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LOCAL QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS AS MORAL PEDAGOGY: A GADAMERIAN READING OF MORAL SUBJECT FORMATION IN *PEPELING JEUNG PANGGEUING*

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menganalisis tafsir lokal sebagai pedagogi akhlak melalui artikulasi tasawuf akhlaqi dalam tafsir populer Sunda *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* karya Aceng Zakaria. Kajian ini berangkat dari kecenderungan pendidikan moral kontemporer yang lebih menekankan dimensi normatif-performatif, sementara tasawuf kerap diposisikan sebagai pengalaman spiritual individual yang terpisah dari praksis pedagogis. Dengan menggunakan hermeneutika Gadamer dan perspektif tasawuf akhlaqi, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana *amtsal*, *'ibar*, dan fusi horizon membentuk mekanisme konstruksi makna yang mengarahkan transformasi kesadaran dan formasi subjek moral. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* mentransformasikan nilai-nilai Qur'ani menjadi kesadaran batin melalui proses yang bergerak dari pemahaman Qur'ani dan *muhasabah* menuju *tazkiyat al-nafs*, internalisasi nilai, serta tindakan sosial dan etis. Proses tersebut mengintegrasikan refleksi dan pengalaman kultural dalam pembentukan kesadaran moral, yang selanjutnya menerjemahkan nilai-nilai Qur'ani yang telah terinternalisasi ke dalam tanggung jawab sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa tafsir lokal berfungsi sebagai pedagogi akhlak yang mengintegrasikan kesadaran spiritual, pembentukan akhlak, dan praksis sosial dalam konteks budaya Sunda. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pedagogi akhlak kontemporer dengan mengusulkan model konseptual formasi subjek moral yang berakar pada tafsir lokal dan pengalaman kultural.

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Keywords:

Moral Pedagogy;
Tasawuf Akhlaqi;
Local Exegesis;
Gadamerian
Hermeneutics; Moral
Subject Formation.

ABSTRACTS

This article analyzes local exegesis (*tafsir*) as a form of moral pedagogy through the articulation of practical Sufism (*tasawuf akhlaqi*) in the popular Sundanese exegesis *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* by Aceng Zakaria. This study is prompted by contemporary trends in moral education that predominantly emphasize normative-performative dimensions, whereas Sufism is frequently relegated to the domain of individual spiritual experiences detached from pedagogical praxis. Utilizing Gadamerian hermeneutics and the perspective of *tasawuf akhlaqi*, this research examines how *amtsal* (parables), *'ibar* (lessons), and the fusion of horizons constitute mechanisms for meaning construction that guide the transformation of consciousness and the formation of the moral subject. The findings indicate that *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* constructs Qur'anic values as an inner consciousness through a process that moves from Qur'anic understanding and *muhasabah* (self-reflection) to *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), value internalization, and social-ethical action. This process integrates reflection and cultural experience in the formation of moral consciousness, through which internalized Qur'anic values are translated into social responsibility. These findings demonstrate that local exegesis functions as a moral pedagogy that integrates spiritual awareness, character formation, and social praxis within the cultural context of Sundanese society. This study contributes to contemporary moral pedagogy by proposing a conceptual model of moral subject formation grounded in local exegesis and cultural experience.

A. INTRODUCTION

The discourse on moral education within contemporary Islamic education reveals a tendency toward normative-performative approaches oriented around behavioral indicators and measurable outcomes (Arthur 2005). Meanwhile, spiritualistic approaches often relegate the experience of Sufism to a personal domain outside formal pedagogical praxis (Sahin 2013). Consequently, the dimension of inner consciousness—which serves as the bedrock of character formation (akhlak) in the traditional Islamic educational framework (Halstead 2004)—remains largely unintegrated, both conceptually and methodologically, within educational practices. This missing link provides an entry point to examine Qur'anic exegesis as a medium for moral pedagogy in cultivating moral awareness.

Numerous studies suggest that moral education demands an integration of pedagogical design, self-reflection, and the reinforcement of inner awareness, all of which develop through spiritual experience and the instructional process (Dabdoub et al., 2024; Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Eaude, 2025). These findings underscore the urgency of a moral pedagogy approach capable of systematically linking spirituality, moral development, and educational praxis.

Within Islamic educational studies, character formation takes place through value internalization, reflection, and habituation, which ultimately shape a student's moral orientation. This process integrates inner consciousness, self-regulation, and social responsibility into the cultivation of the moral subject. Qur'anic exegesis offers a pedagogical repository that allows Qur'anic values to be deeply felt, reflected upon, and connected to the reader's lived experiences. In this paper, moral pedagogy is conceptualized as the process of shaping moral orientations through value internalization, reflection, habituation, and the transformation of consciousness, thereby bridging inner experiences with social responsibility.

