THE FORMATION OF CHILDREN'S CHARACTER IN ISLAM: AN ANALYSIS OF SURAH LUQMAN VERSES 13–16

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Abstract

This study explores the formation of children's character in Islam through a thematic analysis of Surah Luqman verses 13–16. The background of this research is rooted in the increasing moral degradation among Indonesian children, which is manifested in various alarming behaviors such as violence, juvenile delinquency, immorality, bullying, and conflicts within educational institutions. These conditions highlight the urgency of integrating spiritual-ethical values into character education in a more systematic, sustainable, and transformative manner. The aim of this research is to formulate a comprehensive conceptual understanding of Quranic-based character formation and to examine its pedagogical implications for contemporary Islamic education. This study employs a qualitative library research method using content analysis of primary sources—including the Qur'an, classical and modern tafsir, and relevant hadith—as well as secondary sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and prior empirical studies. The findings reveal that Luqman's counsels to his son present a multi-dimensional framework of character formation comprising: (1) tawhid education as the core spiritual foundation that warns against polytheism and its ethical consequences; (2) filial piety (birr al-wālidayn) which promotes moral responsibility toward parents while upholding theological principles; and (3) spiritual consciousness of divine surveillance, emphasizing that every human action—no matter how small—is accountable before God. The study concludes that effective implementation of Islamic character education requires a holistic approach that integrates spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions through exemplary conduct, consistent habituation, and constructive communication. Furthermore, the collaboration among family, educational institutions, and the broader community serves as a decisive factor in nurturing a morally upright and resilient young generation. This research contributes a systematic conceptual model for strengthening character education based on Islamic values in addressing contemporary moral challenges.

Keywords: *Islamic character education, tawhid values, Surah Luqman, children's moral development, Qur'anic perspective*

Introduction

Character formation stands as a fundamental pillar of education and plays a vital role in preparing morally upright future generations. However, contemporary social realities in Indonesia reveal a significant moral crisis among children, characterized by increasing violence, delinquent behavior, immorality, bullying, and interpersonal conflicts in schools (Safitri, Hasbi, & Nur, 2024). These issues indicate that existing educational practices have not sufficiently addressed the moral and spiritual needs of learners. The widening gap between expected moral standards and actual behavior underscores the urgency of implementing a more holistic, value-based educational model that strengthens children's spiritual identity.

Theoretical models of character education often emphasize cognitive development and moral reasoning, yet they fail to adequately incorporate religious and spiritual frameworks that can serve as intrinsic motivators for moral conduct. Likewise, numerous social factors—including limited understanding of religious teachings, negative environmental influences, and inadequate parental or institutional supervision—have weakened the foundation of children's character development (Rahmawati, Nurpriatna, Nurachadijat, & Jaelani, 2024). These conditions highlight the need to reconnect educational theory with Qur'anic principles, especially those grounded in the family setting, to reinforce the moral formation of children through spiritually oriented approaches.

Previous studies within Islamic education underline the significance of spiritual values, particularly tawhid, as the core of children's character formation. Research by Nuridayah, Mukhsin, and Fahmi (2023) shows that Islamic character formation encompasses values such as honesty, religiosity, courtesy, respect, compassion, social care, and sincere friendship. Their findings also emphasize the need for synergy between parents, schools, and society to strengthen students' moral development (Maslani, Basyari, Rohmatulloh, & Nuroh, 2023). Despite this, the mechanisms for internalizing these values effectively within family-based educational practices remain insufficiently elaborated, revealing a gap between conceptual understanding and practical strategy.

Studies focusing on family-centered character education identify parents as the first and primary educators responsible for instilling Islamic values through exemplification, habituation, and dialogical communication. For instance, analyses of Qur'anic pedagogical models demonstrate that the narrative of Luqman offers a holistic approach integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in moral cultivation (Meza Aulia Zahrah, Mifta Yuljannah Pasaribu, & Reva Nur Amalya, 2024). However, these studies often discuss Islamic character education broadly without specifically examining the structured pedagogical hierarchy offered in Surah Luqman verses 13–16.

