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Teaching Tawhid through Prophetic Narratives: Exploring Faith Values in Islamic Religious Education Textbooks

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Abstract

Faith formation constitutes a central objective of Islamic Religious Education, particularly at the elementary school level where students begin to develop their religious understanding and identity. Among the instructional approaches used to transmit Islamic values, prophetic narratives occupy a significant position because they provide concrete examples through which abstract theological concepts can be understood. This study aims to explore the representation of tawhid values in prophetic narratives contained in Islamic Religious Education textbooks and to examine their educational significance for faith formation. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study uses content analysis to investigate narratives of the prophets presented in fourth-grade Islamic Religious Education textbooks. The analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting the representation of three major dimensions of tawhid: tawhid al-rububiyah, tawhid al-uluhiyyah, and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat. The findings reveal that prophetic narratives function not only as historical accounts but also as pedagogical instruments for transmitting faith values. The stories consistently represent Allah's sovereignty, exclusive worship of Allah, and belief in Allah's names and attributes through meaningful narrative experiences that are accessible to young learners. Furthermore, the narratives integrate theological teachings with moral virtues such as patience, honesty, perseverance, responsibility, and trust in Allah, thereby supporting both faith formation and character development. This study contributes to Islamic educational scholarship by repositioning prophetic narratives as pedagogical resources for tawhid education rather than merely moral or historical stories. The findings highlight the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education textbooks in facilitating value internalization, religious socialization, and the development of students' faith-oriented identities.

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Introduction

Faith formation constitutes one of the central objectives of Islamic education. Beyond the transmission of religious knowledge, Islamic education seeks to nurture students' spiritual consciousness, strengthen their relationship with Allah, and develop moral character grounded in Islamic values. Within this framework, tawhid occupies a foundational position because it serves as the core principle of Islamic belief and the basis upon which all aspects of Muslim life are constructed. Consequently, the successful internalization of tawhid values among students becomes an essential indicator of the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in schools.

In elementary education, the process of teaching tawhid presents particular challenges. Young learners often encounter difficulties in understanding abstract theological concepts such as divine sovereignty, worship, and the attributes of Allah. Unlike older students who may engage with theological discussions at a conceptual level, children generally learn more effectively through concrete examples, narratives, and experiential learning. Therefore, Islamic education requires pedagogical approaches that can translate abstract faith concepts into meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

One of the most widely used approaches in Islamic Religious Education is the use of prophetic narratives. Stories of the prophets occupy a prominent place in Islamic educational traditions because they convey religious teachings through engaging narratives, relatable characters, and moral lessons. The Qur'an itself employs storytelling as a powerful educational method, presenting the experiences of prophets not merely as historical accounts but as sources of guidance, reflection, and spiritual development. Through prophetic narratives, learners encounter examples of faith, patience, obedience, perseverance, and devotion to Allah within concrete life situations.

Educational scholars have long recognized the significance of narratives in facilitating value transmission and character formation. Narrative-based learning enables students to connect emotionally with learning materials, enhances memory retention, and promotes deeper understanding of moral and spiritual concepts. Within Islamic education, prophetic stories perform similar functions by transforming theological principles into lived experiences that are easier for students to comprehend and emulate. Consequently, stories of prophets represent more than supplementary instructional materials; they function as pedagogical tools for cultivating faith and character.

Among the values embedded within prophetic narratives, tawhid occupies a particularly significant position. The stories of Prophets Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa, Yusuf, and Muhammad consistently emphasize devotion to Allah, rejection of polytheism, trust in divine guidance, and submission to God's commands. These narratives communicate various dimensions of tawhid, including recognition of Allah's sovereignty (tawhid al-rububiyah), exclusive worship of Allah (tawhid al-uluhiyyah), and belief in Allah's names and attributes (tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat). Through repeated exposure to these narratives, students are expected to develop a stronger understanding of Islamic faith and its practical implications in everyday life.

Previous studies on Islamic education have highlighted the importance of value internalization, character education, and faith development through religious instruction. Other studies have examined the educational significance of prophetic stories in shaping

moral behavior and religious awareness among learners. However, existing research has largely focused on the moral and character-building dimensions of prophetic narratives, while relatively limited attention has been given to how tawhid values are represented and transmitted through Islamic Religious Education textbooks. Furthermore, studies that specifically examine prophetic narratives as pedagogical instruments for teaching tawhid at the elementary school level remain scarce.

