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The Representation of Islamic Moral Values in the Character of Syifa in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's Novel *Suluh Rindu*

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how *akhlaq* toward Allah is represented through Syifa in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's novel *Suluh Rindu* and to identify its pedagogical implications for Islamic Religious Education. It employed a qualitative textual design using directed qualitative content analysis. The 2022 edition of the novel constituted the primary source, while books, peer-reviewed articles, and previous studies on Islamic morality, literary analysis, and Islamic education served as secondary sources. Meaning units comprising Syifa's speech, actions, attitudes, spiritual responses, and narratorial descriptions were identified through repeated close reading, documented with their narrative contexts, and deductively coded using six categories derived from Sesady's framework. Manifest and latent meanings were compared within and across categories, while ambiguous and negative cases were retained to prevent confirmatory interpretation. The findings reveal representations of *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, and *tawbah*, although their evidentiary strength varies. *Taqwa*, love of Allah, *khauf* and *raja'*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr* are relatively well supported by recurring actions and contextualised spiritual responses. Conversely, *rida* and *tawbah* remain tentative because admiration of divine creation does not necessarily demonstrate acceptance of divine decree, and *istighfar* alone does not establish complete repentance. The study's originality lies in distinguishing religious vocabulary from moral-spiritual disposition through a context-sensitive analysis of speaker, motivation, narrative situation, and behavioural consequences. It contributes theoretically by refining the classification of *akhlaq* in literary texts and pedagogically by identifying *Suluh Rindu* as potential supplementary material for reflective discussion, moral reasoning, and contextual learning in Islamic Religious Education. Nevertheless, its educational effectiveness requires validation through teacher review and classroom-based research involving substantially larger and more varied student groups.

Keywords: *akhlaq* toward Allah; Islamic moral values; Islamic Religious Education; literary content analysis; *Suluh Rindu*; Syifa

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education is responsible not only for transmitting religious knowledge but also for cultivating students' character and moral-spiritual dispositions. Rapid social and technological transformations have created increasingly complex challenges for the religious and moral development of young people. An educational process that focuses exclusively on cognitive mastery is therefore insufficient to enable students to consistently embody Islamic values in their daily lives. Previous research has demonstrated that IRE can contribute to the development of students' religious character through instruction, habituation, exemplary conduct, and the internalisation of Islamic values (Efendy et al., 2022). Within an Islamic educational framework, knowledge and moral-spiritual formation are inseparable because education is intended to shape both intellectual understanding and embodied religious conduct (Sabki & Hardaker, 2013).

This challenge indicates that the cultivation of *akhlaq* requires more deliberate attention in educational practice. Students need not only to understand religious teachings concerning the relationship between human beings and Allah but also to develop the awareness and disposition necessary to embody those teachings in everyday conduct. Religious character can be cultivated through worship-related habituation, moral exemplarity, advice, reflective dialogue, and stories containing Islamic values. Dewi (2025) similarly found that habituation, role modelling, value internalisation, advice, and exemplary stories can support the development of students' religious character. Nevertheless, moral education should not be reduced to the passive transmission or mechanical imitation of prescribed values. Research on role-modelling programmes in an Islamic context suggests that moral exemplars are more educationally meaningful when learners are also encouraged to engage in critical reflection, moral reasoning, and the practical embodiment of virtues (Osman, 2024).

One essential dimension of Muslim character is *akhlaq* toward Allah. This dimension reflects the relationship between a servant and Allah through obedience, love, acceptance of divine decree, hope, reverential fear, reliance upon Allah, awareness of divine blessings, and the willingness to return to Allah after committing a wrongdoing (Sesady, 2023). In this study, *akhlaq* toward Allah is examined through six conceptual categories: *taqwa*; love and *rida*; *khauf* and *raja'*; *Tawakkal*; *shukr*; and *tawbah*. These values can provide a moral-spiritual foundation for students' religious development. IRE that facilitates the understanding, reflection, and contextual enactment of these values may help students connect religious knowledge with everyday moral conduct. Homba (2025), for example, demonstrated that habituation and exemplary conduct in *Aqidah Akhlaq* instruction can support religious character as reflected in students' relationships with Allah, other human beings, and the environment.

The cultivation of *akhlaq* toward Allah can draw on various educational resources, including literary works. Novels present characters, dialogue, conflicts, decisions, and consequences through which readers can encounter moral and spiritual issues in concrete human situations. Fiction may offer a narrative space in which readers interpret characters' motives, emotions, choices, and moral struggles. Experimental evidence indicates that fictional narratives can influence readers' empathy when they become emotionally transported into the story (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). However, such educational effects should not be presumed to occur automatically. Wimmer et al. (2021) found no robust evidence that narrative perspective alone produced immediate improvements in social or moral cognition. They emphasised the roles of reader characteristics, textual features, identification, and the conditions under which reading occurs. Consequently, the pedagogical significance of a novel should be established through careful textual and educational analysis rather than inferred solely from the presence of religious messages.

Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Suluh Rindu* is a religiously oriented novel that portrays characters negotiating worship, interpersonal relationships, personal struggles, and spiritual experiences. Syifa is depicted as maintaining a close relationship with Allah through prayer, *dhikr*, Qur'anic reading and memorisation, supplication, and responses to difficult circumstances grounded in religious conviction. Sapitri et al. (2024) found that Syifa is represented as hardworking, generous, disciplined, observant in worship, and forgiving. Their study also identified five broad dimensions of character education in the novel: religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity. Another study of the same novel identified 17 character-education values derived from the Indonesian national character-education framework (Mala et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate the novel's educational content, but they primarily classify general character values. They do not specifically examine how Syifa's speech, actions, attitudes, and spiritual experiences narratively represent *akhlaq* toward Allah, nor do they systematically distinguish among the closely related categories of *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *Tawakkal*, *shukr*, and *tawbah*.

This limitation constitutes the research gap addressed in the present study. Rather than merely inventorying religious or character values, this study analyses how *akhlaq* toward Allah is represented through Syifa's speech, actions, attitudes, inner responses, and the narrative contexts in which they occur. Particular attention is given to the conceptual boundaries among the six categories so that a religious expression is not automatically classified as evidence of a specific moral-spiritual disposition without considering its narrative context. The study also distinguishes textual findings from pedagogical implications. Because it is based on textual analysis rather than classroom intervention, it does not claim that reading the novel directly produces religious character. Instead, it considers the novel's potential as a supplementary and reflective resource for IRE, whose educational use would still require appropriate learning objectives, teacher mediation, critical discussion, and contextual adaptation to students' developmental needs.

Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: (1) How are *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *Tawakkal*, *shukr*, and *tawbah* represented through the character of Syifa in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Suluh Rindu*? and (2) What pedagogical implications do these representations have for the teaching of *akhlaq* in Islamic Religious Education? By answering these questions, the study seeks to contribute to Islamic education and literary scholarship in two respects. Theoretically, it offers a more focused and context-sensitive account of the representation of *akhlaq* toward Allah in an Indonesian Islamic novel. Pedagogically, it identifies ways in which literary narratives may be used as supplementary materials for reflective discussion of moral-spiritual values without treating fictional representation as direct evidence of educational effectiveness.

Method

This study employed a qualitative textual research design using directed qualitative content analysis. It aimed to identify, classify, and interpret the representation of *akhlaq* toward Allah through the character of Syifa in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's novel *Suluh Rindu* and to examine the pedagogical implications of these representations for Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative approach was selected because the data consisted of words, sentences, dialogues, descriptions of actions, internal responses, and narrative episodes whose meanings required contextual interpretation rather than statistical measurement. The study was also library-based because its data were obtained from written sources, particularly a literary work as the primary source and relevant academic literature as secondary sources (Alfien, 2024). Directed qualitative content analysis was considered appropriate because the initial analytical categories were derived from an established conceptual framework, while the interpretation remained sensitive to narrative context and data that did not fit the predetermined categories. Qualitative content analysis enables researchers to examine both manifest content, which is explicitly expressed in a text, and latent content, which concerns meanings implied through narrative context, actions, and character development (Graneheim et al., 2017). This method requires a clearly defined unit of analysis, systematic coding procedures, consistent categorisation, and a transparent account of interpretive decisions (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo et al., 2014).

The primary data source was the 2022 edition of *Suluh Rindu*, written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy and published by Republika Penerbit. The primary data comprised textual passages related to Syifa, including her speech, actions, attitudes, emotional and spiritual responses, interactions with other characters, and narratorial descriptions of her conduct. The analysis focused on passages that represented Syifa's relationship with Allah through *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *Tawakkal*, *shukr*, and *tawbah*. Secondary sources consisted of books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and previous studies concerning *akhlaq* toward Allah, Islamic Religious Education,

qualitative content analysis, literary analysis, religious character formation, and the pedagogical use of literary narratives. These secondary sources were used to define the analytical categories, support the interpretation of textual data, and examine the potential pedagogical implications of the findings. They were not treated as substitutes for textual evidence from the novel.

