

A Conceptual Framework for Elucidating the Epistemological Foundations of Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity for the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence: Emphasizing the Teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has created new opportunities and challenges for higher education. The responsible use of this technology extends beyond the mere ability to operate intelligent tools; it also requires academic readiness and adherence to the principles of academic integrity. Despite the significance of these two constructs, the existing literature has generally examined them within separate theoretical frameworks, while the potential of Islamic epistemological sources to deepen their theoretical foundations has received limited attention. Accordingly, the present study aimed to develop a conceptual framework for explaining the epistemological, educational, and ethical foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity in the context of AI, with particular emphasis on the teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. This study employed a theoretical review approach using document analysis, concept analysis, and theoretical synthesis. First, the literature

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on academic readiness, academic integrity, and the responsible use of AI in higher education was reviewed to identify their principal components. Subsequently, selected concepts from *Nahj al-Balaghah* were examined through concept analysis to explore their potential for explaining the theoretical foundations of the research constructs. The objective was not to establish direct conceptual equivalence between classical concepts and contemporary constructs, but rather to identify the capacity of *Nahj al-Balaghah* to enrich the study's theoretical framework. The findings indicated that concepts such as reason (*'aql*), wisdom (*hikmah*), the unity of knowledge and action, self-accountability, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, and responsibility can serve as foundational components for reinterpreting academic readiness and academic integrity in the age of AI. Based on the theoretical synthesis, a conceptual framework was developed in which academic readiness provides the cognitive, psychological, and technological capacities required for informed engagement with AI, whereas academic integrity determines the ethical orientation and sense of responsibility guiding such engagement. By integrating contemporary higher education literature with the epistemological resources of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, this study proposes an integrative framework for a deeper understanding of the foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity amid technological transformation. The proposed framework may provide a basis for future empirical research, the design of educational programs, and the development of institutional policies regarding the responsible use of AI in higher education.

Keywords: Academic Readiness, Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Higher Education.



1. Introduction

1.1. The Transformation of Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has transformed learning, teaching, research, and knowledge production in higher education. AI-based tools are increasingly used for content generation, information analysis, translation, programming, and educational and research support, offering opportunities to enhance productivity, personalize learning, and expand access to scholarly resources (Kasneci et al., 2023: 102274). However, their widespread use has also raised concerns about learning quality, intellectual independence, the authenticity of scholarly work, intellectual property, and research credibility (UNESCO, 2023: 24–25). Therefore, higher education must develop not only students' technological skills but also the cognitive, psychological, and value-based capacities required for informed and responsible AI use.

1.2. Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity

In this context, academic readiness and academic integrity have become increasingly important. Academic readiness refers to the capacities required for learning, research, problem-solving, and decision-making, including cognitive abilities, self-regulation, psychological readiness, technological competence, and awareness of ethical requirements (Pintrich, 2000: 451–452; Zimmerman, 2000: 13–14). Academic integrity, in contrast, encompasses the principles that guide scholarly conduct and protect the credibility of education and research. The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) identifies honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage as its fundamental values (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021: 4). Although conceptually distinct, academic readiness and academic integrity are complementary in the age of AI. Technological competence without ethical responsibility cannot ensure appropriate AI use, while ethical commitment without sufficient cognitive and technological capabilities may limit its effective use.

1.3. The Potential of *Nahj al-Balaghah* for Explaining the Conceptual Foundations of the Study

Nahj al-Balaghah, as an influential epistemological and ethical text in the Islamic intellectual tradition, contains teachings concerning knowledge, learning, human conduct, and social responsibility. Concepts such as reason, wisdom, self-accountability, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, and responsibility provide valuable perspectives for understanding scholarly behavior. This study does not seek to establish direct equivalence between these concepts and contemporary higher education constructs.



Rather, through concept analysis and theoretical synthesis, it examines their potential to elucidate the foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity.

1.4. Research Objective and Contribution

This study aims to develop a conceptual framework for explaining the epistemological foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity in the responsible use of artificial intelligence, with emphasis on the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah. It addresses the following research questions:

2. How can the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah contribute to explaining the epistemological and ethical foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity?

3. How can concept analysis and theoretical synthesis contribute to developing a conceptual framework for responsible AI use in higher education?

