



At-Tarbawi: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Kebudayaan  
e-ISSN: 2086-9754/p-ISSN: 2086-9754  
Volume 12 Number 2 2025  
doi: 10.32505/tarbawi.v12i12411

## Exploring Moral Values through Story Education: Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/Elementary School Student Character Building Solutions

Received:  
August 11, 2025

Accepted:  
December 25, 2025

Published:  
December 30, 2025

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### Abstract

*Learning Islamic values for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) students or Elementary School (SD) children presents challenges in conveying abstract moral and spiritual concepts, considering that children's cognitive abilities are at the concrete operational stage. The primary challenge is to effectively internalise Qur'anic values so that they can be understood, internalised, and practised in everyday life. This article aims to explore the effectiveness of learning based on Qur'anic stories as a pedagogical strategy that is appropriate to children's developmental characteristics. The research uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods. The results of the study show that Qur'anic stories have strong potential in forming noble morals, because they present characters, event plots, conflicts and resolutions that are concrete, so that it makes it easier for children to interpret abstract values. In addition, the integration of stories with creative methods such as role playing, drawing, and group discussions increases students' emotional engagement and conceptual understanding. This research recommends that MI/SD teachers develop interactive Qur'anic story-based learning models, use visual and audio media to strengthen the learning experience, and carry out ongoing assessments of the application of values in student behaviour. This approach is believed to be able to shape Islamic character from an early age and provide a strong foundation for the younger generation in facing the challenges of the times.*

**Keywords:** Akhlak, Character, Elementary School, Moral, Storytelling

### Abstrak

Pembelajaran nilai-nilai Islam pada anak usia Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) atau Sekolah Dasar (SD) menghadapi tantangan dalam menyampaikan konsep moral dan spiritual yang bersifat abstrak, mengingat kemampuan kognitif anak berada pada tahap operasional konkret. Permasalahan utama adalah bagaimana menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai Qur'ani secara efektif agar dapat dipahami, dihayati, dan diamalkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Artikel ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi efektivitas pembelajaran berbasis kisah Qur'ani sebagai strategi

pedagogis yang sesuai dengan karakteristik perkembangan anak. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kisah Qur'ani memiliki potensi kuat dalam membentuk akhlak mulia, karena menghadirkan tokoh, alur peristiwa, konflik, dan resolusi yang konkret sehingga memudahkan anak memaknai nilai-nilai abstrak. Selain itu, integrasi kisah dengan metode kreatif seperti bermain peran, menggambar, dan diskusi kelompok meningkatkan keterlibatan emosional dan pemahaman konseptual siswa. Rekomendasi penelitian ini adalah agar guru MI/SD mengembangkan model pembelajaran berbasis kisah Qur'ani yang interaktif, menggunakan media visual dan audio untuk memperkuat pengalaman belajar, serta melakukan penilaian berkelanjutan terhadap penerapan nilai dalam perilaku siswa. Pendekatan ini diyakini dapat membentuk karakter Islami sejak dini dan memberikan landasan moral yang kokoh bagi generasi muda dalam menghadapi tantangan zaman.

**Kata Kunci: Akhlak, Moral, Pendidikan Dasar, Pendidikan Kisah**

## **Introduction**

Character education is a national strategic agenda launched to form a young generation with noble character, integrity, and responsibility (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017). MI/SD, as one of the formal educational institutions, has a strategic role in shaping the character of students from an early age, instilling religious values, science, and understanding in its students. In the context of basic education, character formation is the main foundation before the mastery of knowledge and skills.

Therefore, character education at the MI/SD level serves as the primary foundation for the development of superior Indonesian human resources. As a national strategic agenda, this effort is not only oriented to academic achievements, but rather to the formation of personalities with noble character, integrity, and responsibility. MI/SD has a strategic position because it is the first formal institution that systematically instills religious values, social ethics, and life skills through a directed learning process. At this stage, students are in the initial phase of moral development, so the internalisation of character values should be a priority before mastery of technical knowledge and skills. Thus, character education in MI/SD is not just a complementary, but is the core of the entire educational process that will determine the moral quality of future generations.