The unit of analysis was a meaning unit, defined as one or more connected sentences, a dialogue exchange, or a narrative episode that conveyed a coherent meaning concerning Syifa's relationship with Allah. A meaning unit could include Syifa's direct statements, observable actions, internal responses reported by the narrator, or other characters' descriptions of her, provided that the narrative context clearly referred to Syifa. When necessary, the surrounding paragraphs or complete narrative episode were examined as the unit of context to prevent quotations from being interpreted in isolation. The initial textual corpus consisted of all passages in which Syifa appeared, spoke, acted, was described by the narrator, or was explicitly discussed by another character.

A passage was included when it was explicitly or contextually attributable to Syifa, described her relationship with Allah or her religious consciousness, worship, spiritual response, or morally relevant action, contained sufficient narrative context to support interpretation, and corresponded to at least one operational indicator in the coding framework. Passages were excluded when they referred exclusively to another character, contained only a general religious statement without a demonstrable relationship to Syifa, repeated previously identified evidence without providing a different context, or lacked sufficient contextual information for reliable interpretation. Ambiguous passages were retained during the preliminary analysis and reviewed after the complete novel had been coded. They were included in the final dataset only when the narrative context provided adequate interpretive support.

Data were collected through systematic documentation. The novel was first read in its entirety to understand the plot, character relationships, narrative perspective, and Syifa's overall character development. It was then reread to identify all passages involving Syifa. Potentially relevant meaning units were recorded in a data extraction sheet containing the data code, direct quotation, page number, speaker or narrative source, episode context, preliminary category, operational indicator, and analytical memo. Each datum was assigned a code consisting of a category abbreviation and a sequential number. The abbreviations were TQ for *taqwa*, CR for love and *rida*, KR for *khauf* and *raja'*, TW for *Tawakkal*, SY for *shukr*, and TB for *tawbah*. Passages that had not yet been classified were temporarily coded UC, meaning uncategorised. Recording page numbers, speakers, and narrative contexts established a traceable relationship between the source text and the researcher's interpretation.

The initial coding framework was developed deductively from Sesady's (2023) conceptualisation of *akhlaq* toward Allah. *Taqwa* was operationally

defined as conscious obedience to Allah, consistent performance of religious obligations, avoidance of prohibited conduct, and prioritisation of worship as an expression of religious commitment. Love and *rida* referred to an affective attachment to Allah, love for practices that bring a person closer to Allah, appreciation of divine signs, and sincere acceptance of Allah's commands or decrees. Expressions of admiration for nature were not automatically coded as *rida* unless the narrative also demonstrated acceptance of divine determination. *Khauf* and *raja'* referred to reverential fear of divine displeasure or the spiritual consequences of wrongdoing, together with hope in Allah's mercy, protection, guidance, or reward. Ordinary anxiety was excluded unless the text connected it explicitly or contextually to Syifa's relationship with Allah.

Tawakkal was defined as reliance upon Allah after reasonable effort, recognition of human limitations, and surrender of outcomes to divine determination. Passive resignation without evidence of effort was not classified as *Tawakkal*. *Shukr* referred to the recognition of blessings as originating from Allah, verbal gratitude supported by narrative context, or the constructive use of blessings. The formulaic expression *alhamdulillah* was not automatically treated as sufficient evidence of *shukr* without examining the situation in which it was expressed. *Tawbah* referred to awareness of wrongdoing, remorse, seeking Allah's forgiveness, cessation or rejection of the wrongful conduct, and an intention to improve. The utterance of *istighfar* as a spontaneous expression of surprise or distress was not automatically classified as *tawbah* unless the narrative indicated an awareness of wrongdoing or a return to Allah.

A passage could receive more than one code when it contained independently supported indicators of different categories. In such cases, the researcher recorded a primary category representing the dominant meaning of the passage and a secondary category representing an additional meaning. The analytical memo documented the basis for both classifications. This procedure prevented conceptually overlapping values from being combined without adequate justification.

Data analysis followed the iterative processes of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The researcher first became familiar with the complete text by reading the novel repeatedly and documenting Syifa's narrative position, relationships, conflicts, and spiritual development. Potentially relevant meaning units were then extracted without immediately discarding ambiguous or contradictory passages. Each meaning unit was coded using the operational definitions in the coding framework. The analysis combined deductive coding based on the six predetermined categories with openness to unexpected meanings and patterns emerging from the text.

The coded data were subsequently compared within and across categories. Within-category comparison was conducted to determine whether the data shared a coherent moral-spiritual meaning, while cross-category

comparison was used to clarify conceptual boundaries. Particular attention was given to distinctions between *taqwa* and love of Allah, love and *rida*, *khauf* and ordinary fear, *Tawakkal* and passive resignation, verbal gratitude and substantive *shukr*, and *istighfar* and *tawbah*. This comparison reduced the risk of assigning a religious expression to a particular category solely because it contained religious vocabulary.

