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Principles of Child Character Education Based on Qur'anic Stories: A Thematic Tafsir Tarbawi Study

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Abstract

The moral crisis among the younger generation marked by increasing violence, dishonesty, and the weakening of spirituality highlights the urgency of formulating a character education model rooted in the transcendental values of the Qur'an. This study aimed to identify and analyze the moral values contained in the Qur'anic educational narratives and to formulate foundational principles for character education. Employing a qualitative library research approach, this study examined classical and contemporary tafsir works as well as international scholarly articles through a thematic synthesis method. The findings revealed that Qur'anic narratives demontrated a consistent pedagogical structure that was formulated into five core principles of children's character education, namely: (1) strengthening spiritual identity, (2) the habituation of ethical behavior, (3) reflective dialogue, (4) emotional guidance, and (5) role modeling (uswah). These five principles were found to be aligned with modern moral education theories, including Lickona's character education framework, the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) approach, and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. The integration of Qur'anic values with contemporary theories resulted in a holistic and applicable pedagogical model for children's character education. The novelty of this study lay in its thematic application of tafsir tarbawi across multiple Qur'anic narratives, the formulation of synthesized Qur'anic–contemporary principles, and the development of a theoretical framework for utilizing Qur'anic stories as a systematic character education curriculum. Practically, the findings provided implications for national education policy in strengthening religious-based character education and offered conceptual references for the development of Islamic education curricula and children's moral development programs.

Keywords: Character education, Educational narratives, Tarbawi exegesis

Abstrak

Krisis akhlak pada generasi muda yang ditandai meningkatnya perilaku kekerasan, ketidakjujuran, dan melemahnya spiritualitas menunjukkan urgensi merumuskan model pendidikan karakter yang berakar pada nilai transendental Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis nilai-nilai akhlak yang terkandung dalam kisah-kisah edukatif Al-Qur'an, serta merumuskan prinsip-prinsip pendidikan karakter. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, dengan menelaah kitab tafsir klasik dan modern serta artikel ilmiah internasional untuk melakukan sintesis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kisah-kisah Qur'ani mengandung struktur pedagogis yang konsisten dan dapat diformulasikan menjadi lima prinsip utama pendidikan karakter anak, yaitu: (1) penguatan identitas spiritual, (2) pembiasaan perilaku etis, (3) dialog reflektif, (4) pendampingan emosional, dan (5) keteladanan (uswah). Kelima prinsip tersebut selaras dengan teori pendidikan moral modern, seperti kerangka pendidikan karakter Lickona, pendekatan Social Emotional Learning

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(SEL), serta teori perkembangan moral Kohlberg. Integrasi nilai Qur'ani dengan teori kontemporer menghasilkan model pedagogis yang holistik dan aplikatif untuk pembelajaran karakter anak. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penggunaan tafsir tarbawi secara tematik lintas-kisah, formulasi prinsip sintesis Qur'ani–kontemporer, dan pembangunan kerangka teoritis pemanfaatan kisah Qur'ani sebagai kurikulum karakter yang sistematis. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bagi perumusan kebijakan pendidikan nasional dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai religius, serta menawarkan rujukan konseptual bagi pengembangan kurikulum PAI dan program pembinaan moral anak.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan karakter, Narasi pendidikan, Tafsir Tarbawi*

A. INTRODUCTION

The moral crisis among today's younger generation has become a fundamental issue that requires systematic and integrated responses within the national education system (Alfarisi, 2020). The phenomenon of moral degradation, reflected in violent behavior, dishonesty, diminishing respect for parents and teachers, and the erosion of religious values in daily life, indicates the urgency of revitalizing character education grounded in transcendental values (Zahroh, 2021). The Qur'an, as the holy scripture of Islam, provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for the development of children's character through its various educational narratives and moral values contained therein.

Previous studies have shown that the *tafsir tarbawi* approach has made a significant contribution to understanding the educational dimensions of the Qur'an. Research conducted by (Munawar, 2023) examined the concept of character education in *Tafsir Al-Ibriz*, focusing on spiritual and moral values. Meanwhile, studies on the principles of early childhood education in Surah Luqman have been analyzed extensively by several scholars who emphasize methodological and practical aspects (Hikmah, Nurul., 2022). Another study investigated the role of *tafsir tarbawi* in character formation through the integration of Qur'anic values with child developmental psychology approaches (Akbar & Latipah, 2025). These studies demonstrated that the Qur'an holds great potential as a holistic and universal source of character education.