However, various surveys show that there is moral degradation among students, such as low respect for teachers, increased intolerant behaviour, and weak discipline (Lickona, 1991). Character crisis in the younger generation is an interesting topic to discuss. Student brawls, drug abuse, and other deviant behaviour are indicators of declining character among teenagers. This encourages the search for learning methods that are not only cognitive but also affective and applicable. Story education is one of the potential approaches, because it contains enthralling narrative elements, clear moral messages, and can arouse students' empathy (Al-Ghazali, 2005; Kasdi, 2014). In the tradition of Islamic education, stories have been used since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, to instil the values of tauhid, patience, and honesty (Kosim, 2022). The Qur'an itself contains many stories of prophets, previous people, and historical events that contain *ibrah* (lessons).

However, the use of story education in character formation of MI/SD students is still not optimal. Many teachers tell stories only as entertainment, without a process of deep moral reflection. On the other hand, the development of child psychology shows that elementary school is a golden age for the cultivation of moral values, because children begin to be able to understand the concept of right and wrong and form their own standards of behaviour (Piaget, 1965).

The education of inspirational stories in learning is effective in shaping students' characters. These stories contain noble values such as honesty, responsibility, and hard work that students can emulate. Stories as a learning medium have their own appeal for MI students. Simple language and interesting storylines make it easier for students to understand the moral message contained in it. Stories can be a bridge to convey character values effectively and fun. So, an alternative means that is effective in the learning process in MI/SD. Namely, by using the story method that is full of moral values and a good life. In this context, the philosophy of education plays an

important role in designing and implementing the right storytelling method to achieve the goals of MI/SD education.

Stories have a strong appeal in the learning process. Teachers can convey moral messages and life values more engagingly and memorably compared to other methods (Ihsan, 2019). Stories or stories from the Qur'an, Hadith or other Islamic literature have the power to inspire students to understand religious teachings and good morals. Stories such as stories about the Prophet, stories about companions or other moral stories are effective ways to convey the message of Islam (Hatta, 2009).

Using the legacy of Islamic stories in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/Elementary education has several benefits. First, these stories can concretely illustrate religious and moral values, so that students can more easily understand them (Sholihah et al., 2019). These stories can also arouse students' interest and curiosity about the religion of Islam. In addition, Islamic stories can also inspire and motivate students to practice religious values in their daily lives. Stories about patience, honesty, and kindness can be exemplary examples for students in dealing with various situations in their lives (Hussien et al., 2021).

Teachers should be able to provide diverse learning approaches by incorporating diverse stories and narratives according to the skills and learning materials (Anshori, 2020). Stories are also an effective way to warn students against immoral and criminal behaviour. With the story or storytelling method, students will receive values that affect their characters. Teachers can use stories as an alternative method to train students' thinking skills, especially in the emotional and psychomotor realms. Teachers can insert stories from the Qur'an into the learning process.

This study seeks to explore moral values that can be integrated through story education, its implementation mechanism, and its relevance in shaping the character of MI/SD students. This research is focused on the analysis of literature from various academic sources, educational policy documents, and relevant Islamic and general story texts.

## **Methods**

This study uses a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2018; Lexy J. Moleong, 2019) Through the Literature Study Method (Bungin, 2010) by reviewing scientific sources such as books, journal articles, education policy documents, and relevant digital sources. The literature used includes classical works of Islamic education, Western moral education theory, as well as empirical research on the effectiveness of story education in primary schools. This approach allows researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the topic being studied.

Data collection tools are used with literature observation techniques. The steps taken are to collect data through the collection of articles related to story education for students at the MI/SD level with documentation techniques through journal articles and books that support what is to be reviewed from this article (Sugiyono, 2023, p. 82), The second step is to process the data that has been collected by reducing appropriate or invalid data, coding and importing data into a format suitable for analysis. Next is data presentation, interpretation, and data verification. This step may require repeating the analysis or verifying the accuracy of the results.