The researcher analysed both manifest and latent meanings. Manifest analysis focused on explicitly stated religious expressions and actions, whereas latent analysis examined moral-spiritual meanings constructed through narrative context, motivation, consequences, and character development. Previous research on novels has similarly employed content analysis to interpret quotations related to the research focus (Rostiyati, 2019). In the present study, however, quotations were analysed together with their speakers, narrative settings, and surrounding episodes so that interpretations did not rely on isolated sentences.

The findings were organised in an analytical matrix containing the category, data code, textual evidence, narrative context, operational indicator, interpretation, alternative interpretation, and final coding decision. Data that challenged or contradicted the dominant portrayal of Syifa were examined as negative cases rather than discarded. The absence of adequate textual evidence for a category was also reported and was not interpreted as proof that the character entirely lacked the corresponding moral quality. Conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns, variations, tensions, and relationships among the six categories. The analysis therefore did not merely count religious expressions or list moral values. It examined how the novel constructed Syifa's moral-spiritual disposition through her speech, conduct, inner responses, narrative conflicts, and development across different situations.

The trustworthiness of the analysis was addressed through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and contextual adequacy. Credibility was supported by repeated reading, examination of complete narrative episodes, use of direct quotations with page numbers, and comparison of each quotation with the relevant operational definition. Because interpretation is inherent in qualitative content analysis, a transparent relationship among textual evidence, coding decisions, and conclusions was maintained throughout the study (Elo et al., 2014; Graneheim et al., 2017).

Dependability was strengthened through a code-recode procedure. After the initial coding had been completed, the data were reviewed in a separate coding round using the same operational definitions. Differences between the initial and subsequent coding decisions were documented and resolved by returning to the complete narrative context and conceptual framework. Coding definitions were revised when they produced overlap or inconsistent decisions, after which previously coded data were reassessed using the revised definitions.

Confirmability was supported through an audit trail consisting of the data extraction sheet, coding framework, analytical memos, records of category revisions, ambiguous cases, alternative interpretations, and reasons for including or excluding each passage. Negative-case analysis was conducted by searching for textual evidence that complicated or contradicted the dominant interpretation of Syifa as a religiously exemplary character. These procedures were intended to reduce confirmation bias and enable readers to follow the interpretive process.

The pedagogical analysis was conducted separately from the textual classification. Each identified representation was examined in relation to the moral-spiritual concept represented in the novel, the narrative situation through which it was expressed, its potential connection to the objectives of *akhlaq* instruction, and possible reflective learning activities in Islamic Religious Education. The analysis considered how selected passages might support contextual interpretation, critical discussion, moral reasoning, and self-reflection.

Because this study did not involve teachers, students, classroom observations, or an instructional intervention, it did not evaluate the effectiveness of *Suluh Rindu* in forming students' religious character. The findings were therefore interpreted as pedagogical implications and potential uses of the novel as supplementary material, rather than evidence of a direct educational effect. Any classroom application would require teacher mediation, alignment with learning objectives, consideration of students' age and reading ability, and critical discussion of the narrative context.

Results and Discussion

The analysis identified six conceptual categories of *akhlaq* toward Allah in the representation of Syifa in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Suluh Rindu*: *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *Tawakkal*, *shukr*, and *tawbah*. These values were represented not only through Syifa's explicit religious statements but also through her routines, actions, responses to difficulties, inner reflections, and spiritual experiences. The textual evidence, however, did not support all six categories with equal strength. The representations of *taqwa*, love of Allah, *khauf* and *raja'*, *Tawakkal*, and *shukr* were relatively explicit, whereas the representations of *rida* and *tawbah* required more cautious interpretation because some relevant passages could also support alternative readings. This distinction is important because the presence of religious vocabulary alone does not necessarily demonstrate a stable moral-spiritual disposition.

Taqwa

Taqwa was one of the most consistently represented values in Syifa's character. It appeared through her commitment to prayer, *dhikr*, Qur'anic recitation and memorisation, and her deliberate use of time for worship. One representative statement is, "I have to review my memorisation. I still have two

juz left" (El Shirazy, 2022). The expression "I have to" indicates a self-imposed religious responsibility rather than an activity performed in response to external pressure. The reference to the remaining two *juz* also places the statement within an ongoing process of disciplined Qur'anic memorisation. The passage therefore represents *taqwa* through sustained commitment, self-regulation, and the prioritisation of a religious obligation.

