



Implementation of Moral Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning Through the Stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW: A Case Study at MTsN 1 Blang Kejeren

Upit Sarimanah^{1*}

¹⁾ MIN 1 Gayo Lues, upitayo521@gmail.com

DOI:



Copyright © 2023

Diajukan: 16/04 /2025

Diterima: 03/05/2025

Diterbitkan: 14/08/2025

ABSTRAK

The erosion of moral character among adolescents amid digital acceleration and shifting social norms has renewed scholarly attention to value-laden pedagogies within religious education. This study examines how moral values are implemented in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through the narration of the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW at MTsN 1 Blang Kejren, a state Islamic junior secondary school situated in the highland Gayo cultural region of Aceh, Indonesia. Adopting a qualitative single-case design informed by narrative-transportation and social learning theory, data were gathered from three PAI teachers, twelve students, and one curriculum coordinator through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observation across eight learning sessions, and documentary analysis of lesson plans and student reflective journals. Data were analysed thematically using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, supported by NVivo 14, with trustworthiness established through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Findings reveal that teachers operationalised prophetic narratives through four interlocking mechanisms: contextual storytelling, character modelling, dialogic reflection, and habituation which together translated abstract moral ideals such as honesty, patience, compassion, and social responsibility into observable classroom conduct. The narrative approach fostered affective engagement and self-referential moral reasoning that conventional expository instruction rarely achieved, although its effectiveness was moderated by teacher narrative competence, time constraints, and assessment misalignment. The study contributes a locally grounded, empirically substantiated model of narrative-based moral internalisation that integrates prophetic biography (*sirah*) with contemporary character-education theory, extending the literature beyond its prevailing Western and quantitative orientation. Practically, the findings inform teacher preparation, lesson design, and madrasah policy on character education, suggesting that structured narrative pedagogy can serve as a viable vehicle for moral formation when institutionally supported.

Keywords: moral values; Islamic Religious Education; prophetic narrative; character education; *sirah*; madrasah; narrative pedagogy

ABSTRACT

Kemerosotan karakter moral di kalangan remaja di tengah akselerasi digital dan pergeseran norma sosial kembali menarik perhatian ilmiah terhadap pedagogi bermuatan nilai dalam pendidikan agama. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana nilai-nilai moral diimplementasikan dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) melalui penuturan kisah-kisah Nabi Muhammad SAW di MTsN 1 Blang Kejren, sebuah madrasah tsanawiyah negeri di kawasan budaya dataran tinggi Gayo, Aceh, Indonesia. Dengan desain studi kasus kualitatif tunggal yang

dilandasi teori transportasi naratif dan teori belajar sosial, data dikumpulkan dari tiga guru PAI, dua belas siswa, dan satu koordinator kurikulum melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas non-partisipatif pada delapan sesi pembelajaran, serta analisis dokumen rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran dan jurnal reflektif siswa. Data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña dengan bantuan NVivo 14, dan keabsahan data ditegakkan melalui triangulasi, pengecekan anggota, serta jejak audit. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru mengoperasionalkan narasi kenabian melalui empat mekanisme yang saling terkait penceritaan kontekstual, pemodelan karakter, refleksi dialogis, dan pembiasaan yang secara kolektif menerjemahkan ideal moral abstrak seperti kejujuran, kesabaran, kasih sayang, dan tanggung jawab sosial menjadi perilaku kelas yang teramati. Pendekatan naratif menumbuhkan keterlibatan afektif dan penalaran moral reflektif yang jarang dicapai oleh pengajaran ekspositori konvensional, meskipun efektivitasnya dimoderasi oleh kompetensi naratif guru, keterbatasan waktu, dan ketidakselarasan penilaian. Penelitian ini menyumbangkan model internalisasi moral berbasis narasi yang terbukti secara empiris dan berakar lokal, yang mengintegrasikan sirah nabawiyah dengan teori pendidikan karakter kontemporer.