## **Result**

### **A. Concept of Story Education**

The stories in the Qur'an and Hadith indeed play an important role in the understanding, morality, and ethics of Islam. The concepts of Wisdom and Tafsir are the two main approaches that Muslim philosophers use to understand and explain these stories.

- 1) Science of wisdom (علم الحكمة) refers to a deep understanding and thoughtful interpretation of the stories in the Qur'an and Hadith. Muslim philosophers believe that these stories have a deeper symbolic and philosophical meaning than their literal meaning. This deep understanding is said to help individuals achieve wisdom, introspection, and spiritual enlightenment.

- 2) Tafsir (تفسير) is an attempt to explain, decode and give context to a verse or story in the sacred text of Islam. Through interpretation, Muslim philosophers seek to understand the moral, ethical, and legal messages contained in the sacred text.
- 3) Apart from the knowledge of wisdom and interpretation, there are other concepts to understand stories in Islam, such as Gestures (تأويل), especially symbolic or metaphorical interpretations, and Badi' (بديع), special appreciation of the beauty of language and the things hidden in the stories of the Qur'an. In short, understanding and interpreting the stories in the Qur'an and Hadith is an integral part of Islamic philosophy. Islamic philosophers use approaches such as Hikmah and Tafsir to dig deeper into the meaning, ethics and morality contained in the sacred text.

The story has the following philosophical foundations: a) Holistic Education. The philosophy of story education for MI/Elementary school students emphasises comprehensive education. This means that education does not only include intellectual aspects, but also moral, spiritual, and social aspects. By telling stories that contain moral and religious values, students not only gain knowledge but also build character; b) Active Learning. The use of stories in education also encourages active learning. Students can identify and reflect on the moral lessons they learn from the stories they hear or read. This allows them to think critically about the values conveyed throughout history; c) Formation of Islamic Identity. The philosophy of education through history in MI/SD aims to shape the Islamic identity of students. By studying the stories in the Quran and Hadith, students can better understand the teachings of Islam and become individuals based on Islamic values. Children will learn about the lives of prophets and companions, as well as the values of kindness, honesty and compassion; d) Developing Good Morals. The story of education for MI/SD students

also aims to develop good morals. Stories about patience, honesty, humility and kindness will be a real example of how to live life well. This will help students form a positive and noble personality.

## **B. The Urgency of Story Education in Shaping Students' Morals**

Story education has a strategic position in the internalisation of good morals, especially in elementary school-age children. In Ayyuhal Walad, Al-Ghazali emphasises that stories are not just entertainment, but an educational means that can instil morals in depth (Al-Ghazali, 2011). He argues that the story runs using three other main methods, namely through example (*uswah hasanah*), habituation (*ta'wid*), and advice (*maw'izhah*), which together form a comprehensive approach to character education (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

According to him, the story touches the emotional side and makes it easier for children to absorb moral messages without feeling patronised (An-Najah, 2017). This concept is in line with the principles of Islamic education, which emphasise the balance of mind and heart (Al-Nahlawi, 2008). From the perspective of classical moral education, stories have the power to instil value through concrete examples and emotional memories inherent in children (Fauzan, 2018).

Thus, education through stories is one of the most effective teaching media to internalize noble moral values in students. This method not only conveys moral messages directly but also wraps them in a narrative flow that is easy for children to understand, remember, and live. The story works on two domains at once, the first cognitive, by providing a clear and logical structure of thinking, and the second affective, by touching the emotional layers that encourage the birth of empathy, care, and motivation to act according to the values learned.

This view is in line with Al-Ghazali's idea of placing stories as a strategic instrument in moral education, not just a means of entertainment. The findings of modern research in educational

psychology and learning theory also confirm its relevance, that stories can stimulate emotional engagement that reinforces the internalisation of values. Therefore, the application of the story method is not only of traditional value but also has strong scientific legitimacy as an effective pedagogical approach to shape students' character in various educational contexts.