Syifa's *taqwa* is further represented through her practice of reciting *dhikr* before sleeping. The narrator describes her eyes as already closed while her lips continue to recite words of remembrance. This narratorial description frames the remembrance of Allah as an embodied habit that persists beyond formal worship. A similar pattern occurs when Syifa chooses to perform the *duha* prayer despite having opportunities to engage in other activities. Her decision is significant because the narrative presents worship as an intentional priority. She also uses time during medical treatment to review her Qur'anic memorisation, and Qur'anic verses are depicted as remaining on her lips even while she sleeps. Taken together, these episodes construct religious obedience as a recurring pattern in Syifa's everyday life rather than as an isolated act.

Sesady (2023) identifies *taqwa* as a central dimension of *akhlaq* toward Allah because it connects inward religious consciousness with obedience and morally disciplined conduct. Syifa's actions are consistent with this understanding because her devotion is represented through repeated and voluntary practices. The evidence also supports Sesady's argument that *akhlaq* develops through actions that become embedded in a person's character through habituation. Nevertheless, the literary evidence should not be interpreted as direct evidence of Syifa's inner piety. As a fictional character, her inward disposition is available to the reader only through the narrator's selection of actions, speech, and spiritual experiences. The finding is therefore more accurately understood as the narrative construction of *taqwa*.

This interpretation extends the findings of Sapitri et al. (2024), who characterised Syifa as disciplined and observant in worship. The present analysis provides a more focused explanation of how those traits are narratively connected to *akhlaq* toward Allah. Discipline is not treated merely as a general character value but as part of a pattern in which Syifa consciously prioritises prayer, Qur'anic engagement, and remembrance of Allah. The representation therefore combines ritual consistency, self-regulation, and spiritual orientation.

Love and Rida Toward Allah

Love of Allah is represented through Syifa's experience of spiritual closeness while contemplating the natural world. The narrator states, "What she felt was happiness and closeness to nature. The closer she was to nature, the more deeply she felt the beauty of being with God" (El Shirazy, 2022). The passage connects the beauty of nature with an affective experience of proximity to Allah. Nature is not described merely as an aesthetically pleasing

environment but as a medium through which Syifa reflects upon divine greatness and experiences spiritual happiness.

A comparable representation occurs when Syifa reaches Puncak Seminung and observes a sea of clouds illuminated by moonlight. She relates the landscape to the signs of Allah's greatness and imagines the beauty of *Sidrat al-Muntaha*. The narrative thus transforms the landscape into a setting for spiritual contemplation. This interpretation is consistent with Hardinagoro et al. (2026), who argue that engagement with nature may provide a contextual space for Qur'anic reflection and the formation of religious awareness. In Syifa's case, the natural environment functions as a narrative stimulus for remembering Allah rather than as an independent source of spirituality.

Love of Allah is also represented through Syifa's relationship with the Qur'an. Her repeated efforts to maintain her memorisation, undertake *murajaah*, and pray to be included among *ahl al-Qur'an* indicate that the Qur'an holds an affective and spiritual position in her life. These actions suggest that her relationship with the Qur'an is sustained by more than formal obligation. It includes attachment, aspiration, and a continuous effort to remain close to divine revelation. In Sesady's (2023) framework, love of Allah is associated with a person's inclination to draw closer to Allah. Syifa's Qur'anic practices provide comparatively strong textual evidence for this dimension.

The evidence for *rida*, however, is less explicit than the evidence for love. Sesady (2023) defines *rida* as the sincere acceptance of Allah's commands and decrees, including the ability to remain grateful during prosperity and patient during adversity. The passages concerning natural beauty and Qur'anic memorisation demonstrate admiration, love, and spiritual closeness, but they do not by themselves establish acceptance of a difficult divine decree. Consequently, these passages should not automatically be classified as evidence of *rida*. The representation of *rida* becomes plausible only in episodes where Syifa responds to circumstances beyond her control by maintaining a positive view of Allah's determination and accepting its moral significance. Without direct evidence of such acceptance, the finding should be reported as an emerging or tentative representation of *rida* rather than a fully established category.

This distinction strengthens the conceptual precision of the analysis. Love and *rida* are related but not interchangeable. Love is represented through attachment, remembrance, and the desire for closeness, whereas *rida* requires evidence of willing acceptance of divine determination. Treating them separately prevents admiration of divine creation from being interpreted too broadly as acceptance of every divine decree.