Other studies have explored the significance of birr al-wālidayn and early inculcation of tawhid within family contexts. These works reveal that

nurturing filial piety and monotheistic awareness contributes to responsible behavior and heightened moral consciousness in children (Luthfiana Nurlathifah & Mia Lisartika, 2024). Nevertheless, research has not sufficiently analyzed how these values can be systematically implemented as an integrated framework derived explicitly from the sequential pedagogical messages of Surah Luqman verses 13–16. This demonstrates a clear research gap regarding the operationalization of Qur'anic-based character formation in contemporary educational contexts.

The novelty of this research lies in developing an integrated conceptual framework of character education rooted specifically in Surah Luqman verses 13–16, which present a systematic hierarchy of spiritual and moral values. Unlike previous studies that address Islamic character education in general terms, this research focuses on the sequential pedagogical logic found in these verses: foundational tawhid education (verse 13), filial piety balanced with theological consistency (verses 14–15), and spiritual consciousness of divine oversight (verse 16). This structured model provides a unique Qur'anic blueprint for character formation that has not been comprehensively articulated in earlier works.

Furthermore, this study offers novelty by synthesizing classical and contemporary interpretations of these verses with modern educational discourse. Through library research and content analysis, the study situates Luqman's advice within present-day challenges of moral degradation among Indonesian children, thereby bridging scriptural teachings with modern pedagogical needs (Rahmawati, Nurpriatna, Nurachadijat, & Jaelani, 2024; M. Choirul Muzaini & Umi Salamah, 2023; Salisah et al., 2024). This integration positions the research as a unique contribution to both Islamic studies and contemporary character education.

This study aims to analyze comprehensively the concept of children's character formation from the perspective of Surah Luqman verses 13–16 and to construct a holistic Qur'anic-based framework for character education that can be applied in contemporary Islamic educational contexts. The objective is to identify core values, pedagogical principles, and practical implications embedded in these verses for strengthening moral development in children.

This research argues that the pedagogical structure within Surah Luqman verses 13–16 offers a coherent and effective model for character education that addresses current moral challenges more holistically than conventional approaches. By emphasizing tawhid as the foundational value, filial piety as the cornerstone of social ethics, and spiritual consciousness as the internal regulator of behavior, these verses deliver an integrated ethical system capable of fostering spiritual, emotional, cognitive, and social maturity in children.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to contribute significantly to the development of Islamic character education models that are both theologically grounded and contextually relevant. In the midst of

growing moral crises among Indonesian youth, this research provides evidence-based insights for families, educators, and policymakers to design more effective strategies for cultivating morally resilient and spiritually conscious future generations. Through its systematic analysis of Surah Luqman verses 13–16, the study reinforces the indispensable role of Islamic values in shaping holistic character formation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a library research (literature study) approach aimed at exploring and analyzing the concept of children's character formation in Islamic education based on Surah Luqman verses 13–16 (Rahmawati, Nurpriatna, Nurachadijat, & Jaelani, 2024). The library research approach was selected because the subject matter requires a comprehensive examination of authoritative textual sources rather than empirical field data. This approach enabled the researcher to conduct an in-depth theoretical inquiry into classical and contemporary Islamic educational perspectives relevant to character formation.

The data for this study were collected from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including the Qur'an, classical and modern tafsir, collections of authentic Hadith, academic textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, and previous research publications relevant to the topic. The process of data collection followed systematic stages: (1) identifying credible and relevant literature aligned with the research focus, (2) conducting critical reading of selected sources, (3) extracting and recording essential information related to character formation, and (4) organizing the data for analytical purposes. These steps ensured that the analysis was grounded in authoritative and academically recognized sources.

The study utilized a content analysis technique to interpret the meanings and pedagogical implications contained in Surah Luqman verses 13–16. Content analysis allowed the researcher to categorize, interpret, and synthesize the thematic elements of the verses, focusing on the structure of values and educational messages embedded within the Qur'anic narrative. The analytical process involved identifying major themes, examining core theological and pedagogical concepts, and relating them to the broader discourse of Islamic character education.

To ensure the validity of findings, the study applied source triangulation by cross-checking and confirming information from multiple authoritative academic references, including classical exegetical works, contemporary scholarly interpretations, and recent empirical studies. This method strengthened the credibility of interpretations and reduced potential bias arising from reliance on a single source. Reliability was further enhanced by maintaining consistency in the analytical procedures across all data sources.