### **C. Story Education Application Procedure**

The advantage of the storytelling method lies in its ability to combine the cognitive and affective aspects of children. Stories packed with characters, plots, conflicts, and solutions make it easier for children to understand complex moral situations (Al-Nahlawi, 2008). For example, the stories of the patience of the prophet Job (Al-Ghazali, 2011) The Prophet Muhammad's Honesty in Trading (An-Najah, 2017), or the sacrifice of the companions (Katsir, 1990), can be a living illustration for the values that are to be instilled. Al-Ghazali reminded us that moral education that is only conveyed through theory is often difficult for children to accept, while stories provide real context that evokes empathy and emotional involvement.

Thus, the story method becomes a bridge that connects moral theory with children's real experiences, so that moral values are not just memorised, but are truly lived and practised in daily life. Therefore, to insert the stories contained in the Qur'an into learning in MI/SD, teachers can use the following effective steps or methods:

Table 1. Story Education Implementation Procedure  
In Learning in MI/SD

<b>No</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.	Selection of Stories Relevant to the Lesson Theme	a. Teachers should choose stories that are appropriate for the age and understanding of students. Stories that are too complicated or heavy can cause students to lose interest. b. Teachers need to adjust the chosen story with basic competencies (KD),

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		indicators and lesson themes. For example, in the PPKn lesson on honesty, teachers can insert the story of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, while trading that displays the traits of al-Amin.
		c. Relevant selection helps the story become more meaningful for students.
2.	Language and Storyline Simplification	The language used must be appropriate to the child's level of cognitive development. Simple sentences, clear flows, and the reduction of difficult terms help children focus on the value being conveyed, not hindered in word comprehension
3.	Use of creative methods and Visual and Audio Media	a. Teachers can innovate or combine the naming methods to make them more interesting when telling stories. For example, students may be asked to role-play characters in the stories or create creative projects based on the stories they learn b. Qur'anic stories can be packaged using images, animated videos, or audio storytelling. This media makes it easier for children to imagine events, characters, and moral messages, while making learning more interesting and interactive
4.	Discussion and reflection	After telling stories, teachers must create conditions for students to discuss and reflect. Invite students to ponder and apply these values in their daily lives. This helps students understand and internalise the moral message of the story
5.	Sharing experiences	Teachers should give students the opportunity to share their experiences and understanding of the stories in the Qur'an. This can be done through group discussions or presentations in front of the class
6.	Creative Activities	a. Teachers can hold creative activities such as drama scripts, poems, or paintings inspired by Islamic stories.

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	It allows students to express their understanding
	b. Inviting students to act out scenes in the Qur'anic story will strengthen their understanding of values and develop empathy. Role play encourages children to "feel" the character's situation so that the moral message is more imprinted
7. Continuity	a. At the end of the lesson, the teacher reiterates the main values of the story, such as patience, honesty, or sacrifice. This affirmation is important so that the message does not get lost in the details of the story
	b. The values conveyed through the Qur'anic story need to be repeated on other occasions, both in different lessons, school activities, and daily interactions, so that these values are firmly embedded in students
	c. Islamic stories must be integrated consistently in the MI/SD curriculum. It helps students build a deep understanding of Islamic values

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The integration of Qur'anic stories in MI/SD learning will be more effective if it is done through the selection of relevant stories, delivery in simple language and attractive supporting media, and followed by reflection and value-strengthening activities through various creative activities. This approach ensures that the moral message of the story is not only understood cognitively but also internalised emotionally and behaviorally, thus being able to shape the character of the student as a whole.

## **Discussion**

According to Al-Ghazali, story education serves as an effective medium for internalising moral values, because this method is easy for children to understand and touches their emotional side. Al-Ghazali in Ayyuhal Walad highlights the importance of storytelling as a method of character education along with example, habituation and advice (Aminuddin & Wahidin, 2021; Tohidi, 2017). The explicit character values mentioned by Al-Ghazali include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, curiosity, and responsibility (Romdaniah, 2023). Modern research confirms that stories form empathy and moral control through narratives that are easily digestible by early childhood (Gare et al., 2021).