Kata kunci: nilai moral; Pendidikan Agama Islam; narasi kenabian; pendidikan karakter; sirah; madrasah; pedagogi naratif

*Korespondensi Author: Upit Sarimanah, MIN 1 Gayo Lues, upitayo521@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

The formation of moral character has re-emerged as one of the most pressing concerns confronting education systems worldwide, as rapid technological change, globalized media flows, and shifting normative landscapes reshape how young people acquire ethical dispositions (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Adolescence, in particular, represents a developmental window during which value orientations consolidate, yet it is precisely at this stage that many contemporary schooling models privilege measurable cognitive outcomes over the cultivation of moral sensibility. International assessments of learning have documented impressive gains in literacy and numeracy across many jurisdictions, but a parallel deterioration in indicators of civility, empathy, and prosocial conduct has prompted educators and policymakers to reconsider the affective and ethical dimensions of schooling. Within this global reckoning, religious education occupies a distinctive position because it explicitly foregrounds questions of virtue, purpose, and responsibility that secular curricula often relegate to the informal or hidden curriculum. The renewed interest in character formation thus provides the broad backdrop against which the present inquiry into moral learning in Islamic education must be situated.

The intensity of this concern is heightened by the transformation of the moral environment in which adolescents now develop. Digital connectivity has expanded the range of influences competing for young people's ethical attention, exposing them to plural and sometimes conflicting value systems that families and schools no longer mediate as exclusively as they once did. Empirical work across several national settings has linked this saturated information environment to a weakening of the sustained relational contexts through which moral learning has historically occurred, prompting renewed calls for schooling to assume a more deliberate formative role. Religious education is frequently invoked in these debates as a counterweight, on the grounds that its explicit engagement with questions of the good life equips learners with interpretive resources for navigating moral complexity. Yet the mere presence of religious content in a curriculum guarantees neither engagement nor internalization, which returns attention to the question of pedagogy that this study foregrounds.

In the Indonesian context, the salience of moral education has been amplified by national policy and by mounting public anxiety over adolescent behaviour. The Strengthening Character Education program (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*) institutionalized character formation as a cross-curricular mandate, positioning schools and madrasahs as primary sites for cultivating religious, nationalist, and civic values (Suyadi et al., 2022). Media reporting and empirical surveys have nonetheless chronicled a persistent gap between the aspirational rhetoric of character policy and the lived realities of classrooms, where bullying, academic dishonesty, and disengagement remain common. Islamic Religious Education, known by its Indonesian acronym PAI, is expected to bear much of the burden of moral formation within this system, yet its pedagogy has frequently been criticized for privileging rote memorization and doctrinal

transmission over the internalization of values. This tension between policy expectation and pedagogical practice constitutes a problem of considerable educational significance, particularly in madrasahs where religious and moral objectives are formally intertwined.

Recent scholarship over the past five years has increasingly converged on the proposition that moral values are more durably internalized when learners engage them affectively and narratively rather than propositionally. Studies of character education in Indonesian schools have shown that value transmission succeeds when embedded in meaningful, contextually resonant experiences rather than delivered as abstract precepts (Hidayat et al., 2023; Rahman & Nurhayati, 2021). Parallel research in moral and religious education has emphasized the pedagogical power of storytelling, demonstrating that narratives engage imagination, emotion, and identification in ways that support moral reasoning and empathy (Zaki & Sa'adah, 2020). Investigations into prophetic biography as an educational resource have argued that the *sirah* of Prophet Muhammad SAW offers a rich repository of exemplary conduct capable of anchoring abstract virtues in concrete, relatable events (Nasir et al., 2022). At the same time, a growing body of work on teacher agency has underscored that the effectiveness of any value-laden pedagogy depends heavily on how teachers mediate content, manage classroom interaction, and model the dispositions they seek to instill (Fahmi & Ridwan, 2021). Taken together, these strands suggest that narrative approaches hold considerable promise for moral education, while also indicating that their realization is neither automatic nor uniform.

Despite this promising convergence, the existing evidence base remains fragmented and uneven in ways that limit its explanatory reach. Much of the literature on storytelling in moral education is conceptual or prescriptive, advocating narrative methods without documenting how they actually unfold in situated classroom practice. Where empirical studies exist, they frequently rely on short-term quantitative measures of attitudinal change that capture surface effects while leaving the underlying mechanisms of internalization opaque. Studies grounded specifically in the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW as a pedagogical vehicle are comparatively scarce, and those that address them seldom analyze the fine-grained interactional processes through which narrative content becomes moral disposition. Moreover, the prevailing frameworks in character-education research are largely derived from Western moral-developmental and virtue-ethics traditions, raising questions about their transferability to Islamic educational settings where the epistemology of moral authority differs in important respects.