The study contributes by connecting contemporary higher education literature with the epistemological resources of Nahj al-Balaghah without treating either as a substitute for the other; integrating academic readiness and academic integrity as complementary constructs for engagement with AI; and proposing a conceptual framework that may support future empirical research, assessment instrument development, and educational programs promoting responsible AI use in higher education.

2. Problem Statement

Previous research has examined various dimensions of academic readiness, academic integrity, self-regulated learning, and the use of emerging technologies. However, these domains have generally been investigated within separate theoretical frameworks. Consequently, there remains a need for conceptual frameworks capable of integrating the cognitive, individual, and value-based foundations of engagement with intelligent technologies into a coherent theoretical model. Moreover, most existing frameworks have been developed within contemporary human sciences, while the potential of Islamic epistemological resources to explain concepts such as knowledge, reason, responsibility, trustworthiness, and ethics in higher education and emerging technologies has received comparatively little attention. Therefore, exploring the potential of these resources to enrich the theoretical foundations of higher education constructs may contribute to the development of interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks.



3. Theoretical Foundations

3.1. Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Higher Education

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has become a major driver of transformation in higher education. Its capabilities in content generation, information processing, translation, programming, and support for teaching and research offer opportunities to improve the quality and efficiency of academic practices (Kasneci et al., 2023: 102274). However, its widespread adoption has also raised concerns regarding learning quality, intellectual independence, the authenticity of scholarly work, intellectual property, and research credibility (UNESCO, 2023: 24–25). Therefore, the challenge is not merely to provide access to AI or develop technical skills, but to enable students to engage with these technologies critically and responsibly through appropriate cognitive, self-regulatory, technological, and ethical capacities.

3.2. The Concept of Academic Readiness

Academic readiness refers to the capacities and competencies required for effective learning, research, problem-solving, and decision-making in higher education. Beyond subject-specific knowledge, it includes managing the learning process, using academic resources effectively, adapting to new educational environments, and engaging with academic challenges (Pintrich, 2000: 451–452; Zimmerman, 2000: 13–14). In the age of AI, academic readiness also requires the ability to critically evaluate information, interact thoughtfully with intelligent technologies, and maintain intellectual independence. Based on the literature, it can be conceptualized through four dimensions:

Cognitive Readiness: The ability to analyze information, think critically, solve problems, and evaluate information credibility, particularly when assessing AI-generated outputs (Kasneci et al., 2023: 102274).

Psychological Readiness: Self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy, and the ability to manage learning through goal setting, performance monitoring, and strategy adjustment (Pintrich, 2000: 451–452; Zimmerman, 2000: 13–14).

Technological Readiness: The ability to select, evaluate, and effectively use digital technologies for educational and research purposes (Vuorikari et al., 2022: 3–4).

Ethical Readiness: The ability to recognize ethical issues, make responsible decisions, and consider the consequences of scholarly conduct (Rest, 1986: 3–5).



Thus, academic readiness represents a set of complementary capacities enabling informed, purposeful, and responsible engagement with academic activities.

3.3. The Concept of Academic Integrity

Academic integrity refers to the values and principles that preserve the credibility of education, research, and knowledge production and guide scholarly conduct. It extends beyond avoiding misconduct to encompass a broader commitment to ethical academic behavior (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021: 4–5).

According to the International Center for Academic Integrity, six core values constitute academic integrity (**International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021: 5**):

- **Honesty:** Truthfulness and authenticity in producing and presenting knowledge.

- **Trust:** Scholarly relationships based on reliability and mutual confidence.

- **Fairness:** Justice and impartiality in academic activities.

- **Respect:** Recognition of the rights, perspectives, and dignity of others.

- **Responsibility:** Accountability for academic decisions and conduct.

- **Courage:** Commitment to academic principles under difficult circumstances.

In the age of AI, these values are particularly important because intelligent technologies raise questions about authorship, transparency, authenticity, and responsibility in knowledge production.

3.4. The Relationship between Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity

Academic readiness and academic integrity are distinct but complementary. Academic readiness provides the cognitive, psychological, technological, and ethical capacities required for effective academic engagement, while academic integrity provides the principles that guide such engagement. In AI-supported environments, technological competence without academic integrity may lead to inappropriate use, whereas ethical commitment without sufficient cognitive and technological competence may limit effective use. Examining both constructs together therefore provides a more comprehensive basis for understanding responsible AI use in higher education.