However, empirical evidence indicates that the moral crisis among the younger generation has continued to intensify over the past decade. Based on data from Statistics Indonesia, approximately 25% of adolescents aged 15–24 were reported to

have been involved in violent behavior, including fighting and bullying, while a survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology recorded that 30% of students engaged in academic dishonesty or plagiarism (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023; Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2024). This phenomenon reflects a decline in moral awareness and a weak internalization of values such as discipline, honesty, and responsibility from an early age.

In addition, research findings have indicated a significant decline in children's and adolescents' religious practices, such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, and participation in religious preaching or regular study circles (Wisudawan & Haikal, 2024). Local studies in several major cities in Indonesia also revealed that diminishing respect for parents, teachers, and community leaders has become increasingly prevalent (Malviana, 2021; Wijono et al., 2025; Yulizha et al., 2023). This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the negative influence of social media and peer environments that tend to promote individualistic and consumerist values.

The factors contributing to this moral crisis are multidimensional. First, the internalization of moral and spiritual values from an early age remained insufficient, as religion-based character education has not been systematically implemented in schools or within families (Munawaroh, 2018). Second, the national education curriculum has predominantly emphasized cognitive aspects, while character formation particularly through narratives and educational stories has received limited attention (Apriliani et al., 2024). Third, social interactions in the modern environment, including the influence of technology and digital media, often reinforce negative behavior and weaken social control over children's moral development (Hamidiyah & Aripin, 2025).

The novelty of this study becomed even more significant when compared to contemporary Islamic character education literature. Although several studies have explored how the Qur'an can shape children's moral and character development, their scope remained relatively limited. For example, the study *The Role of the Qur'an in the Educational Development of Primary School Children* highlighted the role of Qur'anic verses as moral and spiritual foundations in primary education, yet it did not develop a pedagogical framework based on thematic exegesis (Asfiana & Sasa, 2025). In addition, the study *Qur'anic Tadabbur Models for Enhancing Students' Character* developed a

Qur'anic *tadabbur* model emphasizing deep reflection on verses; however, its focus lay within the general domain of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and not specifically on educational narratives as a structured character curriculum (M. H. Aulia et al., 2025). Furthermore, in *Implications of Moral Education on Children's Character in the Digital Era: Insights from Surah Al-Isra, Verses 23–24*, the authors analyzed the implications of moral education derived from these verses for children's character in the digital era; however, the study was local and situational in nature and did not construct a theoretical model based on Qur'anic narratives (Rochmat et al., 2024).

Previous studies shared similarities with the present research in that they emphasized the role of Qur'anic values in character formation and children's moral development. Nevertheless, these three studies have several limitations, as they focus on specific verses or chapters, examined moral aspects in general terms, or developed reflective models without formulating thematic and cross-narrative Qur'anic pedagogical principles. In other words, prior research had not yet developed a theoretical framework that utilized the Qur'an's educational narratives as a structured character curriculum for children's education.

Conversely, this study offered distintive novelty in three main aspects: (1) the use of a thematic *tafsir tarbawi* approach to analyze educational narratives distributed across various chapters of the Qur'an; (2) the formulation of principles of children's character education through the integration of Qur'anic moral values and contemporary character education theories; and (3) the development of a pedagogical theoretical model that explained the mechanism of utilizing Qur'anic narratives as an applicable tool for children's character learning. This study aimed to identify and analyze the moral values contained in the educational narratives of the Qur'an and to formulate principles of children's character education based on Qur'anic narratives through a thematic *tafsir tarbawi* study.

B. RESEACH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a library research approach, focusing on the exploration, collection, and analysis of textual sources related to character education in the Qur'an. This approach was applied to examine the Qur'an's

educational narratives through an in-depth reading of classical and contemporary exegetical works within the framework of *tafsir tarbawi*. The library research method was selected because all research data were derived from written documents; therefore, the analysis was conducted entirely through literature review without involving respondents or field observations.

The research instrument in this study consisted of a textual analysis guideline developed based on indicators of character education values within the *tafsir tarbawi* framework. This instrument was used to guide the process of identifying relevant verses, categorizing moral values, and formulating principles of character education. Research data were collected through documentation techniques, namely the compilation of verses containing educational narratives, the comparison of interpretations from various mufassirs (Qur'anic exegetes), and the collection of relevant academic literature such as journal articles, books, and dissertations. Each verse and its interpretation were classified according to thematic categories and then analyzed using content analysis with a thematic approach, which included data reduction, coding, thematic categorization, interpretation of meaning, and drawing conclusions.

Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, namely by comparing interpretations from several mufassirs to ensure consistency of meaning. Analytical consistency was maintained by periodically re-examining the same texts at different times. In addition, expert checking was conducted through consultation with scholars in the fields of Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic education to ensure that the interpretation of verses and the character values derived from Qur'anic narratives aligned with scholarly principles and did not deviate from sound exegetical contexts.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Implementation of Thematic Tarbawi Tafsir in the Analysis of Educational Stories in the Qur'an

The thematic tarbawi tafsir approach positioned Qur'anic stories not merely as historical texts, but as sources of pedagogical values that could be identified and

transformed into objectives for children's character education. A thematic study of Surah Luqman and the stories of the prophets demonstrated how values such as obedience, patience, and exemplary conduct were systematically extracted and translated into character-based curricula. Research by (S. Aulia et al., 2024; Farid et al., 2024; Wanto & Jalwis, 2021) emphasized that the maudhu'i (thematic) analysis facilitates educators in mapping values into the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, making learning more measurable. However, its implementation requires adaptation in language and delivery methods to align with children's developmental stages (for example, through simple narratives, visual media, and dramatization). These findings were supported by contemporary tarbawi tafsir studies and research on the application of Qur'anic values in character education.

Methodologically, the application of thematic tarbawi tafsir to educational narratives required a combination of textual (*tahlili*) analysis and thematic (*maudhu'i)* synthesis so that the inherent moral meanings could be contextualized for children. Research indicated that story-based teaching models, employing question-and-answer strategies, dramatization, and guided reflection, resulted in better value internalization compared to merely delivering normative rules (Mirza & Siroj, 2025). These findings were aligned with studies that developed the tadabbur/tadzkirah model as a medium for cognitive–affective integration in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (M. H. Aulia et al., 2025). The main challenges identified include educators' limited literacy in thematic tafsir methods and the need for age-appropriate instructional materials (Maya et al., 2023). Therefore, practical recommendations emphasized applied tafsir training and the development of age-appropriate, story-based modules.

From an evaluative perspective, several studies reported that integrating Qur'anic narratives through thematic tarbawi tafsir constributed to measurable improvements in attitudinal indicators such as empathy, responsibility, and perseverance among early childhood and elementary students, particularly when interventions were complemented through practical activities and repetition (Faisal, 2022). Comparative studies across institutions (general schools vs. religion-based schools) by (Futhira et al., 2025; Mainiyo, 2023) found that the moral power of Qur'anic narratives is more effective when supported by consistent messaging at home and at

school. The theoretical implication was the need to develop a pedagogical framework that integrated contemporary character education theory (Licona, 1999) with thematic Qur'anic tafsir to produce curricula that were both religiously and pedagogically valid. Finally, the literature recommended prioritizing the development of a story material bank that has been age-modulated and aligned with character formation benchmarks as a step toward scalability. Overall, these arguments were grounded in thematic tafsir studies and recent applied research.

2. Principles of Child Character Education Based on the Synthesis of Qur'anic Moral Values and Contemporary Theory

The synthesis of Qur'anic moral values with contemporary character education theory produced five fundamental principles: strengthening spiritual identity, habituation of ethical behavior, reflective dialogue, emotional mentoring, and exemplary conduct (*uswah*). Strengthening spiritual identity is grounded in the values of *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *ḥilm* (forbearance), as discussed in the works of al-Ghazali and Ibn Kathir, and aligns with the moral knowing–moral feeling–moral action framework (Lickona, 2013; Zuhri, 2023). The principle of habituating ethical behavior is reinforced by the findings of (Mainuddin et al., 2023), which emphasized that value internalization is effective only when it is brought to life through repeated practice in real-life contexts. Reflective dialogue becomes key in connecting revealed values with children's personal experiences, as highlighted by (Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025; Othman et al., 2023), who stressed that Qur'anic values possess pedagogical power when implemented through strategies of reflection, dialogue, and habituation. Thus, the principles of character education do not remain at normative transmission but develop into a structured and contextualized process of moral internalization.

This synthesis approach affirmed that the principles of emotional mentoring and exemplary conduct find strong foundations in the story of Luqman and in the Prophetic (Nabawiyah) educational method, which emphasized *adab* (proper conduct) as the moral foundation (Aisyah & Nahar, 2025; Muid & Nasrulloh, 2024). Meanwhile, Kohlberg's theory of moral development and the social-emotional learning (SEL) approach added that children must progress through stages of moral reasoning and

practice emotional regulation to stabilize behavior (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). When both approaches Qur'anic and contemporary are integrated, key principles emerge, such as strengthening spiritual identity, habituating ethical behavior, reflective dialogue, and emotional mentoring. This synthesis demonstrated that child character education is effective only when divine values intersect with empirically grounded pedagogical strategies that are appropriate to developmental stages.