The theoretical foundation of the present study draws principally on the theory of narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), complemented by Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). Narrative transportation holds that when audiences become absorbed in a story, they experience diminished counter-arguing, heightened emotional engagement, and vivid mental imagery, which together render the story's implicit values more persuasive and more likely to be adopted. This mechanism is especially pertinent to prophetic narratives, whose dramatic structure, moral clarity, and emotional resonance invite precisely the kind of absorption that transportation theory describes. Social learning theory supplies a complementary account of how observed exemplary conduct whether enacted by the Prophet within a narrated episode or modelled by the teacher who narrates it is encoded, retained, and reproduced by learners through processes of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The pairing of these theories is appropriate because it links the persuasive power of the narrative itself to the observational and imitative processes by which its moral content is translated into behavior, offering an integrated lens rarely applied to Islamic religious education.

Against this backdrop, four interrelated gaps warrant explicit articulation. Methodologically, the field is dominated by survey-based and quasi-experimental designs that measure declared attitudes but rarely capture the situated, processual dynamics of moral learning as it happens; a fine-grained qualitative account of classroom practice is therefore needed. Contextually, the overwhelming majority of studies are set in urban or Javanese-majority schools, leaving the distinctive cultural ecology of peripheral regions such as the Gayo highlands of Aceh where local *adat*, religious authority, and state schooling intersect in particular ways almost entirely unexamined. Empirically, direct evidence of how the specific stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW are deployed and received in ordinary PAI classrooms is thin, with most claims resting on advocacy rather than observation. Theoretically, narrative-transportation and social learning

frameworks have seldom been brought into dialogue with the *sirah* tradition, leaving the conceptual integration of Islamic narrative sources and contemporary character-education theory underdeveloped. These gaps are consequential because they constrain the field's capacity to explain not merely whether narrative pedagogy works but how, for whom, and under what conditions. The methodological gap matters because policy and practice require actionable understanding of process, not merely evidence of aggregate effect; without it, interventions are designed in the dark. The contextual gap matters because moral education is culturally situated, and models validated in one setting may fail or function differently in another, making the neglect of peripheral regions a substantive threat to the field's inclusiveness. The empirical gap matters because the enthusiasm for prophetic narrative currently outruns the evidence, risking the promotion of practices whose real classroom dynamics remain undocumented. The theoretical gap matters because the absence of dialogue between Islamic sources and contemporary theory impoverishes both, leaving practitioners without a coherent conceptual account of why the approach they are urged to adopt should work. Addressing these gaps in combination, rather than piecemeal, is what allows the present study to move from advocacy toward explanation.

The novelty of this study lies in three complementary contributions that respond directly to these gaps. Conceptually, it develops an integrated model that situates prophetic narrative within a transportation-and-modelling framework, articulating four operational mechanisms through which story becomes moral disposition and thereby bridging Islamic educational sources and mainstream character-education theory. Methodologically, it advances a rigorous qualitative case design that triangulates interviews, sustained classroom observation, and documentary evidence to render visible the processual and interactional dynamics that quantitative designs typically obscure. Contextually, it foregrounds an under-researched highland Acehnese madrasah, generating locally grounded insight into how narrative moral pedagogy is enacted where religious schooling, Gayo cultural norms, and state curriculum policy converge. Rather than claiming primacy, the study offers analytic depth and transferable understanding that extend the literature in directions it has not adequately pursued.

A further consideration reinforcing the relevance of the *sirah* as a moral resource concerns its unique epistemic authority within Islamic pedagogy. Unlike fictional narratives whose moral force derives solely from their aesthetic construction, the biography of Prophet Muhammad SAW carries normative weight grounded in revelation and prophetic exemplarity, positioning him in Islamic thought as the paradigmatic model of ethical conduct. This distinctive status means that prophetic narratives combine the affective and imaginative appeal of story with the binding moral authority of a divinely sanctioned exemplar, a combination that secular narrative pedagogies cannot replicate. Consequently, the mechanisms by which such narratives operate may differ in important respects from those documented in general moral-education research, which further justifies focused empirical attention. Recognizing this specificity is essential to understanding why the present inquiry cannot simply import findings from secular contexts wholesale.