In this regard, tasawuf akhlaqi offers an ethical-spiritual framework for the formation of the moral subject through tazkiyat al-nafs (soul purification), self-control, and the internalization of Qur'anic values. This tradition positions inner transformation as the cornerstone for developing ethical orientations and social accountability. Such a framework provides a solid pedagogical foundation for nurturing moral consciousness in Islamic education by integrating spiritual, reflective, and ethical dimensions (Francis et al. 2019; Sahin 2018).

This perspective aligns with the study development on Islamic moral education, which views Islamic education as a process of character and moral identity formation through the synthesis of cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social dimensions. Within this matrix, character education is understood as a process of moral subject formation that connects self-reflection, value internalization, and social responsibility.

The relation between these ethical, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions highlights the relevance of culturally rooted Qur'anic exegesis as a medium for moral pedagogy through local languages and cultural expressions which closely aligns with the reader's interpretive horizon (Nugraha, 2026; Rohmana 2015, 2023). Although a substantial body of literature has examined local Sundanese exegesis in terms of language, vernacularization, and religious transmission, its role as a mechanism for moral subject formation within a moral pedagogy framework remains relatively under-researched. *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* warrants the investigation because it utilizes *amtsal* and *'ibar* as pedagogical instruments that tie Qur'anic values to the lived realities

of the Sundanese people through reflective meaning-making and internalization. This characteristic shows the utility of exegesis as a medium for moral pedagogy that synthesizes spiritual experience, ethical reflection, and social engagement.

The study on Islamic moral education, Sufism, and local exegesis has seen significant conceptual growth over the past few decades. Studies on Sundanese exegesis generally position local languages as a medium for proselytization (*da'wah*), religious communication, and the articulation of Sundanese Islamic identity (Gusmian 2013, 2016, 2017). Other research highlights the relation between Qur'anic reception, local culture, and the socio-religious dynamics of Sundanese society (Rohmana, 2013, 2015; Nugraha & Rohmana, 2021; Rohmana, 2024; Rohmana & Zuldin, 2019), including the position of Aceng Zakaria as a modernist figure who remained rooted in the Sundanese *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) tradition (Rohmana 2021). However, *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* has seldom been analyzed as a pedagogical text that integrates *tasawuf akhlaqi*, hermeneutic reflection, and cultural experience in shaping moral consciousness. This gap suggests a clear need for an analytical approach that approaches local exegesis as a pedagogical venue for cultural-based moral subject formation.

To address this gap, this study analyzes *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* as a text of moral pedagogy using a hermeneutic reading. Philosophical hermeneutics is employed to understand the exegesis as a dialogical practice wherein text, cultural experience, and the reader's horizon converge through a fusion of horizons (Gadamer 2013). This analysis is enriched by the perspective of *tasawuf akhlaqi*, which establishes *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the primary mechanism for cultivating inner awareness and ethical direction (Al-Ghazālī 2005).

This study demonstrates that *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* functions as a form of moral pedagogy in which Qur'anic understanding is mediated through cultural experience, *amtsal*, *'ibarat*, and hermeneutic reflection. The interpretive process moves from Qur'anic understanding and *muhasabah* to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, value internalization, and social and ethical action, forming a pathway of moral subject formation. Based on this process, the study proposes a conceptual model that positions local Qur'anic exegesis as a pedagogical medium connecting spiritual awareness, moral formation, and social responsibility within the cultural context of Sundanese society.

B. METHOD

This study employs an interpretative qualitative approach based on a textual analysis of the Sundanese exegesis *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* by Aceng Zakaria. The study examines the construction of moral pedagogy within local exegesis through a hermeneutic reading of narratives, *amtsal*, and *'ibarat*. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is used to examine the dialogical relationship between the text, cultural experience, and the reader's horizon through the concept of the *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer 2013). The perspective of *tasawuf akhlaqi* is employed to examine the processes of inner cultivation and ethical orientation represented in the commentary. This combined framework understands meaning as emerging through an ongoing dialogue between the text and its interpretive context (Creswell 2019; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

The primary data consists of the text *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*, chosen because it typifies a reflective exegesis designed to foster moral awareness among the Sundanese people. The interpretation is strengthened by a comparative reading of several other works by Aceng Zakaria that share similar thematic interests. Secondary data includes literature on philosophical hermeneutics, *tasawuf akhlaqi*, Islamic moral education, and local exegesis studies. The units of analysis comprise textual fragments containing narratives, *amtsal*, and *'ibar* related to the formation of inner dispositions and social behaviors. These fragments were selected through purposive sampling based on the density of moral messages, ethical reflections, and calls for self-transformation relevant to the research objective. Data collection was conducted through close reading to isolate ethical themes such as gratitude, sincerity, patience, justice, self-restraint, and social empathy.