This gap is important because textbooks continue to function as one of the primary learning resources in Indonesian schools. The ways in which faith values are represented within textbooks significantly influence students' understanding of religious teachings and contribute to the broader process of religious socialization. Examining the representation of tawhid values within prophetic narratives therefore provides valuable insights into how Islamic Religious Education supports the formation of students' faith and religious identity.

Against this background, this study investigates how tawhid values are represented in prophetic narratives contained in Islamic Religious Education textbooks for fourth-grade elementary school students. Using a content analysis approach, the study explores the forms, dimensions, and educational meanings of tawhid embedded within the narratives. Particular attention is given to the representation of tawhid al-rububiyah, tawhid al-uluhiyyah, and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat as the fundamental dimensions of Islamic faith.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to reposition prophetic narratives as pedagogical instruments for teaching tawhid rather than merely as historical or moral stories. While previous studies have predominantly emphasized character education and moral values, this article highlights the role of prophetic narratives in facilitating faith formation through the internalization of tawhid values. By doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on Islamic pedagogy, value-based education, and the development of faith-oriented learning materials in Islamic Religious Education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design using content analysis to examine the representation of tawhid values in prophetic narratives contained in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) textbooks for fourth-grade elementary school students. Library research was considered appropriate because the study focused on analyzing textual content and educational meanings embedded within teaching materials rather than investigating empirical classroom practices.

The primary data source consisted of Islamic Religious Education textbooks used at the elementary school level, particularly sections containing narratives about the prophets. These narratives were selected because they constitute one of the principal instructional media through which Islamic values are introduced to students. Secondary data sources included scholarly books, journal articles, educational studies, and other academic publications related to tawhid, Islamic pedagogy, faith education, prophetic narratives, and textbook analysis.

Data were collected through document analysis. The researcher systematically identified and compiled textual materials containing stories of prophets presented in the selected textbooks. Relevant passages, narratives, dialogues, illustrations, and instructional explanations related to faith values were subsequently categorized and organized for further analysis.

The study employed qualitative content analysis to identify patterns of representation and educational meanings associated with tawhid values. The analytical framework focused on three major dimensions of tawhid: tawhid al-rububiyyah (belief in Allah's sovereignty and lordship), tawhid al-uluhiyyah (exclusive worship and devotion to Allah), and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat (belief in Allah's names and attributes). Textual units containing explicit or implicit references to these dimensions were coded and classified according to their thematic characteristics.

The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, relevant narratives were selected and organized into a textual corpus. Second, the content was coded according to the three dimensions of tawhid. Third, recurring themes, messages, and educational values were identified and interpreted within the broader context of Islamic Religious Education. Finally, the findings were synthesized to explain how prophetic narratives function as pedagogical instruments for transmitting faith values and supporting students' religious development.

To enhance analytical rigor, the interpretation of findings was supported by relevant theories of Islamic education, value internalization, and narrative-based learning. This approach enabled the study not only to identify representations of tawhid but also to explain their educational significance within contemporary Islamic Religious Education.

Results

Prophetic Narratives as Pedagogical Instruments for Tawhid Education

The analysis reveals that prophetic narratives in Islamic Religious Education textbooks function not merely as historical accounts but as pedagogical instruments for transmitting faith values. The stories are systematically constructed to introduce students to fundamental Islamic beliefs through concrete examples of the prophets' experiences, struggles, and interactions with their communities.

Rather than presenting theological concepts in abstract forms, the textbooks employ narrative structures that enable students to understand faith through lived experiences. Through the stories of Prophets Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa, Yusuf, and Muhammad, students encounter examples of devotion, obedience, trust in Allah, perseverance, and commitment to truth. These narratives provide meaningful contexts through which tawhid values can be understood and internalized.

The findings indicate that tawhid values are represented through three major dimensions: tawhid al-rububiyyah, tawhid al-uluhiyyah, and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat. Each dimension is embedded within specific narrative episodes that communicate particular aspects of Islamic faith.

Representation of Tawhid al-Rububiyyah: Recognizing Allah's Sovereignty

The first major dimension identified in the textbooks is tawhid al-rububiyyah, which refers to the belief in Allah as the Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of the universe. This dimension is represented through narratives that illustrate Allah's absolute power over natural events and human affairs.