This study aims to examine how moral values are implemented in PAI learning through the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW at MTsN 1 Blang Kejeren, to identify the pedagogical mechanisms through which prophetic narratives foster moral internalization, and to analyze the conditions that facilitate or constrain their effectiveness. Guided by these aims, the research addresses three questions: first, how do PAI teachers integrate the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW into their moral instruction; second, through what mechanisms do these narratives contribute to the internalization of moral values among students; and third, what factors enable or impede the effective implementation of this narrative approach. By pursuing these questions, the study seeks to contribute both a locally grounded empirical account and a theoretically integrated understanding of narrative-based moral education in the Islamic school context.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of moral internalization through prophetic narratives within its authentic educational context (Yin, 2018). A case study was considered appropriate because moral internalization is a context-dependent

process shaped by classroom interactions, institutional culture, and local social values. The study pursued analytic rather than statistical generalization by linking empirical findings to theoretical propositions on narrative transportation and social learning. The research was conducted at MTsN 1 Blangkejeren, a state Islamic junior secondary school in Gayo Lues Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The site was purposively selected because it integrates the national Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum with strong Gayo cultural traditions and actively employs prophetic narratives as part of classroom instruction. Fieldwork was undertaken over one academic semester to enable prolonged engagement with the research setting.

Participants were selected through purposive and criterion sampling to ensure direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The study involved three PAI teachers with at least five years of teaching experience, twelve students from Grades VII–IX representing different academic abilities and levels of classroom participation, and one curriculum coordinator responsible for character education. Teachers were selected based on their consistent use of narrative pedagogy, while students were identified in consultation with teachers to ensure diversity of perspectives. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, following the principle of information power rather than a predetermined sample size. Data were collected using three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Separate interview guides were developed for teachers, students, and the curriculum coordinator to explore participants' experiences while allowing flexibility for emerging issues. Classroom observations were conducted across eight learning sessions to document teachers' storytelling practices, student responses, classroom interactions, and the integration of moral values into instruction. Documentary evidence, including lesson plans, syllabi, and students' reflective journals, was analyzed to corroborate observational and interview findings. Prior to fieldwork, all research instruments underwent expert validation by specialists in Islamic education and qualitative research, followed by pilot testing at a comparable madrasah. Procedural consistency was maintained through documented interview protocols, observation guides, and a case-study database to enhance dependability.

Data collection followed a sequential procedure beginning with classroom observations to establish familiarity with participants and minimize researcher reactivity. This was followed by interviews with teachers and the curriculum coordinator to explore instructional intentions and strategies, and subsequently with students to understand how prophetic narratives were interpreted and internalized. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, with occasional use of the Gayo language where appropriate, audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for reporting purposes. Documentary materials were collected throughout the fieldwork period, and all data were systematically catalogued and securely stored to preserve a transparent chain of evidence. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee before data collection commenced, and formal permission was granted by the school administration. Written informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, while parental consent and student assent were secured for minors. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the confidentiality of their responses. Personal identities were protected through pseudonyms, and all data were managed in accordance with institutional data-protection regulations.

Data were analyzed using the interactive thematic analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were initially coded using descriptive and in-vivo coding before being organized into broader pattern codes aligned with the study's conceptual framework. NVivo 14 software facilitated systematic coding, data management, and cross-source comparison. Trustworthiness was established through methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, thick description, reflexive memo writing, and a comprehensive audit trail. To enhance analytical transparency, a detailed codebook specifying code definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and exemplar quotations was maintained. Two researchers independently coded a subset of the data, reconciled coding differences through discussion, and refined the coding framework before applying it across the

entire dataset. The complete analytical process from raw data to themes was documented in the case-study database to ensure dependability, confirmability, and analytical reproducibility.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized according to the three research questions, addressing in turn the integration of prophetic narratives into instruction, the mechanisms of moral internalization, and the enabling and constraining conditions. Analysis of the combined interview, observation, and documentary corpus yielded four principal mechanisms through which teachers translated prophetic stories into moral learning, together with a set of contextual factors that moderated their effect. Table 1 summarizes the participant composition, and Table 2 presents the thematic framework derived from the analysis.

Table 1. Composition of study participants

Participant group	Number	Data source
PAI teachers	3	Interviews; observed lessons
Students (grades VII–IX)	12	Interviews; reflective journals
Curriculum coordinator	1	Interview; policy documents
Total	16	Interviews, 8 observations, documents

As shown in Table 1, sixteen participants contributed across three data sources, with teacher accounts and observed lessons providing the analytic core and student journals and coordinator interviews offering corroboration and contrast. This configuration enabled cross-source triangulation of each emergent theme.