Khauf and Raja'

The relationship between *khauf* and *raja'* is represented through Syifa's fear of spiritual loss and her continuing hope in Allah's mercy and assistance. One passage states, "She was deeply afraid of losing the Qur'an that she had struggled so hard to memorise" (El Shirazy, 2022). The object of her fear is not

a material loss but the weakening of her relationship with the Qur'an. The narrative further describes her questioning whether her declining commitment to maintaining her memorisation, spiritual dryness, and weakening worship should be understood as a calamity. This context distinguishes *khauf* from ordinary anxiety because her fear concerns spiritual deterioration and the possibility of becoming distant from Allah.

According to Sesady (2023), *khauf* can encourage obedience and prevent a person from engaging in prohibited conduct, whereas *raja'* directs a person toward hope in Allah's mercy and goodness. In Syifa's case, fear does not result in withdrawal or despair. It motivates her to pray, recite *dhikr*, weep in prostration, seek protection, and renew her relationship with the Qur'an. This behavioural response is analytically important because it shows that her fear remains oriented toward moral and spiritual restoration.

The representation of *raja'* is visible in Syifa's supplications. She asks Allah to include her among *hamalat al-Qur'an* and *ahl al-Qur'an* and prays for goodness for herself and those she loves. During the night prayer, she also prays for her husband. These actions represent hope as an active orientation expressed through prayer, worship, and concern for others. In this sense, *raja'* is not passive expectation. It is hope accompanied by continued religious effort, which is consistent with Sesady's (2023) assertion that authentic hope must be accompanied by obedience.

The narrative presents *khauf* and *raja'* as mutually regulating dispositions. Fear makes Syifa aware of spiritual decline, while hope prevents that awareness from becoming despair. This balance is significant because fear without hope could produce helplessness, whereas hope without moral effort could become unrealistic expectation. The finding therefore concerns not simply the presence of two separate emotions but the narrative pattern through which fear prompts Syifa to return to worship and hope sustains that return.

Tawakkal

Tawakkal is represented as the relationship between human effort and reliance upon Allah. A central passage states, "Then one must take responsibility for oneself and understand that success is one's own responsibility, not someone else's. All of this must be accompanied by complete trust in Allah, the Lord who governs the universe" (El Shirazy, 2022). The passage rejects an understanding of *Tawakkal* as passive surrender. Personal responsibility and effort are presented as necessary, while the ultimate outcome remains entrusted to Allah.

This interpretation is consistent with Sesady's (2023) explanation that *Tawakkal* involves entrusting one's affairs to Allah after undertaking the maximum possible effort. It also entails freeing the heart from absolute dependence on anything other than Allah. The quotation brings these two elements together by affirming human responsibility while recognising divine authority over the final outcome. However, the attribution and context of this statement must be made explicit in the published article. If the statement is

spoken by another character rather than Syifa, it cannot serve as direct evidence of Syifa's *Tawakkal* unless the narrative subsequently shows that she accepts or enacts the principle.

Syifa's reliance upon Allah is more convincingly represented in episodes where she encounters circumstances beyond her control. The narrative describes her surrendering her helplessness to Allah and recognising that Allah is her ultimate source of dependence. Her efforts to maintain proper conduct and a positive understanding of divine rules also indicate that reliance is connected with moral responsibility. These passages suggest that her *Tawakkal* contains two interrelated elements: continued human effort and the surrender of outcomes that cannot be controlled.

The distinction between *Tawakkal* and *rida* should nevertheless be maintained. *Tawakkal* concerns reliance upon Allah while acting and facing uncertain outcomes, whereas *rida* concerns the willing acceptance of what Allah has decreed. A single passage may contain both meanings, but dual coding is justified only when each meaning is independently supported by the narrative context. This conceptual distinction prevents every form of religious acceptance from being placed indiscriminately in both categories.

Shukr

Shukr is represented through Syifa's responses to assistance, safety, achievement, and opportunities for worship. One passage states, "Alhamdulillah. Allah saved Syifa through the hands of many people" (El Shirazy, 2022). This statement attributes her safety ultimately to Allah while acknowledging other people as the means through which assistance was provided. The passage therefore combines theological recognition with social awareness. Syifa does not deny the contribution of other people, but she interprets their assistance within her belief in divine providence.

Another statement, "Alhamdulillah, I reached the summit" (El Shirazy, 2022), connects achievement with gratitude rather than individual pride. Syifa recognises her accomplishment but frames it as an occasion for praising Allah. A comparable pattern is found when she awakens at an appropriate time to perform the night prayer and expresses gratitude for the opportunity to worship. These episodes broaden the narrative scope of gratitude. The objects of *shukr* include not only material benefit but also safety, achievement, assistance, time, and access to worship.

