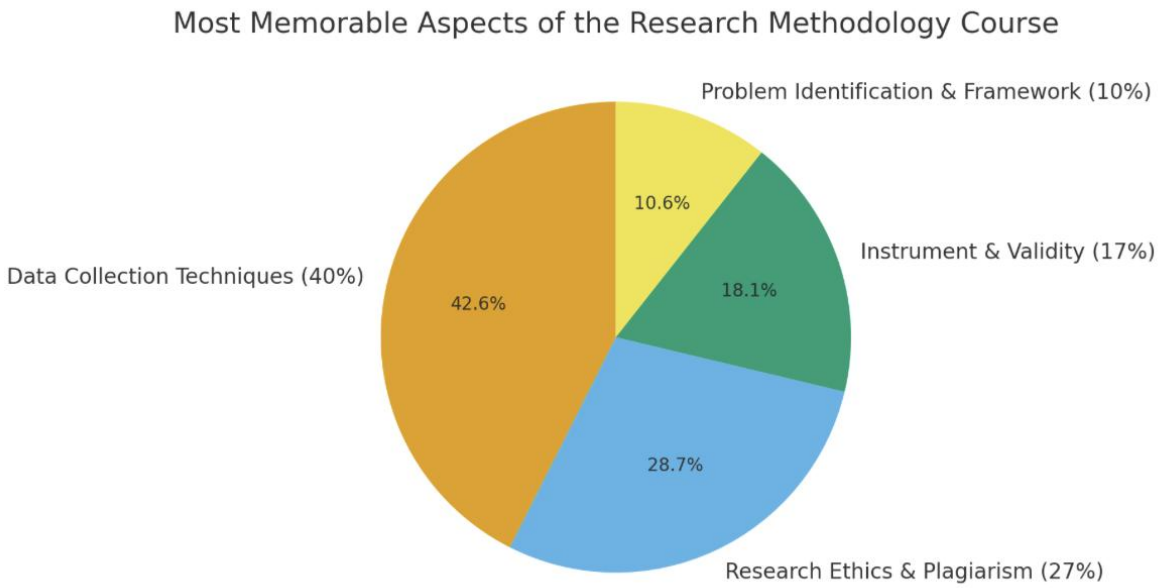
The third aspect, research instruments and validity (17%), was seen as challenging yet enriching for students' analytical abilities. Through the process of constructing and testing instrument validity, they learned to think logically, systematically, and critically about data. Reflective learning—accompanied by lecturer guidance and concrete examples—helped them understand that the accuracy of research largely depends on the quality of the instruments used.

The last aspect, conceptual framework and problem identification (10%), though mentioned less frequently, represented an intellectual challenge for many students. They realized that the initial stages of research—formulating problems and building conceptual frameworks—require sharp analytical thinking, social sensitivity, and reflective awareness of real-life phenomena.

Overall, these four aspects demonstrate a balance between cognitive mastery, practical experience, and ethical internalization, which together form the essence of reflective–inspirational learning. Students not only understood research concepts theoretically but also experienced a transformation in their way of thinking, behaving, and upholding ethical standards as future researchers. This process shows that learning research is, in essence, a journey toward becoming a scientific human being—one who thinks clearly, acts honestly, and lives reflectively.

Figure 2.

Learning Aspects Most Meaningful to Students



Overall, the findings of this study indicate that learning Research Methodology through a reflective–inspirational approach successfully builds a harmonious integration between scientific knowledge, ethical awareness, and students' personal growth. Through a learning process that combines reflection, dialogue, and inspiration, students not only learn research techniques cognitively but also experience transformation at the affective and moral levels. They come to understand research as both a scientific and spiritual activity—a process that nurtures honesty, self-awareness, and sensitivity to human values.

The reflective–inspirational approach has proven effective in creating a more dynamic, participatory, and meaningful academic environment. The classroom is no longer merely a space for knowledge transmission but a forum for value dialogue, where students discover the relevance between theory and real life. Every learning activity—whether discussions, reflective assignments, or field practices—serves as a medium for cultivating scientific character rooted in empathy and responsibility. Within this environment grows a learning climate that values students' uniqueness, courage, and critical thinking as active subjects in the learning process.