Table 2. Thematic framework of narrative-based moral internalization

Mechanism (theme)	Description	Illustrative moral value
Contextual storytelling	Narrating <i>sirah</i> episodes with vivid detail linked to students' lived experience	Honesty (al-amin), trustworthiness
Character modelling	Foregrounding the Prophet's conduct as an observable exemplar to imitate	Patience, compassion, humility
Dialogic reflection	Guided questioning that elicits students' moral reasoning about the narrative	Empathy, moral discernment
Habituation	Linking narrative lessons to repeated classroom and daily practice	Social responsibility, discipline

Table 2 displays the four mechanisms that structured the narrative pedagogy observed at the school, each associated with characteristic moral emphases. The mechanisms were not discrete stages but overlapping practices that teachers combined fluidly within and across lessons, as elaborated in the subsections that follow.

3.1 Integration of prophetic narratives into PAI instruction

Teachers integrated the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW into instruction through deliberate contextual storytelling rather than incidental reference. Observation across the eight sessions showed that teachers routinely opened or anchored a lesson with a narrated episode from the *sirah* such as the Prophet's

reputation for honesty before his prophethood or his conduct during periods of adversity rendered with concrete detail, dialogue, and emotional colour. Lesson plans examined in the documentary analysis confirmed that these narrations were planned rather than spontaneous, with explicit moral objectives recorded alongside the chosen episodes. One teacher explained the rationale for this placement in the following terms:

“If I begin with a rule, the students forget it by the next week. If I begin with a story about the Prophet, they remember the story, and the rule lives inside the story. So I always let the story carry the lesson.” (Teacher A)

This account, echoed by the other teachers, indicates that narration was understood as a vehicle for carrying normative content rather than as decorative illustration. The consistency between planned objectives and observed practice suggests that the integration of prophetic narrative was a settled pedagogical strategy at the school rather than the idiosyncratic preference of a single teacher. The manner of integration varied systematically with the moral objective of the lesson. Where the target value concerned interpersonal conduct such as honesty or trustworthiness, teachers selected episodes from the Prophet's early life that foregrounded his reputation among his contemporaries, drawing an explicit line from the narrated event to the students' own dealings with peers and family. Where the objective concerned endurance under difficulty, teachers turned to episodes of adversity and persecution, using them to frame patience not as passivity but as principled steadfastness. Documentary evidence from the reflective journals showed that students recognized this pairing of episode and value, frequently naming both the story and the virtue it was meant to convey. This deliberate matching of narrative content to moral purpose indicates a level of pedagogical intentionality that distinguishes the observed practice from incidental moralizing.

3.2 Mechanisms of moral internalization

The narratives contributed to moral internalization principally through character modelling and dialogic reflection working in tandem. In observed lessons, teachers repeatedly directed students' attention to the Prophet's conduct as a concrete exemplar, pausing the narrative to name the virtue enacted and inviting students to consider how it might be reproduced in their own circumstances. Student reflective journals provided corroborating evidence that this modelling was internalized in self-referential terms, with several students writing about applying patience or honesty in specific situations at home or school. One student articulated the connection during interview:

“When the teacher told how the Prophet stayed patient even when people insulted him, I thought about how I get angry with my little brother. I tried to be patient like that. It felt different because it was a real person, not just a rule.” (Student, grade VIII)

Dialogic reflection amplified this modelling by converting passive reception into active moral reasoning. Rather than concluding a story with a stated moral, teachers frequently posed open questions what would you have done, why did the Prophet respond that way, what does this ask of us that required students to articulate and defend moral judgements. Observation notes recorded animated exchanges in which students negotiated interpretations, indicating that the narratives functioned as objects of reasoning rather than mere illustrations of doctrine. The convergence of journal, interview, and observational evidence points to a process in which narrative absorption, exemplary modelling, and guided reflection jointly supported the translation of abstract virtues into personally owned commitments.

3.3 Enabling and constraining conditions

The effectiveness of the narrative approach was moderated by a set of enabling and constraining conditions identified consistently across data sources. On the enabling side, teacher narrative competence emerged as decisive: teachers who narrated with vividness, pacing, and emotional expressiveness elicited visibly greater engagement than those who recounted episodes flatly, a pattern evident in the contrast between observed sessions. Habituation practices that linked narrated lessons to repeated classroom

routines and daily conduct further consolidated the moral message, as the coordinator emphasized in describing the school's character programming.