Sesady (2023) places *shukr* among the principal forms of *akhlaq* toward Allah and associates it with a servant's awareness and acceptance of divine blessings. The passages concerning Syifa support this understanding because she repeatedly interprets positive circumstances as blessings originating from Allah. Nevertheless, the expression *alhamdulillah* should not automatically be treated as sufficient evidence of a stable disposition of gratitude. Its analytical significance depends on the surrounding situation, the object of gratitude, and whether the statement is consistent with the character's subsequent conduct. In the selected episodes, the narrative context provides that support because

the expressions are connected to identifiable experiences of protection, achievement, or worship.

The representation of *shukr* is therefore more than a collection of formulaic religious utterances. It constitutes a recurring interpretive pattern through which Syifa understands human assistance and personal achievement in relation to Allah. The novel portrays gratitude as a way of interpreting experience, locating the ultimate source of benefit in Allah while continuing to recognise human agency.

Tawbah

The representation of *tawbah* requires the most cautious interpretation. One passage records Syifa saying, "Astaghfirullāh al-'Aẓīm. Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn" (El Shirazy, 2022). Although *istighfar* can indicate a request for forgiveness, it can also function as a spontaneous response to shock, distress, or alarming information. The quotation alone does not establish that Syifa is repenting from a particular wrongdoing. Its classification therefore depends on whether the surrounding episode identifies an action she regards as wrong, her recognition of personal responsibility, and an intention to correct it.

A more substantial indication appears in the repeated supplication, "Lā ilāha illā anta subḥānaka innī kuntu mina al-ẓālimīn," accompanied by tears (El Shirazy, 2022). The supplication contains an acknowledgment of human wrongdoing before Allah, while the accompanying emotional response may indicate humility and remorse. Sesady (2023) describes *tawbah* as awareness of wrongdoing followed by a return to Allah through seeking forgiveness and improving one's conduct. The passage provides evidence of self-reproach and a return to Allah, but it does not by itself demonstrate all dimensions of *tawbah*, particularly the cessation of a specific wrongdoing and a sustained commitment not to repeat it.

Accordingly, the available evidence is better described as representing a movement toward *tawbah* rather than conclusive proof of completed repentance. The strongest evidence would consist of a connected narrative sequence in which Syifa recognises a specific error, experiences remorse, seeks forgiveness, changes her conduct, and demonstrates an intention not to repeat the error. If such a sequence occurs elsewhere in the novel, it should be presented together with the quoted supplications. If it does not, the result should remain qualified.

This cautious interpretation avoids equating every instance of *istighfar* with repentance. It also strengthens the analysis by distinguishing religious language from the moral-spiritual process represented through that language. Even in its qualified form, the finding shows that the novel portrays spiritual self-evaluation and returning to Allah as responses to perceived human weakness.

Relationship With Previous Research

The findings are consistent with Sapitri et al. (2024), who identified Syifa as disciplined, hardworking, generous, observant in worship, and forgiving. However, the present study differs by examining how her religious conduct is specifically structured as *akhlaq* toward Allah. Discipline is interpreted through *taqwa*, spiritual concern through *khauf*, continued supplication through *raja'*, the relationship between effort and surrender through *Tawakkal*, and the religious interpretation of assistance and success through *shukr*. This focused framework reveals distinctions that are less visible in a broad inventory of character-education values.

The findings also show that Syifa's moral-spiritual character is constructed through an interaction among speech, repeated action, inner response, and narrative context. The analysis therefore moves beyond identifying religious expressions and considers how those expressions function within the portrayal of the character. At the same time, the novel largely presents Syifa as an exemplary religious figure. This idealisation creates a methodological need to search for ambiguity, inconsistency, and negative cases so that the analysis does not merely reproduce the narrator's positive evaluation.

Pedagogical Implications for Islamic Religious Education

The six categories have potential pedagogical implications for Islamic Religious Education, particularly as materials for contextual and reflective discussion of *akhlaq* toward Allah. The representation of *taqwa* can be used to discuss the relationship among religious consciousness, consistency in worship, self-discipline, and daily decision-making. The representation of love of Allah may support reflection on the Qur'an, divine creation, and spiritual motivation. However, students should also be invited to distinguish love from *rida* and to examine whether a particular passage actually demonstrates acceptance of divine determination.

The relationship between *khauf* and *raja'* may provide material for discussing a balanced religious disposition. Students could analyse why Syifa's fear of spiritual decline leads her toward prayer and self-correction rather than despair. The representation of *Tawakkal* may support discussion of effort, responsibility, uncertainty, and reliance upon Allah. The representation of *shukr* may help students distinguish verbal gratitude from gratitude expressed through awareness and constructive action. Passages associated with *tawbah* may be used to examine the differences among *istighfar*, remorse, responsibility, behavioural change, and a commitment not to repeat wrongdoing.