From a paradigmatic perspective, these findings align with the Curriculum of Love (Kurikulum Cinta) policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2025), which emphasizes the importance of value-based, empathetic, and compassionate education. This curriculum encourages learning that focuses not only on the mastery of academic competencies but also on the transformation of both knowledge and humanity. Thus, reflective–inspirational research learning becomes a concrete manifestation of a humanistic–transformative educational vision—making knowledge a means to love truth, honor others, and nurture holistic humanity.

Furthermore, this approach demonstrates great potential for replication in other courses, particularly within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI), as a learning model that harmonizes scientific reasoning with spiritual conscience. Amid the challenges of academic life often dominated by technical and administrative concerns, this model offers a refreshing spirit: education that breathes love, cultivates integrity, and humanizes knowledge.

Discussion

The study found that Reflective–Inspirational Learning in Research Methodology produced a significant impact on students' research attitudes. Students showed improvement not only in methodological understanding but also in self-awareness, motivation, and academic ethics. This transformation occurred through three mutually reinforcing mechanisms: Reflective Dialogue, Inspirational Modeling, and Ethical Internalization.

1. Reflective Dialogue: The Heart of Learning

Reflective dialogue serves as the core of the reflective–inspirational learning process. In practice, students are not only encouraged to think critically about theories and data but also to reflect on their learning experiences, uncover personal meanings behind the research process, and reinterpret its relevance to life values and spirituality. This process creates a dialectical space between cognition and affection—between thinking and feeling—enabling holistic and meaningful learning.

This approach aligns with Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice, which emphasizes that meaningful learning arises not merely from information absorption but from the capacity to "think in action" (reflection-in-action) and "think after action" (reflection-on-action). For students, reflection becomes not only a cognitive recall process but a metacognitive mechanism that cultivates self-awareness about how they think, act, and learn. Rodgers (2002) adds that reflection strengthens the connection between mind, emotion, and action—a unity that shapes mature academic and professional identity.

Reflective dialogue enhances metacognitive regulation and emotional intelligence. Through reflection, students learn to recognize their own thinking and emotional patterns

when facing research challenges. This corresponds with Zimmerman's (2002) theory of self-regulated learning, which highlights self-reflection as key to effective learning strategies. Reflection also nurtures empathy and moral awareness—parts of the affective domain often neglected in higher education, which tends to overemphasize cognition. When students engage in value-based dialogues about research, they are cultivating moral introspection, intrinsic motivation, and balance between reason and conscience—the three pillars of psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Reflective dialogue also builds a dialogical and participatory academic culture, transforming the lecturer–student relationship from hierarchical to egalitarian. This echoes Habermas's (1984) concept of communicative action, which calls for intersubjective rationality based on mutual understanding and open listening. In a reflective classroom, students are not passive recipients but co-creators of meaning, forming a learning community that promotes academic solidarity and social sensitivity within scholarship.

Moreover, reflective dialogue carries a liberatory meaning. Freire (1970) in Pedagogy of the Oppressed argues that liberating education is dialogical—it enables learners to become agents of change rather than recipients of dogma. Reflection helps students become aware of power structures in knowledge production and gives them courage to challenge dominant assumptions that stifle scientific creativity. This process cultivates critical consciousness (conscientization)—the awareness that research is not only an academic task but also a moral and political act.

Reflective dialogue also instills awareness of scientific responsibility and moral consequence. Students learn that plagiarism, data manipulation, and ethical violations are not merely academic offenses but breaches of scientific integrity that damage institutional credibility. Open discussions help them understand policies such as the Ministerial Regulation No. 17/2010 on the Prevention and Mitigation of Plagiarism in Higher Education as moral guides, not just bureaucratic obligations. Here, reflection bridges ethical awareness and legal compliance —students follow rules not out of fear, but from moral conviction.

From an Islamic perspective, reflective dialogue resonates with tafaqquh fi al-din — the deep process of understanding knowledge as a path to truth. The Qur'an repeatedly calls humans to yatafakkarūn (reflect) and yatadabbarūn(contemplate deeply). Reflection in research is thus an intellectual dhikr combining intellect ('aql), heart (qalb), and morality (akhlaq). It builds both epistemological and spiritual consciousness, affirming that knowledge is an amanah (trust) to be upheld with honesty, love for truth, and responsibility for the public good.

Hence, reflective dialogue is not just a pedagogical strategy —it is a multidimensional transformative process, shaping students into self-aware, critical, empathetic, and morally grounded individuals capable of disseminating knowledge with civility.