The relationship between stories and character reinforcement was also found empirically through the storytelling method (Haerudin & Cahyati, 2018; Istiani & Islamy, 2020; Rusiyono & Apriani, 2020). Storytelling is also able to increase empathy, build children's capacity to understand other people's perspectives, and strengthen moral control (J. Bruner, 1991). Furthermore, Bruner stated that narrative is one of the basic forms of human thinking, so that children find it easier to remember the value conveyed in the form of stories than abstract concepts. Piaget's theory of moral development shows that children's morality develops through concrete experiences and stories that contain *moral dilemmas*. This improves the child's ability to evaluate the concept of right and wrong concretely (Chen et al., 2023; Yalçın, 2021).

Meanwhile, other research confirms that stories trigger emotional engagement that plays an important role in internalising values (Haven, 2007). The relationship between story and character formation has also been recognised in Western educational traditions. The storytelling method widely used in European and American elementary schools has proven to be effective in developing children's social skills, empathy, and moral values (Paley, 1990). This is in line with Al-Ghazali's principle of seeing stories as part of an integral moral education strategy, not just an additional method.

Thus, both Al-Ghazali's classical theory and contemporary findings confirm that stories are an effective medium of character formation.

Learning based on Qur'anic stories that is relevant to the development of children of MI/elementary school age has proven to be effective because children are at the stage of concrete operational development according to Piaget's theory, so they tend to understand abstract concepts through contextual examples and stories (Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). Stories with characters, conflicts, and solutions present a learning experience that is both emotional and rational, making students understand not only "what is right" but also "why it is right" (J. S. Bruner, 1986). Other research shows that the story method can improve memory and moral understanding in students because it combines cognitive and affective aspects in one learning experience (Al-Afandi, 2017). In fact, according to Hasan, internalising values through Qur'anic stories is more effective than the pure lecture method because it triggers empathy, imagination, and active involvement of children (Arisinah et al., 2023).

In addition, the strategy of telling stories accompanied by reflection and strengthening values through creative activities has the potential to deepen the internalisation of students' morals (Santrock, 2014). Activities such as drawing characters, role-playing, or rewriting stories in their own language, encourage the elaboration of meaning and the formation of stronger moral awareness (Vygotsky, 1978). Hamid emphasised that the combination of visual, audio, and verbal media when telling stories significantly increases the absorption of Qur'anic values (Abdullah, 2018; Ramadhan et al., 2024). Thus, the story method is not just a means of entertainment, but a pedagogical device that can sustainably instil noble morals, forming the personality of students who are in harmony with Islamic teachings (Shihab, 2000).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Qur'anic story-based learning for MI/SD children has high relevance to their cognitive development characteristics that are in the concrete operational stage. Stories presented with characters, conflicts, and resolutions can concretise abstract values so that they are easier to understand and internalise. In addition to serving as an educational tool, Qur'anic stories combine cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, forming an understanding that not only emphasises "what is right," but also provides reasons for "why it is right" in moral and spiritual contexts. This approach has proven to be more effective than the pure lecture method because it engages students emotionally, triggers empathy, and encourages active involvement in the learning process.

Furthermore, when the Qur'anic story is combined with creative strategies such as role-playing, drawing, or rewriting the story, the process of internalising values becomes more profound and memorable. The integration of visual, audio, and verbal interaction media strengthens the learning experience, so that Qur'anic values are not only memorised but also lived out in students' daily behaviour. Therefore, learning based on the Qur'an story can be seen as a continuous, relevant, and contextual pedagogical method to form noble morals from an early age. This strategy not only prepares children to become individuals with Islamic character, but also is able to equip them with a solid moral foundation to face the challenges of life in the future.

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