3. Theoretical–Pedagogical Model for Utilizing Qur'anic Stories as Instruments of Character Education

The use of Qur'anic stories as tools for character education was grounded in the principle of narrative pedagogy: stories construct meaning frameworks that facilitate the internalization of values through cognitive and affective experiences. The literature showed that storytelling (including digital storytelling) enhances empathy, engagement, and moral reflection skills—findings documented in studies on narrative pedagogy and storytelling in education (Lee et al., 2023). Thematic/*tarbawi tafsir* provides a systematic method for extracting values from Qur'anic narratives so that the messages of the teachings can be translated into measurable learning objectives. Applied tafsir studies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) emphasize the need to adapt language and methods to align with students' developmental stages (M. H. Aulia et al., 2025; S. Aulia et al., 2024). Theoretically, integrating social learning theory (modeling/*uswah*) with the social-emotional learning (SEL) approach strengthens the processes of behavioral change, as children learn through observation, practice, feedback, and reinforcement.

The operationalization of the model began with a value–story matrix (mapping values → verses/stories → behavioral indicators), which is then transformed into lesson plans/modules based on Qur'anic narratives (lesson plan sequence: storytelling → guided reflection → role-play → habituation tasks). The learning approach emphasizes practical activities (habit formation) and guided reflection (*tadabbur* or structured discussion) so that values are not merely understood but deeply internalized (M. H. Aulia et al., 2025). Schools and researchers were encourage to provide thematic tafsir training for teachers and develop an age-appropriate story material bank to address the issue of limited tafsir literacy frequently identified in field studies. Ultimately, this

model was adaptable and could be piloted at the RA (Islamic preschool), kindergarten, and elementary school levels, with adjustments in storytelling formats (visual, digital, puppet, or drama) according to children's developmental stages.

Discussion

1. Principles of Child Character Education in the Educational Stories of the Qur'an through the Tarbawi Tafsir Approach

The application of *tafsir tarbawi* to the educational stories of the Qur'an provided a methodological foundation for formulating principles of child character education that were integrative and transformative. *Tafsir tarbawi* does not merely interpret verses as normative texts, but as pedagogical guidelines that can be operationalized within children's development. By focusing on the values and educational processes embedded in Qur'anic narratives, this approach enabled the formulation of principles aligned with holistic learning needs. The findings of this study were consistent with the approach of (Farid et al., 2024) which emphasized that tarbawi-based interpretation generates contextual educational concepts while remaining grounded in the authority of revelation.

The results of the study revealed five fundamental principles of character education within Qur'anic narratives that showed significant correlation with contemporary educational theories. The principle of exemplary conduct in the story of Prophet Ibrahim validated Bandura's concept of behavioral modeling, in which learning occurs through observation and imitation of respected figures (Hadlori et al., 2020). his theoretical legitimacy was further reinforced by Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21, which affirms the role of the Prophet as *uswah hasanah* (a good example).

(لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا)

> "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever hopes for (the mercy of) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often."

The principle of gradual development reflected in the story of Prophet Yusuf demonstrated convergence with Kohlberg's theory of moral development and validated the educational interpretation within *tafsir tarbawi*. This finding also enriched the

research of (Rokim et al., 2023) which highlighted the relevance of Qur'anic narratives as a medium for transmitting moral values.

The synthesis of Qur'anic moral values and contemporary theory strengthened the understanding that character education must be rooted in foundational values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *ḥilm* (forbearance), as developed by classical scholars, and reinforced by modern moral theory frameworks such as moral knowing–moral feeling–moral action (Lickona, 2013). This approach explained that moral internalization was ineffective if it remained merely cognitive; it must become an emotional and practical process. This was supported by the findings of (Mainuddin et al., 2023) which stated that integrating Qur'anic values with modern pedagogy produces long-term character stability because children experience, rather than merely learn, the values.

From the perspective of *tafsir tarbawi*, the principles of character education that emerged from this synthesis operated through Qur'anic educational mechanisms such as *uswah* (exemplary modeling), *mau'izhah* (moral exhortation), reflective dialogue, and practical habituation (Rakhmat & Abdussalam, 2022). The story of Luqman, as one of the most prominent models of *tafsir tarbawi*, demonstrated how principles such as the formation of spiritual identity and the strengthening of moral awareness were instilled through advice that was both argumentative and emotionally rich. This approach aligned with the study of (Muid & Nasrulloh, 2024) which emphasized that *adab* (proper conduct) must serve as the foundation before cognitive abilities fully develop.