3.5. Positioning the Present Study Within the Existing Literature

Existing frameworks, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Digital Competence Framework (DigComp), self-regulated learning theory, and academic integrity framework, address different aspects of technology use and scholarly behavior (Davis, 1989: 320; Vuorikari et al., 2022: 3–4; Zimmerman, 2000: 13–14; International Center



for Academic Integrity, 2021: 4–5). However, they largely originate from contemporary human sciences and give limited attention to alternative epistemological traditions in explaining concepts such as knowledge, responsibility, and scholarly conduct. The present study therefore draws on the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah to enrich the conceptual foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity in the context of responsible AI use.

4. Research Method

4.1. Research Approach

This study is a fundamental, theoretical review employing document analysis, concept analysis, and theoretical synthesis to develop a conceptual framework for explaining the epistemological foundations of academic readiness and academic integrity in the responsible use of artificial intelligence, with particular emphasis on the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah. Since the study focuses on the analysis and conceptual development of constructs rather than empirical testing of causal relationships, a theoretical review approach was adopted (Jabareen, 2009: 49–52; Snyder, 2019: 333–335). The study first examined the core constructs in contemporary higher education literature, then analyzed relevant epistemological and ethical concepts from Nahj al-Balaghah, and finally integrated the findings through theoretical synthesis.

4.2. Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to identify and organize the theoretical foundations of the study. Sources included scholarly articles, academic books, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks related to higher education, academic readiness, academic integrity, and AI use in educational settings. Relevant literature was identified through Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Persian academic databases. *Nahj al-Balaghah* and its authoritative commentaries were also examined as the principal sources for analyzing epistemological and ethical concepts. Sources were selected based on their relevance, scholarly credibility, theoretical contribution, and suitability for developing the conceptual framework. The selected documents were then analyzed to identify and organize the concepts required for subsequent stages (Bowen, 2009: 27–29; Grant & Booth, 2009: 93–95).

4.3. Concept Analysis

Concept analysis was used to examine the study's core concepts and the potential of *Nahj al-Balaghah* to enrich their theoretical foundations. Concepts from different epistemological traditions may be expressed through distinct conceptual frameworks while contributing to the understanding and development of a common phenomenon (Rodgers,



2000: 77–81; Walker & Avant, 2019: 163–166). Accordingly, the definitions and dimensions of academic readiness and academic integrity were first identified in contemporary literature. Relevant epistemological, educational, and ethical concepts in *Nahj al-Balaghah* concerning knowledge, reason, responsibility, and human conduct were then identified and analyzed. The purpose was not to establish direct equivalence between these concepts and contemporary constructs, but to examine their potential for strengthening their theoretical foundations. Concepts were included in the final framework based on three criteria:

1. Direct relevance to the research problem;
2. Support from authentic textual evidence in *Nahj al-Balaghah*;
3. Theoretical relevance to academic readiness, academic integrity, or responsible AI use.

4.4. Development and Synthesis of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was developed through four stages involving the analysis and integration of concepts derived from contemporary higher education literature and the teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. *Nahj al-Balaghah* was not treated as a substitute for contemporary theories, but as an epistemological resource for explaining concepts related to knowledge, responsibility, and scholarly conduct. The resulting framework was evaluated in terms of conceptual coherence, theoretical consistency, and its capacity to explain the research problem (Jabareen, 2009: 51–54; Snyder, 2019: 336–339).

Table 1. Stages of Developing the Conceptual Framework

Stage	Activity	Output
Document Analysis	Review of the literature on higher education, academic readiness, academic integrity, and artificial intelligence	Identification of the principal constructs and concepts
Concept Analysis	Examination of <i>Nahj al-Balaghah</i> concepts related to knowledge, reason, ethics, and responsibility	Identification of relevant epistemological and ethical concepts
Conceptual Relationship Analysis	Examination of the potential of <i>Nahj al-Balaghah</i> concepts to enrich the theoretical foundations of the research constructs	Development of theoretical linkages among concepts
Theoretical Synthesis	Organization of the selected concepts into a coherent conceptual structure	Proposed conceptual framework