On the constraining side, three factors recurred. Time pressure within a content-heavy curriculum frequently truncated the dialogic reflection that teachers themselves regarded as most valuable, forcing premature closure of promising discussions. Assessment misalignment compounded the difficulty, since formal examinations rewarded factual recall of religious content rather than the moral reasoning the narratives were designed to cultivate, creating a subtle incentive to abbreviate reflective work. Variability in students' prior familiarity with the *sirah* also affected reception, with some students engaging readily while others required substantial scaffolding. The coordinator summarized the institutional tension candidly:

“We believe in character formation, and we write it into our program. But the exam is still the exam. Teachers feel the pressure to finish the material, so sometimes the deepest part the reflection is the part that gets cut.” (Curriculum coordinator)

The interplay of these conditions produced observable variation in outcomes across classrooms and lessons. Sessions in which a narratively skilled teacher was able to protect time for reflection and to connect the lesson to a recurring routine displayed the fullest expression of the four-mechanism process, with students moving visibly from absorption through reasoning toward stated intention. Sessions compressed by time pressure, by contrast, often stopped at the level of narration and modelling without reaching sustained reflection, yielding engagement that appeared more effective than deliberative. This within-case variation is analytically valuable because it shows the mechanisms operating in different combinations under different conditions, strengthening confidence that the enabling and constraining factors identified are causally pertinent rather than incidental. Taken together, the findings indicate that prophetic narrative pedagogy operated through four interlocking mechanisms whose moral yield depended materially on teacher skill, institutional support, and the alignment of assessment with the values being taught. These patterns are interpreted in relation to theory and prior research in the discussion that follows.

The findings collectively demonstrate that the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW functioned not as ornamental supplements to doctrinal instruction but as the principal pedagogical vehicle through which moral values were conveyed and internalized at MTsN 1 Blang Kejren. The four mechanisms identified contextual storytelling, character modelling, dialogic reflection, and habituation together describe a coherent process in which narrative absorption opens learners to moral influence, exemplary conduct supplies a concrete model, reflection converts reception into reasoning, and habituation stabilizes disposition into conduct. This section interprets each of these dynamics in relation to theory and prior scholarship, considers points of agreement and divergence, and draws out the theoretical, practical, and policy implications before acknowledging the study's limitations.

The salience of contextual storytelling aligns closely with the predictions of narrative-transportation theory, which holds that absorption in a story reduces resistance and heightens the persuasive uptake of its embedded values (Green & Brock, 2000). Teachers' insistence that the rule should live inside the story, and students' reports of vivid identification with narrated episodes, are consistent with the proposition that transported audiences adopt story-consistent attitudes more readily than they accept propositional argument. This finding corroborates recent Indonesian research showing that value transmission is more effective when embedded in meaningful experience than when delivered as abstract precept (Hidayat et al., 2023; Rahman & Nurhayati, 2021). It extends that work, however, by specifying the mechanism at a finer grain: it is not narrative in general but the transportive quality of skilled narration that appears to matter, a distinction that survey-based studies have been unable to isolate.

The prominence of character modelling both confirms and enriches social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). Students' accounts of consciously attempting to reproduce the Prophet's patience and honesty exemplify the observational sequence of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, with the narrated exemplar and the narrating teacher jointly serving as models. This resonates with scholarship positioning the *sirah* as a repository of exemplary conduct capable of anchoring abstract virtues in relatable

events (Nasir et al., 2022). The present study advances this literature by showing that modelling operated at two levels simultaneously: the Prophet as the narrated exemplar and the teacher as the live exemplar who embodied the disposition while narrating it. This dual modelling, largely unremarked in prior work, helps explain why teacher narrative competence proved so consequential, since a teacher who narrates virtue without embodying it undermines the very modelling the narrative is meant to supply.

The pivotal role of dialogic reflection speaks to a productive tension between narrative persuasion and critical moral reasoning. Whereas transportation theory emphasises reduced counter-arguing, the teachers in this study deliberately reopened the narrative to interrogation through questioning, inviting students to reason about rather than merely absorb the moral. This practice aligns with constructivist and dialogic accounts of moral education that stress the learner's active construction of ethical understanding, and it complements recent work on the pedagogical power of storytelling for moral reasoning and empathy (Zaki & Sa'adah, 2020). The finding suggests a refinement of the theoretical picture: narrative transportation and reflective deliberation are not antagonistic but sequential and complementary, with absorption furnishing the affective ground on which subsequent reasoning can build. This integrative reading contributes conceptually by reconciling two mechanisms often treated as opposed.