One of the most prominent examples appears in the story of Prophet Ibrahim when he remained steadfast in his belief despite threats from King Namrud. The narrative emphasizes Allah's supreme authority and protection over His servants. Similarly, stories

describing divine assistance to prophets during difficult circumstances reinforce the understanding that all events occur according to Allah's will and wisdom.

These representations encourage students to recognize Allah as the ultimate source of life, sustenance, guidance, and protection. Through narrative learning, the concept of divine sovereignty becomes more accessible and meaningful for elementary school students.

Representation of Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah: Exclusive Worship and Obedience to Allah

The second dimension identified is tawhid al-uluhiyyah, which emphasizes that Allah alone deserves worship, devotion, and obedience. This aspect appears prominently in stories depicting the prophets' efforts to guide their communities away from polytheism and toward the worship of Allah.

The narratives of Prophets Nuh, Ibrahim, and Muhammad consistently highlight their perseverance in inviting people to embrace monotheism despite opposition and rejection. These stories portray the prophets as role models who remained committed to Allah's commands and demonstrated unwavering faith in difficult circumstances.

The analysis indicates that tawhid al-uluhiyyah is represented not only through verbal messages but also through the actions and attitudes of the prophets. Their obedience, sincerity, patience, and submission to Allah provide concrete examples that students can emulate in their own religious lives. Consequently, the narratives function as educational tools for cultivating religious commitment and spiritual responsibility.

Representation of Tawhid al-Asma' wa al-Sifat: Understanding Allah's Attributes

The third dimension identified in the textbooks is tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat, which concerns belief in Allah's names and attributes. This dimension is represented through stories that demonstrate Allah's power, mercy, wisdom, justice, and compassion.

For example, narratives describing Allah's protection of Prophet Musa from Pharaoh illustrate Allah's omnipotence and ability to assist His servants. Other stories depicting forgiveness, guidance, and divine mercy highlight Allah's attributes as the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate. Through these narratives, students are introduced to theological concepts in ways that are concrete and emotionally engaging.

The findings suggest that prophetic narratives provide effective contexts for helping students understand Allah's attributes. Rather than memorizing abstract concepts, learners encounter these attributes through meaningful stories that illustrate how divine qualities operate within human experiences.

Table 1. Representation of Tawhid Values in Prophetic Narratives

Dimension	of Narrative Representation	Educational Meaning
Tawhid		
Tawhid Rububiyyah	al- Allah's protection, guidance, and control over events	Strengthening belief in Allah's sovereignty
Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah	Prophets' devotion and invitation to worship Allah alone	Cultivating obedience and religious commitment
Tawhid al-Asma' wa al-Sifat	Manifestations of Allah's mercy, power, wisdom, and justice	Developing understanding of Allah's attributes

Educational Functions of Prophetic Narratives in Faith Formation

Beyond representing theological concepts, the findings demonstrate that prophetic narratives perform important educational functions in the formation of students' faith. The stories facilitate the internalization of tawhid values by connecting religious teachings with concrete examples of behavior and experience.

The narratives also contribute to character formation by presenting role models who embody Islamic virtues. Values such as patience, honesty, perseverance, responsibility, trust in Allah, and moral courage are consistently integrated with the teaching of tawhid. Consequently, faith education and character education are presented as interconnected dimensions of Islamic learning.

The analysis suggests that prophetic narratives serve a dual educational function. On the one hand, they communicate fundamental theological principles; on the other hand, they provide moral examples that guide students in applying those principles within everyday life. This combination makes prophetic narratives an effective pedagogical medium for strengthening both faith and character development in Islamic Religious Education.

Discussion

Prophetic Narratives as a Qur'anic Pedagogical Tradition

The findings indicate that prophetic narratives occupy a strategic position in the transmission of tawhid values within Islamic Religious Education textbooks. This role is not merely a pedagogical innovation of contemporary textbook writers but reflects a long-standing educational tradition rooted in the Qur'an itself. Throughout the Qur'an, stories of the prophets are repeatedly presented as instruments of guidance, reflection, and spiritual formation. The narratives of Prophets Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Yusuf, and Muhammad are not narrated primarily to convey historical information but to strengthen faith, cultivate moral awareness, and encourage believers to remain steadfast in their devotion to Allah.