5. Findings of the Concept Analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

5.1. Foundation of the Concept Analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

The concept analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah* in this study was not conducted with the intention of identifying direct equivalents for contemporary higher education constructs. Concepts such as academic readiness and academic integrity have emerged within the theoretical context of modern educational sciences and higher education and therefore cannot be directly equated with concepts found in classical texts. Accordingly, *Nahj al-Balaghah* was examined as an epistemological and educational resource capable of contributing to the explanation of concepts related to cognition, learning, responsibility, and human conduct. The concept analysis focused on identifying concepts from *Nahj al-Balaghah* that were both supported by authentic textual evidence and conceptually relevant to the dimensions examined in this study, namely cognitive capacities, self-regulation, academic responsibility, and ethical values. Consequently, concepts including reason (*'aql*), wisdom (*hikmah*), self-awareness and self-accountability, the unity of knowledge and action, trustworthiness, truthfulness, justice, and responsibility were identified as the principal concepts of the analysis. These concepts were considered not as substitutes for contemporary constructs but as epistemological and ethical foundations that enrich their interpretation.

5.2. Reason and Wisdom: Epistemological Foundations for Conscious Engagement with Knowledge and Technology

One of the central themes of *Nahj al-Balaghah* is the emphasis on reason and wisdom as guiding principles of human conduct. From this perspective, knowledge acquires value only when accompanied by sound judgment, careful deliberation, and informed decision-making. Imam Ali (as) states:

(*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Saying 113) «لَا غِنَى كَالْعَقْلِ»

This statement presents reason as one of humanity's greatest assets. Within the conceptual framework of the present study, reason is understood as the capacity for evaluation, discernment, and sound judgment—a capacity closely associated with critical thinking, information evaluation, and scholarly decision-making. Likewise, the concept of wisdom emphasizes the appropriate application of knowledge and its use in the proper context. Knowledge, therefore, is not merely the accumulation of information but requires an understanding of circumstances, anticipation of consequences, and the selection of appropriate actions. Accordingly, reason and wisdom constitute epistemological foundations for understanding the cognitive dimensions of informed decision-making in the context of emerging technologies.



5.3. Self-Awareness and Self-Accountability: Foundations of Self-Regulation and Personal Responsibility

Another important theme in *Nahj al-Balaghah* concerns self-knowledge and the continuous evaluation of one's own conduct. The concept of self-accountability is based on the principle that individuals should examine their own inner state and actions before judging external matters. Imam Ali (A.S.) states:

(*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Saying 208) «مَنْ حَاسَبَ نَفْسَهُ رَيْحَ»

From an analytical perspective, this concept corresponds to ideas such as self-assessment, self-monitoring, and behavioral regulation found in theories of self-regulated learning. However, *Nahj al-Balaghah* frames this process within an ethical and educational context. Consequently, self-awareness and self-accountability may be regarded as epistemological foundations for understanding self-regulation, intellectual independence, and individual responsibility in scholarly activities.

5.4. Knowledge Accompanied by Action: The Relationship Between Knowledge and Responsible Practice

In *Nahj al-Balaghah*, knowledge attains its full value only when it is translated into action. Imam Ali (A.S.) states:

(*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Saying 366) «تَمَرَّةُ الْعِلْمِ الْعَمَلُ بِهِ»

This teaching suggests that knowledge separated from appropriate action lacks its full human significance. Within the context of this study, it is interpreted as emphasizing the necessity of transforming knowledge into responsible scholarly practice. Thus, the unity of knowledge and action provides an epistemological basis for the view that scientific and technological competence becomes meaningful only when exercised responsibly in real-world academic practice.

5.5. Trustworthiness and Truthfulness: Foundations of Academic Authenticity and Scholarly Trust

Trustworthiness and commitment to truth are among the important concepts emphasized in *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Within this perspective, individuals are responsible for whatever is entrusted to them, and knowledge is no exception. In Letter 53, Imam Ali (as) emphasizes the importance of trustworthiness in fulfilling social responsibilities. From the standpoint of concept analysis, trustworthiness and truthfulness provide an epistemological basis for understanding values such as academic authenticity, proper attribution of knowledge, avoidance of distortion, and responsibility in the production and dissemination of information. In the context of artificial intelligence, these concepts become particularly important because the use of AI-generated content requires transparency,



the preservation of academic authenticity, and accountability for generated outputs.