The final stage of analysis involved synthesizing the interpreted data to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework of children's character formation based on the values articulated in Surah Luqman verses 13–16. The synthesis process included identifying the hierarchical sequence of values within the verses, examining their pedagogical significance, and exploring their practical relevance for contemporary Islamic education. Through this systematic process, the study produced a holistic and in-depth understanding of Qur'anic-based character formation.

Results and Discussion

Conceptualizing Character Formation in the Perspective of Surah Luqman Verses 13–16

A comprehensive examination of Surah Luqman verses 13–16 reveals the fundamental principles of character formation in Islamic education, emphasizing a holistic integration of spiritual, moral, cognitive, and social development. Verse 13 states:

وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ۗاِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ

"And [mention, O Muhammad], when Luqman said to his son while he was instructing him, "O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah. Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice."

This verse establishes a profound theological foundation that *tawḥīd-based education* is the core of character formation in children (Atin, Hidayat, Wibowo, & Romadhon, 2024). The teaching of monotheism in this context does not merely introduce cognitive understanding about the oneness of God, but cultivates *spiritual consciousness* and a *God-centered worldview* that guides all dimensions of human conduct. Thus, character formation is positioned not only as behavioral training but as an internalized spiritual orientation that influences ethical decision-making and moral identity.

Pedagogically, this verse indicates the responsibility of Islamic education to form individuals who recognize their ontological identity as servants of Allah entrusted with moral responsibility in worldly life. Recent studies reaffirm that tawḥīd as an educational foundation plays a strategic role in shaping morally upright character in early childhood by nurturing their spiritual awareness and moral accountability (Fasyiransyah, Filenti, Yuhmir, & Karti, 2024). This implies that religious character formation extends to vertical (transcendent) relations with God and horizontal relations with fellow human beings and the environment, forming a comprehensive ethical framework.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصَالُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَۗ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ

"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination."

The following verses deepen this educational framework. Verse 14 introduces the moral imperative of *birrul wālidayn* (kindness to parents), emphasizing gratitude, empathy, and responsibility toward one's caregivers. This reinforces the Qur'anic model of holistic education that integrates *'aqīdah, akhlāq,* and *'ibādah* into one inseparable system. As highlighted by Fasyiransyah et al. (2024), the value of birrul wālidayn becomes a starting point for cultivating compassion, social responsibility, and emotional intelligence in children—skills highly needed in contemporary education systems.

Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates that birrul wālidayn plays a significant role in shaping children's empathetic disposition, moral sensitivity, and prosocial behavior (Kaharuddin et al., 2024). This insight aligns with emerging educational paradigms that advocate the integration of emotional and spiritual values into character education to enhance children's socio-emotional competencies.

Verse 15 introduces an important balance between obedience and moral autonomy. The Qur'an emphasizes that filial piety must not violate the principles of tawḥīd:

وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِى الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًاۖ وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ

"But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do."

This verse teaches that obedience to parents is conditional and bounded by religious ethics, offering a framework for teaching moral reasoning and independent judgment in children. According to Fiddini Izaturahmi, Adillah, Murnika, Shafiah, & Sakban (2024), this verse provides a platform for developing critical ethical thinking wherein children learn to make morally sound decisions based on Islamic principles rather than coercion or fear.

The culmination of Luqman's counsel in verse 16 establishes the principle of divine accountability and internal moral control:

يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِيْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِى الْاَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ

"[And Luqman said], 'O my son, indeed if wrong should be the weight of a mustard seed and should be within a rock or [anywhere] in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted.'"

This theological perspective reinforces the belief that every action—however hidden or minute—will be accounted for by Allah (Idris, Mamonto, Mokodenseho, & Mohammad, 2023). Such awareness functions as a highly effective internal regulatory mechanism, strengthening the development of *self-discipline*, *intrinsic motivation*, and *ethical integrity*. In educational practice, this internalized awareness becomes a central foundation for nurturing a consistent moral character in children.

Implementation of Islamic Character Values in Educational Practice

The findings further demonstrate that the implementation of Islamic character values requires systematic and sustained processes that encompass cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Character formation in Islamic education is inherently relational, involving dynamic interactions between students, educators, and the value system transmitted through pedagogical practice. Students are viewed as active moral agents who develop their potential through spiritual engagement and meaningful educational experiences.