The prominence of prophetic narratives in Islamic education reflects the Qur'anic recognition that stories possess a unique educational power. Narratives allow learners to encounter abstract religious principles through concrete human experiences. Rather than teaching monotheism solely through doctrinal propositions, the Qur'an demonstrates how tawhid operates within real-life struggles, conflicts, and moral choices. Consequently, the use of prophetic narratives in Islamic Religious Education textbooks represents a continuation of a pedagogical model that has been embedded within Islamic intellectual and educational traditions for centuries.

The findings suggest that textbook authors intentionally employ this Qur'anic pedagogical tradition to facilitate students' understanding of faith. Through stories, learners are invited to witness how prophets maintained belief in Allah despite persecution, social rejection, and severe hardship. Such narrative representations enable students to perceive tawhid not merely as theological knowledge but as a lived commitment that guides human behavior and decision-making. In this regard, prophetic narratives function as educational bridges connecting doctrinal teachings with practical religious life.

Internalizing Tawhid through Narrative Learning

One of the most significant findings of this study concerns the role of narrative learning in facilitating the internalization of tawhid values. The analysis reveals that the three dimensions of tawhid—tawhid al-rububiyah, tawhid al-uluhiyyah, and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat—are consistently embedded within stories rather than presented as abstract theological concepts. This pedagogical strategy is particularly important at the elementary school level because young learners often experience difficulty understanding complex religious ideas when they are delivered through purely conceptual explanations.

Narrative learning enables students to understand faith through identifiable characters, meaningful events, and emotional experiences. For example, students learn about Allah's sovereignty through stories depicting divine protection and intervention in the lives of the prophets. They learn about exclusive devotion to Allah through narratives illustrating the prophets' rejection of idolatry and commitment to monotheism. Likewise, students encounter Allah's attributes through stories demonstrating divine mercy, wisdom, justice, and power.

This process transforms theological knowledge into experiential understanding. Rather than memorizing definitions of tawhid, students observe how faith operates within the lives of prophetic figures. Such an approach corresponds with educational theories emphasizing that children learn more effectively when abstract concepts are connected to concrete examples and meaningful experiences. Stories therefore function as pedagogical mediators that translate theological doctrines into forms that are cognitively accessible and emotionally engaging.

Furthermore, narrative learning facilitates deeper value internalization because stories engage both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Students not only understand religious concepts intellectually but also develop emotional connections with the experiences of the prophets. These emotional connections strengthen the likelihood that faith values will be remembered, appreciated, and eventually incorporated into students' personal belief systems. Consequently, prophetic narratives contribute not only to religious knowledge acquisition but also to the broader process of spiritual formation.

Tawhid as the Foundation of Character Education

Another important finding emerging from the analysis is the inseparable relationship between tawhid education and character formation. Although the primary objective of the narratives is to strengthen faith, the stories simultaneously communicate a range of moral virtues such as patience, honesty, perseverance, courage, responsibility, sincerity, and trust in Allah. These virtues are consistently portrayed as consequences of strong belief rather than as independent ethical principles.

This finding reflects a fundamental characteristic of Islamic educational philosophy, which views character as an expression of faith. In Islamic thought, moral behavior cannot be separated from one's relationship with Allah. Actions such as honesty, patience, and responsibility acquire educational significance because they emerge from obedience to divine guidance. Consequently, character education in Islamic contexts is not merely concerned with producing socially acceptable behavior but with nurturing individuals whose conduct reflects their faith commitments.

The stories of the prophets provide concrete illustrations of this relationship. Prophet Ibrahim's steadfastness demonstrates the moral implications of unwavering belief in Allah. Prophet Yusuf's honesty and integrity reveal how faith influences ethical decision-making. Prophet Nuh's perseverance illustrates the connection between spiritual conviction and resilience in adversity. Through these examples, students are encouraged to understand that faith is not confined to ritual practices but encompasses attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior.

The findings therefore suggest that prophetic narratives perform a dual educational function. They strengthen students' understanding of tawhid while simultaneously fostering character development. This integration of faith and morality represents one of the distinctive features of Islamic Religious Education and highlights the importance of maintaining theological foundations within contemporary character education initiatives.

Textbooks as Instruments of Religious Socialization and Identity Formation

The findings also reveal the significant role of textbooks as instruments of religious socialization. Educational textbooks are not neutral collections of information; they serve as cultural and ideological tools that shape learners' perceptions, beliefs, and identities. Through the selection and presentation of prophetic narratives, Islamic Religious Education textbooks communicate particular understandings of faith, morality, and religious life.