6.6. Justice and Responsibility: The Social Dimensions of Scholarly Conduct

Nahj al-Balaghah regards justice and responsibility as fundamental principles of social order. In Letter 53, justice is presented as one of the foundations of sound governance. Within the present study, justice and responsibility contribute to understanding the social dimensions of scholarly conduct, including fairness, consideration of the consequences of decisions, and accountability in the use of knowledge and technology. Rather than being treated as direct equivalents of particular dimensions of academic integrity, these concepts function as ethical foundations for understanding responsible scholarly behavior.

5.7. Summary of the Concept Analysis

The concept analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah* demonstrates that the text offers a rich body of epistemological and ethical concepts capable of contributing to the theoretical understanding of academic readiness and academic integrity.

These concepts include:

- **Reason and wisdom** as the foundations of discernment and the prudent use of knowledge;
- **Self-awareness and self-accountability** as the foundations of self-regulation and behavioral improvement;
- **The unity of knowledge and action** as the link between knowledge and responsible practice;
- **Trustworthiness and truthfulness** as the foundations of academic authenticity;
- **Justice and responsibility** as the foundations of scholarly and social conduct.

Accordingly, *Nahj al-Balaghah* is not presented as an alternative framework to contemporary higher education theories. Rather, it serves as an epistemological resource for enriching the understanding of academic readiness and academic integrity in the age of artificial intelligence.

6. Theoretical Synthesis and Development of the Conceptual Framework

6.1. Identification of the Principal Components of the Conceptual Framework

Based on the document analysis, concept analysis, and examination of the teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, the proposed conceptual framework was organized into three primary levels. The first level consists of the epistemological and ethical foundations extracted from the concept



analysis of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. These foundations include reason, wisdom, self-awareness, the unity of knowledge and action, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, and responsibility. These concepts are not regarded as substitutes for contemporary higher education constructs; rather, they function as epistemological foundations for a deeper understanding of scholarly conduct and responsible engagement with technology.

The second level comprises the two principal constructs of the study: academic readiness and academic integrity. Academic readiness represents the cognitive, psychological, and technological capacities required for informed engagement with academic environments and emerging technologies, whereas academic integrity provides the ethical orientation and guiding principles governing scholarly conduct.

The third level represents the responsible use of artificial intelligence, which is conceptualized as the outcome of the interaction between academic readiness and academic integrity. In this framework, effective use of AI becomes possible only when individual competencies are accompanied by academic and ethical values.

Table 2. Relationship Between *Nahj al-Balaghah* Concepts and the Proposed Conceptual Framework

Concepts from <i>Nahj al-Balaghah</i>	Epistemological Role within the Conceptual Framework
Reason and Wisdom	Strengthening discernment, critical evaluation, and informed decision-making
Self-Awareness and Self-Accountability	Enhancing self-regulation and performance evaluation
Knowledge Accompanied by Action	Linking knowledge to responsible practice
Truthfulness	Promoting academic authenticity and the pursuit of truth
Trustworthiness	Supporting responsibility in the production and dissemination of knowledge
Justice	Encouraging fairness and consideration of the social consequences of scholarly conduct
Responsibility	Accepting accountability for academic decisions and scholarly performance

6.2. Conceptual Synthesis of Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity

The theoretical synthesis indicates that academic readiness and academic integrity are two distinct yet interrelated constructs. Academic readiness equips individuals with the capacities required to engage with



academic challenges, evaluate information, learn independently, and use technology purposefully. Academic integrity, in contrast, determines the ethical and value-based framework within which these capacities should be exercised. From the perspective of the proposed framework, the ability to use artificial intelligence without principles such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility may result in superficial or inappropriate use of the technology. Likewise, ethical values alone cannot be translated into effective scholarly conduct without the cognitive abilities necessary for critical analysis, learning, and the effective use of technology. Accordingly, the responsible use of artificial intelligence is not the product of a single construct but rather the outcome of the interaction between individuals' cognitive and technological capacities and the ethical values that govern scholarly conduct.