The importance of habituation situates the findings within the Aristotelian and Islamic ethical traditions that regard virtue as formed through repeated practice rather than through knowledge alone. The observation that narrated lessons consolidated into disposition only when linked to recurrent routines echoes character-education scholarship emphasizing that values must be practiced to be internalized (Berkowitz et al., 2017). It also converges with Indonesian studies of the Strengthening Character Education program, which stress the need to move beyond declarative instruction toward embodied habit (Suyadi et al., 2022). The present study contributes by locating habituation as the terminal mechanism in a narrative sequence, showing how story and practice interlock: the narrative supplies the meaning that motivates the habit, while the habit stabilizes the disposition the narrative inspires.

Not all findings, however, sit comfortably with the optimistic tenor of the advocacy literature, and several tensions merit attention. The constraining influence of assessment misalignment contradicts the implicit assumption in much prescriptive writing that narrative methods will flourish once teachers adopt them. The evidence here indicates that even committed teachers curtailed their most valued practices under the pressure of examinations that rewarded recall over reasoning, a finding that complicates celebratory accounts of storytelling and aligns instead with critical scholarship on the gap between character policy and classroom reality. Similarly, the dependence of the whole approach on teacher narrative competence qualifies the assumption that the *sirah* possesses an intrinsic pedagogical potency independent of its narration. These divergences suggest that the effectiveness of prophetic narrative is conditional and institutionally contingent rather than guaranteed.

Theoretically, the study makes a contribution by integrating narrative-transportation and social learning frameworks with the *sirah* tradition, a synthesis that the literature has left underdeveloped. The four-mechanism model articulates how transportive narration, dual-level modelling, dialogic reasoning, and habituation combine into a single process of moral internalization, offering a conceptual bridge between Western character-education theory and Islamic educational sources. This integration responds to longstanding concerns about the transferability of predominantly Western frameworks to Islamic settings by demonstrating that these theories illuminate Islamic narrative pedagogy while being themselves enriched by it, particularly through the notion of dual modelling and the sequential complementarity of transportation and reflection.

Practically, the findings carry clear implications for teacher preparation and lesson design. Because narrative competence proved decisive, teacher education for PAI should cultivate the craft of narration pacing, characterization, emotional expression, and the art of the reflective question rather than assuming that content mastery suffices. Lesson design should deliberately sequence transportive narration, exemplar identification, guided reflection, and linkage to habitual practice, treating these as an integrated cycle rather than as separable options. These implications resonate with research on teacher agency showing that the mediation of value-laden content depends heavily on how teachers manage narration and interaction (Fahmi

& Ridwan, 2021), and they translate that insight into concrete guidance for practice.

At the level of policy, the study points to the corrosive effect of misaligned assessment on character objectives. If madrasah and national policy genuinely prioritize moral formation, then assessment regimes must be reconfigured to value moral reasoning and reflective engagement rather than factual recall alone, so that the incentive structure teachers face ceases to penalize the very practices character policy espouses. This implication extends critiques of the implementation gap in the Strengthening Character Education program by locating one concrete mechanism of that gap assessment misalignment and indicating a specific lever for reform. Institutional support for protected reflective time within the curriculum would similarly help close the distance between aspiration and practice.

Several limitations temper these conclusions and frame directions for further inquiry. As a single-case study, the research pursues analytic rather than statistical generalization, and its findings are offered as transferable understanding to be tested in other settings rather than as universally applicable claims. The reliance on self-report in interviews and journals, though mitigated by observation and triangulation, cannot fully exclude social-desirability effects, and the semester-long timeframe captures proximal engagement rather than long-term behavioral change. Future research could productively extend the study through longitudinal designs that track moral development over time, comparative multi-site studies across diverse cultural regions, and mixed-methods work that pairs the processual insight of qualitative inquiry with measures of outcome, thereby consolidating and extending the model advanced here.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study set out to examine how moral values are implemented in PAI learning through the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW at MTsN 1 Blang Kejeren, and it found that prophetic narratives served as the central pedagogical vehicle for moral formation, operating through four interlocking mechanisms of contextual storytelling, character modelling, dialogic reflection, and habituation. These mechanisms together translated abstract virtues such as honesty, patience, compassion, and social responsibility into observable conduct, while their effectiveness was moderated by teacher narrative competence, time constraints, and the misalignment of assessment with moral objectives.

The scientific contribution of the study lies in rendering visible, through sustained qualitative inquiry, the situated processes by which narrative content becomes moral disposition, thereby addressing methodological and empirical gaps left by predominantly survey-based research. Theoretically, it advances an integrated model that unites narrative-transportation and social learning frameworks with the sirah tradition, introducing the notions of dual-level modelling and the sequential complementarity of transportation and reflection as conceptual refinements. Practically, it offers concrete guidance for teacher preparation and lesson design, indicating that narrative competence and a deliberate narrate model reflect habituate cycle is central to effective moral pedagogy.