Data analysis was conducted through two interconnected stages. First, thematic analysis was used to identify and categorize moral themes embedded in the text (Saldaña 2021). Second, hermeneutic analysis was used to interpret how these themes acquire pedagogical meaning through the interaction between textual, cultural, and reader horizons. Thematic analysis provided an initial mapping of moral values and their categories, while hermeneutic analysis examined the processes through which these values were interpreted, internalized, and connected to ethical action.

The hermeneutic analysis was operationalized through five analytical dimensions: pre-understanding, textual horizon, reader/context horizon, fusion of horizons, and transformation of meaning. *Pre-understanding* referred to the researchers' initial conceptual orientation toward local exegesis, moral pedagogy, and *tasawuf akhlaqi*, which was maintained reflexively throughout the interpretive process. The textual horizon was identified through close reading of the meanings, narratives, *amtsal*, *'ibar*, and moral orientations explicitly articulated in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*. The reader/context horizon was examined through the cultural and educational contexts invoked by the text, particularly Sundanese lived experience and the social realities addressed by the commentary. The fusion of horizons was identified where textual meanings entered into dialogue with these cultural and contextual horizons, producing an expanded understanding of Qur'anic values and their ethical significance. Transformation of meaning was then traced through the movement from Qur'anic understanding and *muhasabah* to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, value internalization, and social and ethical action. The analytical procedure is summarized in Figure 1.

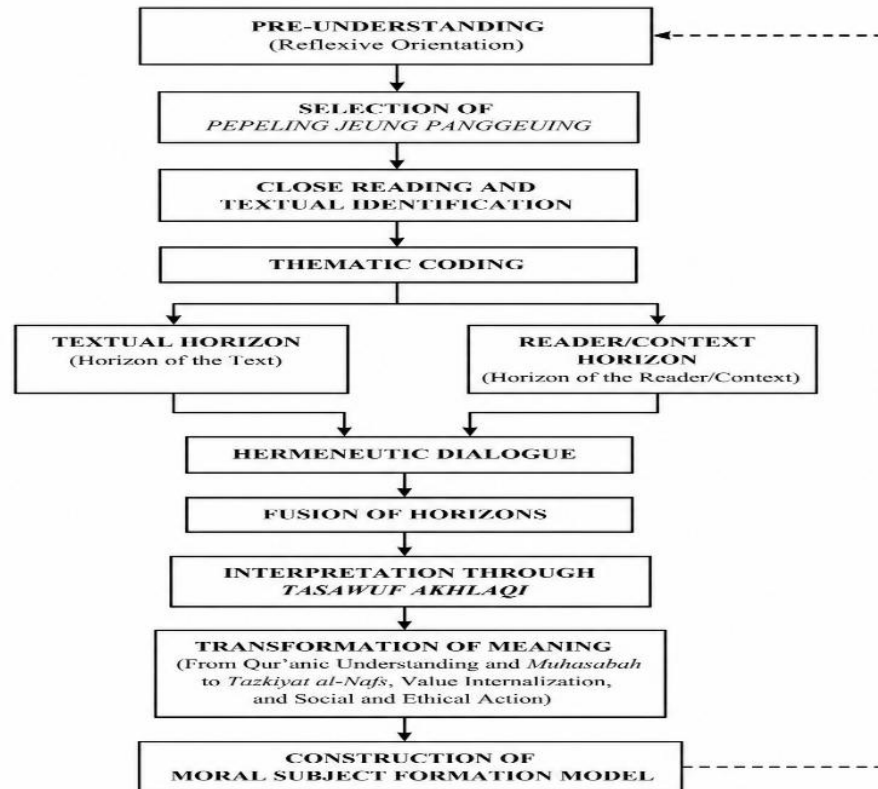


Figure 1. Analytical Procedure of the Study

During the thematic analysis, textual fragments were initially coded according to recurring moral themes, such as gratitude (*syukur*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), patience (*sabar*), humility (*tawadhu*), justice, social empathy, and restraint of desire. These themes were subsequently clustered into categories representing the progression of moral consciousness: value orientation, self-reflection, inner refinement, and social actualization. The hermeneutic analysis then examined the relationships among these categories through the concepts of *fusion of horizons* and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. This process facilitated the identification of transformational patterns connecting Qur'anic understanding, reflection, value internalization, ethical orientation, and social action. While thematic analysis mapped the moral values and their categories, hermeneutic analysis explained how these categories interact across textual and contextual horizons to form a conceptual model of moral subject formation.