Islamic character values reflect the prophetic model embodied by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), including faith, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion, and wisdom. Tyas Ayu Farah Dina (2024) shows that Islamic education teachers systematically instill key character values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, independence, and respect through exemplary behavior, trust-building, and consistent reinforcement. Modeling (*uswah hasanah*) emerges as one of the most effective pedagogical strategies because it provides students with authentic moral prototypes to emulate.

The internalization of character values is not instantaneous; rather, it requires consistent habituation, reflective learning, and supportive learning environments. Research highlights the increasingly strategic role of Islamic religious education in the digital era, where moral challenges and ethical ambiguity are heightened by rapid technological changes. Integrating Islamic values with digital learning tools enhances both the effectiveness of instruction and the resilience of students' moral identity in facing modern societal challenges (Safitri, Sa'baniah, & Nursalim, 2023).

Moreover, the broader educational environment plays a crucial role. Supporting factors for the successful implementation of Islamic character education include internal factors such as motivation and personal readiness, as well as external factors involving community support, educational policies, integrated curricula, reflective evaluation, and parental involvement (Saprianigsih, Whenti, Razzaq, & Imron, 2021). Conversely, one of the main barriers identified is the heterogeneity of students' backgrounds, necessitating adaptive pedagogical approaches that accommodate individual differences. Educators must therefore possess strong pedagogical and socio-emotional competence to manage diversity and promote inclusive character development.

This study offers a substantive novelty by providing a Qur'an-based conceptual mapping of character education derived specifically from Surah Luqman verses 13–16, and integrating it with contemporary pedagogical frameworks. While previous research has examined Islamic character values in general terms, this study advances the discourse by demonstrating how each verse systematically constructs a holistic character formation model that encompasses theological consciousness (tawḥīd), moral autonomy, socio-emotional ethics, and internal self-regulation. The sequential analysis of Luqman's counsel offers a unique interpretive contribution, positioning Qur'anic pedagogy not merely as doctrinal guidance but as a structured educational framework with direct applicability to character development in modern learning contexts.

In addition, this research contributes to the field by connecting the Qur'anic character model with empirical findings on character implementation in Islamic educational institutions. The integration of classical scriptural principles with contemporary educational challenges—particularly within the digital era—provides a novel synthesis that has not been sufficiently explored in previous literature. By articulating how Qur'anic values interact with pedagogical practices such as moral modeling, digital-based religious instruction, and inclusive character management, this study enriches existing theories of Islamic education with an operational model that is both textually grounded and empirically validated. Consequently, the findings offer a new conceptual lens that can guide curriculum development, teacher training, and policy formulation in character-based Islamic education.

Conclusion

A comprehensive examination of children's character formation within the framework of Islamic education based on Surah Luqman verses 13–16 reveals that these verses provide a profound philosophical foundation for shaping an ethically grounded and spiritually oriented generation. The findings of this study indicate that Luqman's advice to his son encompasses three essential dimensions of character development: first, *tawhid education* as the spiritual core that prohibits polytheism and establishes theological

integrity; second, moral education through the principle of *birr al-wālidayn,* which emphasizes filial piety while upholding the boundaries of monotheistic belief; and third, the cultivation of spiritual consciousness regarding God's constant oversight of all human actions, regardless of their magnitude. These dimensions collectively illustrate that Islamic character formation requires more than cognitive instruction; it demands a comprehensive process that integrates spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social development. Accordingly, the implementation of Islamic character values should be carried out through sustained moral modeling, habituation, and constructive educational communication.

The synergy between family, school, and community emerges as a decisive factor in ensuring the success of children's moral and character development. This study contributes a systematic conceptual framework that can guide the implementation of Islamic value-based character education, especially amid the increasingly complex and dynamic challenges of the modern era. Future research is recommended to explore practical models for applying character education derived from Surah Luqman verses 13–16 within both formal and informal educational settings. Further studies should also examine the effectiveness of various teaching strategies that can optimize the internalization of these character values across different educational levels, taking into account the psychological characteristics and cognitive developmental stages of learners.

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