Tafsir tarbawi also indicated that character education in the Qur'an develops through three stages of transformation: value initiation, structural internalization, and character crystallization. This model corresponds with Surah Luqman verse 13, which underscores the importance of establishing a foundation of *tawhid* before progressing to social and emotional values. Research by (Nurfitriana, 2020) showed that the spiritual and social dimensions cannot be separated in character education, and this finding supports their integration as a unified and mutually reinforcing moral framework.

Qur'anic narratives as pedagogical media offer distinctive advantages in the process of child character education because they present values in the form of

emotional experiences, moral conflicts, and exemplary models. Surah Yusuf verse 111 affirms the function of stories as *'ibrah* (lessons) for people of understanding, reflecting that value education is not merely normative but also narrative and affective in nature.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ)

> "Indeed, in their stories there is a lesson for people of understanding. The Qur'an is not a fabricated tale, but a confirmation of what came before it, a detailed explanation of all things, and a guidance and mercy for people who believe."

This was consistent with the reviews of (Othman et al., 2023) and (Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025) which demonstrated that narrative-based strategies were effective in shaping children's moral dispositions.

Qur'anic stories (e.g., Luqman, Yusuf, Ash-Shaffat, Al-Kahf) function as powerful moral narratives. These narratives facilitate children's meaning-making processes through identification with characters, situations, and moral choices. From the perspective of narrative pedagogy, stories construct affective and cognitive pathways that support value internalization; strategies such as storytelling, dramatization, and guided reflection (*tadabbur*) facilitate the transition from knowing to being. International literature on narrative pedagogy and storytelling consistently shows that narrative techniques enhance empathy, engagement, and students' reflective abilities—key indicators in character education (Sánchez-Rivas et al., 2023). Therefore, systematic *tafsir tarbawi* provides a value mapping framework so that each element of the story can be translated into specific learning activities.

Research by (Alfani et al., 2025) showed improvements in attitudinal indicators such as empathy, responsibility, and patience following thematic tafsir-based learning interventions when the methods combine storytelling, dramatization, and habituation tasks. These findings supported the argument that teaching values through Qur'anic narratives was more effective when delivered interactively and reinforced regularly, rather than through purely normative instruction without practice. However, research by (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025) highlighted variations in effects across different settings (RA/kindergarten vs. elementary school), indicating that intervention designs must be

adjusted to students' cognitive-emotional maturation. These results underscored the need for broader experimental studies and cross-context replications to ensure external validity.

Tafsir tarbawi does not operate independently; in practice, its effectiveness depends heavily on the quality of mediators (teachers and parents) who are able to translate interpretation into role modeling, habituation, and reflective dialogue. Research by (Osman, 2024) emphasized that role modeling and consistency of messages between home and school amplify the effect of character internalization; without these, Qur'anic messages risk becoming merely passive knowledge. Therefore, teachers' capacity in thematic tafsir literacy and narrative pedagogy skills (storycrafting, discussion facilitation, use of drama) becomes a prerequisite for successful model implementation. Teacher training grounded in *tafsir tarbawi* and the development of age-modulated story module banks are common recommendations in implementation studies.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the application of *tafsir tarbawi* to the educational stories of the Qur'an can generate principles of child character education that are integrative, holistic, and relevant to contemporary educational theory. Through the narrative analysis of Qur'anic texts and the synthesis of moral values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *ḥilm* (forbearance) with modern pedagogical frameworks, it was found that child character formation operates through mechanisms of exemplary conduct, reflective dialogue, value internalization, and gradual moral transformation. These findings addressed the research objective by affirming that the Qur'an is not merely a normative source but also provides a comprehensive, systematic, and adaptable model of character education within modern educational contexts.

From a policy perspective, these findings underscored the need to integrate Qur'anic moral values and the *tafsir tarbawi* approach into the national character education curriculum, particularly through the strengthening of narrative-based learning, teacher role modeling, and moral-emotional mentoring appropriate to

children's developmental stages. Educational institutions may adopt this integrative model to reinforce the Character Education Strengthening Program (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter/PPK*) and revitalized religious education practices. For future research, it is recommended to conduct empirical testing of the effectiveness of this Qur'anic–contemporary synthesis model in school or family contexts, as well as to expand the study to other surahs in order to develop a more comprehensive and applicable character education framework.

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