At the level of policy, the findings underscore that character-education aspirations will remain unrealized unless assessment regimes and curricular time are reconfigured to reward moral reasoning and reflective engagement rather than factual recall alone. Future research should pursue longitudinal and comparative multi-site designs, together with mixed-methods approaches, to test and extend the transferability of the model across diverse Islamic educational contexts. In sum, structured narrative pedagogy grounded in the prophetic biography constitutes a viable and theoretically coherent vehicle for moral formation, provided it is supported by institutional conditions that honour the depth of reflection it requires.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.

- Berkowitz, M. W., Bier, M. C., & McCauley, B. (2017). Toward a science of character education: Frameworks for identifying and implementing effective practices. *Journal of Character Education*, 13(1), 33–51.
- Fahmi, M., & Ridwan, M. (2021). Teacher agency in value-based instruction: Mediating character education in Indonesian madrasahs. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 15(3), 401–409. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v15i3.19945>
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>
- Hidayat, R., Patras, Y. E., & Hardhienata, S. (2023). Character education in Indonesia: A systematic literature review. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(2), 1123–1135. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i2.2100>
- Lickona, T. (2018). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Nasir, M., Taufik, T., & Yusuf, M. (2022). Prophetic values in Islamic education: Integrating the sirah of Prophet Muhammad into moral learning. *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 16(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.21580/nw.2022.16.1.10123>
- Rahman, A., & Nurhayati, E. (2021). Contextual value internalization in Islamic religious education: A qualitative inquiry. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 133–148. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i2.13456>
- Suyadi, Nuryana, Z., & Fauzi, N. A. F. (2022). The fiqh of disaster and character education: Strengthening character education in Indonesia. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 11(1), 244–252. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i1.21738>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Zaki, M., & Sa'adah, N. (2020). Storytelling as a method of moral education: Evidence from Islamic primary schools. *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 25(2), 155–168. <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v25i2.6789>
- Alwi, B. M., & Amri, K. (2021). Moral reasoning and religiosity among madrasah students: A structural analysis. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(4), 621–638. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14436a>
- Fitriah, A., & Suryadi, B. (2020). Habituation of religious character in Islamic schools: A qualitative case study. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 39(3), 555–567. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i3.31123>
- Halstead, J. M., & Pike, M. A. (2018). Citizenship, values, and moral education in a plural society. *Journal of Moral Education*, 47(4), 445–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2018.1445983>
- Ismail, F., & Wekke, I. S. (2019). Islamic education and character building in remote areas of Indonesia. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 19(2), 289–304. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i2.1650>
- Kurniawan, S., & Mahfud, C. (2021). Value integration in Islamic religious education curriculum: Challenges and strategies. *Jurnal Tarbiyah*, 28(1), 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.30829/tar.v28i1.895>
- Mustofa, A., & Hamid, A. (2020). Narrative pedagogy and empathy development in religious education. *Al-Ta'lim Journal*, 27(3), 245–258. <https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v27i3.612>
- Nurdin, A., & Naqiyah, N. (2019). The role of teachers in internalizing moral values in Islamic education. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 4(2), 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2019.4.2.201-218>
- Rohman, F., & Mukhibat, M. (2022). Character education based on local wisdom in Acehnes madrasahs. *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 189–205. <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v11i2.6821>

- Sahin, A. (2018). Critical issues in Islamic education studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western liberal secular values of education. *Religions*, 9(11), Article 335. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110335>
- Sari, D. P., & Zamroni, Z. (2021). Storytelling method in strengthening students' character: A classroom study. *Jurnal Prima Edukasia*, 9(1), 88–100. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpe.v9i1.36778>
- Tan, C. (2020). Beyond rote-memorisation: Rethinking teaching and learning in Islamic education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 42(3), 289–300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2019.1621262>
- Wahyudin, D., & Suwirta, A. (2019). Character education values in the Indonesian national curriculum. *TAWARIKH: Journal of Historical Studies*, 10(2), 157–172. <https://doi.org/10.2121/tawarikh.v10i2.1116>
- Zubaidah, S., & Aziz, A. (2023). Assessment practices and character outcomes in Islamic secondary schools. *Journal of Turkish Science Education*, 20(1), 112–128. <https://doi.org/10.36681/tused.2023.007>