The representation of tawhid values within prophetic stories contributes to the formation of students' religious worldviews. Repeated exposure to narratives emphasizing Allah's sovereignty, mercy, justice, and guidance encourages students to interpret reality through an Islamic theological framework. Such representations help construct an understanding of the relationship between humans and Allah while simultaneously defining the ethical responsibilities associated with being a Muslim.

The process of religious socialization becomes particularly influential during elementary education because children are still developing their personal identities and systems of belief. At this stage, textbooks function as authoritative sources of knowledge that significantly shape students' understanding of religion. The integration of tawhid values within narratives therefore contributes not only to knowledge acquisition but also to the development of religious identity.

Moreover, the use of stories enhances the effectiveness of this socialization process because narratives are more memorable than abstract doctrinal statements. Students often remember characters, events, and conflicts long after formal instruction has ended. As a result, prophetic narratives possess considerable potential to influence students' long-term understanding of faith and religious commitment. This finding highlights the importance of carefully designing textbook content to ensure that religious values are communicated in ways that are both educationally meaningful and theologically sound.

Repositioning Prophetic Narratives in Contemporary Islamic Education

The final implication of this study concerns the need to reconsider the educational status of prophetic narratives within contemporary Islamic education. In many educational contexts, stories of the prophets are frequently treated as supplementary materials intended primarily to provide historical information or moral entertainment. Such a perspective underestimates their broader pedagogical significance.

The findings of this study demonstrate that prophetic narratives should be understood as strategic instruments for faith education. Through narrative structures, theological concepts become accessible, moral values become concrete, and religious identity formation becomes possible. The stories operate simultaneously at cognitive, affective, and spiritual levels, making them particularly effective for elementary school learners.

This perspective invites educators and curriculum developers to reposition prophetic narratives within Islamic Religious Education. Rather than viewing them as supporting content, they should be recognized as central pedagogical resources capable of facilitating the integration of faith education, character formation, and spiritual development. Such a repositioning is especially relevant in contemporary educational environments where learners face increasingly complex moral, cultural, and religious challenges.

Ultimately, the study demonstrates that prophetic narratives represent more than historical accounts preserved within textbooks. They function as educational vehicles through which tawhid values are transmitted, internalized, and transformed into meaningful religious commitments. Their continued relevance within Islamic Religious Education highlights the enduring importance of narrative pedagogy for nurturing faith-oriented and morally responsible Muslim learners.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that prophetic narratives in Islamic Religious Education textbooks function as important pedagogical instruments for teaching tawhid to elementary school students. The analysis reveals that the narratives consistently represent three fundamental dimensions of Islamic monotheism: tawhid al-rububiyah, tawhid al-uluhiyyah, and tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat. These dimensions are embedded within stories of the prophets that present faith not merely as a theological concept but as a lived reality reflected in human experiences, struggles, and moral choices.

The findings further indicate that prophetic narratives facilitate the internalization of tawhid values by translating abstract religious concepts into concrete and meaningful learning experiences. Through the examples provided by prophetic figures, students are introduced to essential Islamic virtues such as patience, honesty, perseverance, sincerity, responsibility, and trust in Allah. Consequently, the narratives serve a dual educational function: strengthening faith while simultaneously fostering character development. This finding confirms that tawhid education and character education are closely interconnected dimensions within Islamic Religious Education.

This study also highlights the strategic role of textbooks in the processes of faith formation and religious socialization. By integrating tawhid values within narrative structures, textbooks contribute to the development of students' religious understanding, worldview, and identity. The representation of prophetic stories enables learners to engage with Islamic teachings at cognitive, affective, and spiritual levels, thereby enhancing the educational effectiveness of faith-oriented learning materials.

The primary contribution of this study lies in repositioning prophetic narratives as pedagogical resources for tawhid education rather than merely historical or moral stories. While previous studies have largely emphasized the moral and character-building dimensions of prophetic narratives, this article demonstrates their significance as

instruments for strengthening faith and cultivating theological understanding among young learners. This perspective enriches contemporary discussions on Islamic pedagogy, narrative-based learning, and value-oriented education.

Future studies may expand this line of inquiry by examining how tawhid values contained in prophetic narratives are implemented in classroom practices, interpreted by teachers, and internalized by students. Empirical investigations involving learners and educators would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of narrative-based approaches in strengthening faith formation within contemporary Islamic education.

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