2. Inspirational Modeling: The Role of the Lecturer

The second mechanism, Inspirational Modeling, emphasizes the lecturer's role as a living example who embodies intellectual passion, integrity, and courage. In the reflective–inspirational model, the lecturer is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a living curriculum—conveying values through behavior, attitude, and authenticity.

According to Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, learning occurs not only through verbal instruction but also through observational learning, where individuals imitate credible models. In research education, students learn not only about research but how to

be researchers by observing their lecturers' scientific honesty, patience, and integrity. Such modeling generates deep affective and motivational impact.

An inspirational lecturer fosters emotional resonance (Hamre & Pianta, 2006)—a positive emotional connection that enhances academic engagement and persistence. Witnessing genuine enthusiasm for research triggers emotional contagion (Rizzolatti, 2004), activating mirror neurons that enable students to "feel" their teacher's passion. This shared energy builds confidence and intrinsic motivation to explore research independently.

Inspirational modeling cultivates an academic habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) based on hard work, collaboration, and honesty. It promotes a culture that values process over performance and sincerity over manipulation. The relationship between lecturer and student transforms into a humanistic mentorship, fostering a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) where learning grows through authentic interaction and shared example.

Such moral and intellectual leadership also acts as a counter-narrative to the pragmatism and bureaucracy that often dominate academia. Inspirational lecturers model academic leadership that liberates students from intellectual fear and feudal culture. By exemplifying the courage to uphold truth, they demonstrate that science must serve as a moral force against injustice.

In the Indonesian context, this moral modeling holds strategic value: it proves that academic integrity can thrive amid bureaucratic pressure and political interests. Thus, inspirational modeling is both a pedagogical and ethical–political act—a quiet resistance against the banality of power.

In Islamic terms, the lecturer functions as uswah hasanah—a noble example. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught that compassion and truth are more powerful than words alone. This aligns with tarbiyah bil qudwah (education through example). In research teaching, an honest, patient, and humble lecturer is not only imparting knowledge but teaching scholarly adab. Such modeling nurtures scientific spirituality —the awareness that research is an act of worship, and integrity is a form of faith.

Ultimately, inspirational modeling animates the soul of learning —it unites psychological motivation, social connection, moral authority, and spiritual purpose. Through the teacher's example, students learn not only about research but about becoming humane researchers.

3. Ethical Internalization: Building Moral Consciousness

The third mechanism, Ethical Internalization, involves the process by which moral values and scientific integrity become part of students' academic identity. Ethics here are not external rules but inner awareness that guides behavior with responsibility. Learning research thus develops both intellectual competence and moral consciousness (Palmer, 1998).

Ethical internalization happens through experience, reflection, and modeling. Students do not merely memorize what is right or wrong but feel the moral consequences of their actions—such as honesty in data collection, fairness in interpretation, and responsibility in publication.

This process reflects the highest stage of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981), where individuals act from universal principles, not fear of punishment. It also aligns with moral identity theory (Aquino & Reed, 2002): values like honesty and justice become part of one's self-concept. Students' reflections—"Doing research honestly makes me feel peaceful" or

"I'm ashamed to copy others' work"—indicate a shift from normative compliance to ethical autonomy.

Ethical reflection also builds self-integrity and moral resilience, helping students stay committed to their values despite social or academic pressure. Lecturers facilitate this by helping students resolve inner conflicts between practicality and morality, turning ethical learning into a healing process for academic integrity.

Socially, ethical internalization cultivates a civilized academic culture—a moral ecology (Durkheim, 1925) where trust and collective responsibility thrive. Students learn that academic credibility stems from honesty, and honesty sustains the community of academic integrity.

Ethical internalization also serves as moral resistance to corrupt academic practices and the "publish or perish" culture that prioritizes output over integrity. Reflective–inspirational learning teaches students to resist these pressures through a simple yet revolutionary act: honesty. In Freire's (1970) terms, true education is not only critical but also ethical and liberating, fostering moral courage to oppose epistemic injustice.

This process bridges regulations and moral conviction. Academic laws (e.g., Ministerial Regulation No. 31/2021 on Research and Community Service) serve as outer controls, while internalized ethics function as inner controls. When the inner control is strong, compliance arises from integrity, not surveillance.

In Islam, ethics are inseparable from faith. Values such as sidq (honesty), amanah (responsibility), adl (justice), and ihsan(benevolence) form the moral foundation of all scholarly activity. Research, therefore, becomes part of ibadah al-'ilm—the spiritual pursuit of truth and benefit. The Qur'an condemns deceit and injustice, as in Surah Al-Mutaffifin (83:1–3), reminding that dishonesty in any form—including data manipulation—is a moral transgression.