The pedagogical value of Syifa as a fictional exemplar should not be understood as a process of uncritical imitation. Sanderse (2013) argues that role models contribute to moral education only when learners understand why particular qualities are morally significant and how those qualities may be acquired. Croce (2019) likewise warns that exemplar-based moral education may become indoctrinative if students are not provided with opportunities for

critical inquiry. Accordingly, Syifa's actions should be discussed rather than merely presented as conduct that students must copy. Students can be invited to identify evidence, evaluate motives, consider alternative interpretations, compare the character's speech with her actions, and relate the moral problem to their own context.

Fictional narratives may support this reflective process by providing concrete situations through which readers consider characters' motives, emotions, decisions, and consequences. Bal and Veltkamp (2013) found that fiction may influence empathy when readers experience emotional transportation into a narrative. However, Wimmer et al. (2021) found no robust evidence that narrative perspective alone produces immediate improvement in social or moral cognition. These findings indicate that the educational effects of reading are conditional rather than automatic. Text selection, teacher mediation, student characteristics, identification with characters, discussion activities, and the broader learning context all influence how a narrative is interpreted.

Therefore, *Suluh Rindu* can be proposed only as supplementary material for Islamic Religious Education, not as a text proven to form religious character. The present research did not involve students, teachers, classroom observations, or instructional interventions. It consequently cannot establish a causal relationship between reading the novel and changes in students' attitudes or behaviour. Its contribution lies in identifying passages and narrative patterns that may be developed into reflective learning materials. Their effectiveness would need to be examined through curriculum analysis, expert validation, classroom implementation, and empirical assessment involving students.

Conclusion

This study found that Syifa's *akhlaq* toward Allah in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Suluh Rindu* is represented through six conceptual categories: *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, and *tawbah*. The analysis demonstrates that narrative context has greater interpretive significance than initially assumed because religious expressions alone do not necessarily constitute evidence of a stable moral-spiritual disposition. The representations of *taqwa*, love of Allah, *khauf* and *raja'*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr* are supported relatively clearly by Syifa's speech, repeated actions, spiritual responses, and narrative experiences. By contrast, the evidence for *rida* and *tawbah* requires more cautious interpretation. Admiration for divine creation does not automatically demonstrate acceptance of divine decree, while *istighfar* does not necessarily constitute complete repentance without evidence of recognised wrongdoing, remorse, behavioural change, and an intention not to repeat the wrongdoing. These findings challenge the assumption that every religious utterance in a literary text can be classified directly as a particular form of *akhlaq* and open a broader discussion about the importance of contextual and conceptually precise interpretation.

Scientifically, this study strengthens previous findings that portray Syifa as a disciplined and religiously observant character while extending them through a more focused analysis of *akhlaq* toward Allah. It also supports Sesady's conceptualisation of *taqwa*, love and *rida*, *khauf* and *raja'*, *tawakkul*, *shukr*, and *tawbah* as dimensions of a servant's relationship with Allah. However, it challenges the equal validity of assigning all six categories to Syifa when their levels of textual support differ. The study introduces a context-sensitive distinction between religious vocabulary and moral-spiritual disposition by connecting each expression to its speaker, motivation, narrative situation, and behavioural consequences. It consequently contributes to literary and Islamic educational scholarship by showing that fictional narratives represent *akhlaq* not only through explicit religious advice but also through habits, conflicts, choices, emotional responses, and character development. From a pedagogical perspective, *Suluh Rindu* has the potential to serve as supplementary material for reflective discussion in Islamic Religious Education. However, the novel should be used through teacher-guided interpretation, moral reasoning, and critical discussion rather than as a model for uncritical imitation.

This study is limited to a single novel, one focal character, and a specific conceptual framework, which restricts the transferability of its findings to other literary works, characters, and educational settings. As a textual study, it also did not involve students, teachers, classroom observations, or an instructional intervention. It therefore cannot establish that reading *Suluh Rindu* directly develops students' religious character or changes their behaviour. Further research should compare multiple Islamic novels and characters, apply theoretical triangulation, involve additional coders to examine interpretive consistency, and investigate ambiguous or negative representations of religious character. Classroom-based studies with larger and more diverse groups of teachers and students are also recommended to evaluate the novel's suitability, instructional implementation, and educational outcomes. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how literary narratives may contribute to the teaching of *akhlaq* in Islamic Religious Education.

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