6.3. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical synthesis, the proposed conceptual framework is organized into four hierarchical levels.

Level 1: Epistemological Foundations of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

The first level comprises the epistemological and ethical principles that shape individuals' perspectives toward knowledge, technology, and responsibility. These include:

- Reason
- Wisdom
- Self-awareness
- Knowledge accompanied by action
- Truthfulness
- Trustworthiness
- Justice
- Responsibility

This level serves as the theoretical and ethical foundation of the conceptual framework.

Level 2: Academic Readiness

The second level consists of the capacities that prepare students for scholarly activities and engagement with emerging technologies. These include:

- Cognitive readiness
- Psychological readiness
- Technological readiness
- Ethical readiness

This level represents individuals' ability to understand, evaluate, and effectively utilize academic and technological resources.



Level 3: Academic Integrity

The third level comprises the values that guide scholarly conduct. These include:

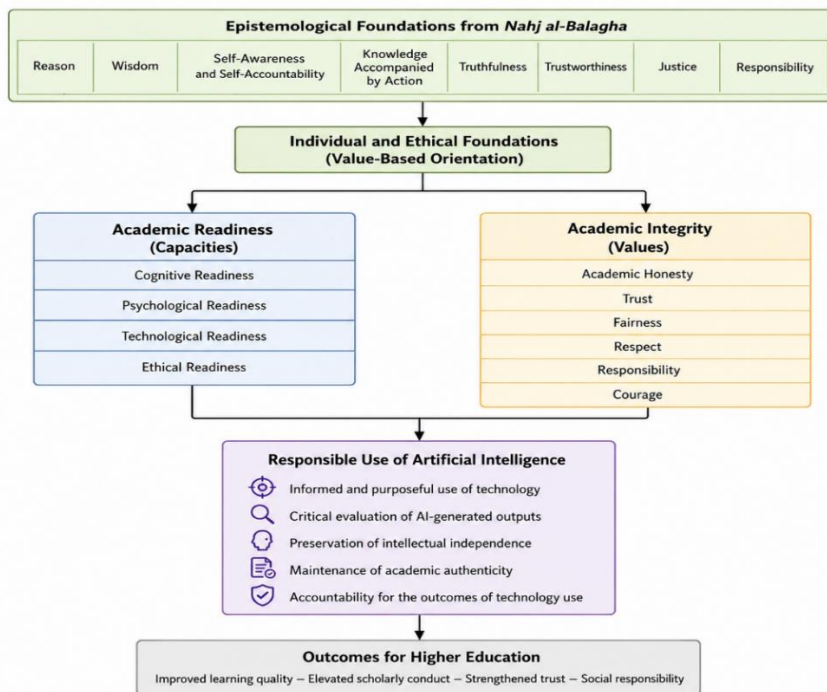
- Academic honesty
- Trust
- Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Courage

This level ensures that knowledge and technology are employed in accordance with accepted academic principles.

Level 4: Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

The interaction between academic readiness and academic integrity leads to the development of a model of responsible artificial intelligence use characterized by:

- Informed and purposeful use of AI technologies
- Critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs
- Preservation of intellectual independence
- Maintenance of academic authenticity
- Accountability for the outcomes of AI use



7. Discussion

7.1. Interpretation of the Proposed Framework

This study developed a conceptual framework for explaining academic readiness and academic integrity in the context of artificial intelligence, drawing on the epistemological resources of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. The findings indicate that its teachings can enrich the understanding of cognition, responsibility, academic authenticity, and scholarly conduct at epistemological and ethical levels. The framework suggests that responsible AI use depends not only on technological competence but also on the interaction between individual capacities and ethical principles. Academic readiness provides capacities such as critical analysis, self-regulation, and purposeful technology use, while academic integrity guides their ethical application. Accordingly, AI is neither inherently beneficial nor harmful to academic quality; its outcomes depend on users' readiness and commitment to academic principles. Concepts such as reason, wisdom, self-awareness, trustworthiness, and responsibility in *Nahj al-Balaghah* provide an epistemological basis for understanding this relationship.

7.2. Relationship Between the Proposed Framework and Contemporary Theories

The proposed framework both overlaps with and extends existing approaches. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) emphasizes perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption (Davis, 1989: 320), whereas the present framework argues that technology acceptance alone cannot explain the quality and responsibility of AI use.