Thus, value-based research learning instills spiritual scientific consciousness, where honesty and accountability are not just academic norms but expressions of taqwa. Students learn to conduct research not for grades but for truth and communal good (maslahah 'ammah). The lecturer, as murabbi al-'ilm (educator of knowledge), becomes the mediator of divine values in academia.

In sum, ethical internalization within reflective–inspirational learning is a mechanism of moral and spiritual transformation in higher education. Psychologically, it builds self-awareness; socially, it shapes a civilized academic culture; politically, it resists shallow scholarship; legally, it upholds scientific integrity; and spiritually, it restores knowledge to its sacred purpose—seeking truth for the betterment of humanity.

Consequently, value-based research education produces not only competent researchers but also scholars of character, dignity, and faith—realizing the vision of the Curriculum of Love (Kemenag RI, 2025): nurturing academic persons who unite intellect, empathy, and compassion in spreading knowledge that enlightens civilization.

These findings reinforce Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning, where critical reflection on experience leads to fundamental changes in one's thinking, feeling, and behavior. Students who once saw research as a technical task now view it as a space for contemplation and self-growth—a perspective transformation that reshapes their values and actions.

Finally, this reflective–inspirational approach coheres with the Islamic paradigm of education, which treats knowledge not merely as accumulation but as a path toward tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the self) and ta'dib (education toward civility). Research

thus becomes a form of intellectual worship, grounded in honesty (sidq), trust (amanah), and love for truth. Through this, Research Methodology learning not only strengthens students' scientific competence but also cultivates moral integrity and spiritual depth—the marks of a knowledgeable and noble scholar.

Conclusion

The Reflective–Inspirational Learning Model in teaching *Research Methodology* has been proven to have a significant impact on students' intellectual, ethical, and personal development. This learning approach not only deepens students' conceptual understanding of the research process but also cultivates ethical awareness and academic honesty—core foundations of the scientific world. Through an emphasis on reflection, dialogue, and inspiration, students experience a transformation in how they perceive research—from an abstract academic assignment to a meaningful journey that engages cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously.

Furthermore, this model successfully fosters intrinsic motivation and the courage to conduct research. An empathetic, dialogical, and inspiring classroom atmosphere creates a more humanistic learning experience, where students feel valued as thinking, feeling, and growing individuals. When lecturers serve as inspirational models, embodying academic integrity and humanistic values, the research learning process becomes vibrant and transformative rather than rigid and procedural.

The reflective–inspirational approach also demonstrates its ability to bridge theory, experience, and moral values. Students not only grasp methodological concepts but also internalize values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy at every stage of research. Thus, research becomes a medium for shaping academic character—a learning process that nurtures integrity, moral sensitivity, and spiritual awareness in practicing the scholarly profession. This model deserves broader adoption in higher education, particularly in research-related courses often perceived as difficult, abstract, or intimidating. Through a reflective and inspirational approach, research education can be realigned with its true essence: not merely training technical competence, but cultivating holistic academic persons—knowledgeable, ethical, and deeply humane.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

The author takes full responsibility for the entire process of this research and the writing of this article—from conceptual design, data collection, and analysis of students' reflections to drawing conclusions and preparing the final manuscript. All stages were carried out independently, upholding the principles of academic honesty, scientific integrity, and research ethics.

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support from an academic partner, particularly in fostering an academic environment that supports reflective, ethical, and value-based scholarly inquiry.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from students' written reflections collected during the Research Methodology course in the Biology Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The data consist of anonymized qualitative reflection documents that were analyzed using content analysis procedures. To protect participants' privacy and comply with research ethics, the raw data are not publicly archived. However, the data are available from the author upon reasonable request for academic and research purposes.

Declaration of interests statement

The author declares that there are no known financial interests, personal relationships, institutional affiliations, or other competing interests that could have influenced the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of the findings, or the writing of this article.

Additional information

This study is part of a broader academic effort to develop reflective, ethical, and value-based pedagogical models in higher education, particularly within the context of Islamic higher education institutions. The author welcomes scholarly dialogue, critical feedback, and academic collaboration related to research methodology instruction, reflective pedagogy, and transformative learning. Further information regarding this research and related publications may be obtained by contacting the author via email at evalatipah1@gmail.com.

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