Similarly, the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) emphasizes competencies required for effective technology use (Vuorikari et al., 2022: 3–4), while the present framework highlights the ethical principles necessary to guide these competencies. Self-regulated learning theories emphasize planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation (Pintrich, 2000: 451–452; Zimmerman, 2000: 13–14), capacities that are applied here specifically to engagement with AI. The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) identifies honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage as fundamental values of academic integrity (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021: 4–5). The present framework seeks to deepen the interpretation of such values by drawing on the epistemological and ethical teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*.

7.3. Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in three areas. First, it connects academic readiness and academic integrity as complementary constructs, demonstrating that competence requires ethical orientation and that academic values require adequate capacities for their practical



realization. Second, it interprets responsible AI use as more than a technical issue, linking it to broader questions concerning knowledge, responsibility, and human action. Third, it introduces *Nahj al-Balaghah* as an epistemological resource for enriching contemporary discussions of knowledge, ethics, and scholarly responsibility, rather than as a replacement for existing theories.

7.4. Educational Implications

AI education in higher education should extend beyond technical skills to cultivate critical thinking, self-regulation, information evaluation, academic authenticity, and responsibility. Universities should therefore design curricula that develop students' ability to make informed judgments about when, how, and to what extent AI should be used in academic activities.

7.5. Policy Implications

The integration of AI into higher education requires more than restrictive regulations or technical guidelines. Institutional policies should promote academic honesty, transparency, accountability, and responsibility while establishing clear standards for AI use. The proposed framework may provide a theoretical basis for developing institutional guidelines, educational policies, and assessment instruments related to academic readiness, academic integrity, and responsible AI use.

8. Conclusion

The present study aimed to propose a conceptual framework for elucidating the epistemological foundations of Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity in the responsible use of artificial intelligence, with an emphasis on the teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*. The findings derived from document analysis, conceptual analysis, and theoretical synthesis demonstrated that responsible use of artificial intelligence in higher education cannot be reduced merely to proficiency in using technological tools. Rather, the quality of engagement with AI depends on the integration of the competencies required for informed action and the value-based principles that guide academic conduct. In this regard, the teachings of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, without being treated as substitutes for or direct equivalents of contemporary constructs, can provide an epistemological and ethical foundation for a deeper understanding of this relationship. Accordingly, the principal strategy emerging from the proposed framework is a shift from a purely skills-based approach toward an integrative approach that considers both the "ability to use artificial intelligence" and the "manner and responsibility of its use."

The operational contribution of the proposed framework lies in providing a theoretically grounded and systematically organized basis for



guiding university practices in three areas: education, assessment, and policy-making. In the educational domain, the framework can serve as a basis for designing programs that integrate AI skills training with the development of critical thinking, self-regulation, information evaluation, academic authenticity, and responsibility. In the assessment domain, the components of the framework can provide an initial basis for developing indicators and assessment instruments to evaluate Academic Readiness and Academic Integrity in the context of AI use. In the policy-making domain, the framework can inform the development of guidelines concerning the scope and manner of AI use, transparency in disclosing its use, the preservation of academic authenticity, and users' accountability for their academic outputs. Thus, the practical value of the proposed framework lies in providing a conceptual basis for translating epistemological and ethical principles into educational, assessment, and policy-oriented directions for universities' engagement with artificial intelligence.

Given the review-theoretical nature of the present study, these contributions should be understood as practical implications of the proposed framework rather than as an empirically validated intervention, assessment instrument, or implemented policy. Operationalizing the components of the framework and empirically evaluating its effectiveness in real-world higher education settings constitute the next steps in the further development of the proposed framework.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the proposed framework is derived from conceptual and theoretical analysis and therefore requires empirical validation in real higher education contexts. Second, the analysis of Islamic sources was limited to *Nahj al-Balaghah*; incorporating additional Islamic texts may provide further theoretical insights. Third, the present study did not develop measurement instruments or examine cultural and disciplinary differences across higher education institutions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to validate the proposed framework through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research designs. Further research should also focus on developing assessment instruments for academic readiness and academic integrity in the context of artificial intelligence, investigating the influence of individual and organizational factors, and conducting comparative studies across different higher education systems.



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