The credibility of this research was maintained through theoretical triangulation and investigator reflexivity throughout the interpretive process.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Amtsal and 'Ibar as Mechanisms of Moral Pedagogy

The application of *amtsal* and *'ibar* serves as a central methodological strategy in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*. Within the tradition of Qur'anic sciences (*ulum al-Qur'an*), *amtsal* is understood as a rhetorical tool that contextualizes meaning through allegories drawn from human experience, whereas *'ibar* aims at drawing moral lessons that guide

ethical choices (Al-Ghazālī 2005; Al-Zarkashi 1988). In *Pepeling*, both function as interpretive mechanisms that tie textual meanings to the reader's existential realities.

This strategy is clearly visible, for instance, in the discussion regarding the verse on gratitude (*syukur*). The commentary begins with familiar, everyday matters, such as crop harvests and the obligation of *zakat*. While gratitude is promised to bring "abundance," practical experience often shows a decrease in material wealth once *zakat* is paid. The tension between the textual promise and empirical reality serves as the starting point for a reflection that brings the text face-to-face with the reader's lived experience. Within a hermeneutic framework, this situation enables a reconstruction of meaning mediated by experience. *Amtsal* opens up a rational pathway to understand the verse, while *'ibar* guides the reader to reframe the concept of "abundance" within a broader ethical horizon (Zakaria 2021).

This reflective pattern finds a more concrete articulation in the parable concerning the law of physical growth:

"*Lamun sapatu dipake unggal poe pasti sataun oge dempes. Naha ari suku dipake unggal poe boh ka sawah atawa ka sakola, tibatan beak atawa dempes mah kalahkah ngajebragan. Tak tak dipake nanggung unggal poe kalahkah jadi pupundakeun tibatan jadi dekok mah*" (Zakaria 2021).

"If shoes are worn every day, they will surely wear out within a year. Yet feet that are used daily, whether to go to the rice field or to school, do not waste away or get ruined; instead, they grow stronger. Likewise, shoulders used daily to carry heavy loads do not weaken, but become sturdier" (Author's translation).

This parable shows that continuous exertion can foster strength and resilience. Through the analogy of the body versus a material tool, the commentator shifts the viewer's perspective from a quantitative assessment to a qualitative understanding of reality based on experiences familiar to the reader. This understanding emerges from the interplay between concrete illustrations and lived experiences.

In *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*, *amtsal* and *'ibar* propel the process of meaning-making from concrete illustrations toward ethical consciousness. The illustration provides rational clarity, while inner reflection reshapes the reader's perspective toward the moral realities they encounter. Through this process, meaning develops into an ethical orientation that is actively lived. Parables serve to integrate cognitive and affective domains, steering the reader toward an ethical embrace of Qur'anic values (Brown et al. 2023).

The consistent use of *amtsal* and *'ibar* as tools for ethical reflection is prominent across Aceng Zakaria's body of work, appearing both in his Sundanese-language sermons (*khutbah*) and his Indonesian religious writings. The diverse parables employed—spanning agricultural metaphors, life journeys, and anatomical analogies—demonstrate that this approach constitutes a deliberate moral pedagogy strategy linking mundane routines with profound moral and religious reflection.

2. The Construction of Ethical Consciousness through Narrative and Reflection

The mechanism of constructing ethical meaning in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* can be understood through the lens of the Gadamerian *fusion of horizons*, where the

text's horizon encounters the reader's experience to forge a new understanding. Practically, the interpreter places the normative messages of the Qur'an in direct dialogue with the practical logic of Sundanese culture. Through familiar illustrations, reflective queries, and analogies, ethical meaning emerges naturally from this convergence (Al-Muta'aliyah et al., 2026).

This pattern appears in the explanation of charity (*sedekah*) as a means of healing. Realizing that the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) on this topic might invite rational skepticism, Aceng Zakaria draws a medical analogy to reconstruct the reader's conceptual framework:

"Ah petunjuk ti dokter ge aya nu teu kaharti, anger we gening diturut. Buktina, anu rieut sirah, tapi anu dijeksi mah bujur. Naha dokter, da bujur mah teu rieut abdi teh, moal salah kitu dokter teh. Tapi ari geus dijeksi mah gening jadi ngemplong sirah teh" (Zakaria 2021).

"Even a doctor's instructions are sometimes not fully understood, yet we follow them regardless. For instance, someone with a headache might receive an injection in their buttocks. Rationally, one might ask: 'Doctor, it is my head that aches, so why inject my buttocks? Could you be mistaken?' However, once the injection is given, the headache subsides" (Author's translation).

The medical analogy is built upon an internal dialogue that mirrors the reader's rational objections: *"Naha dokter, da bujur mah teu rieut..."* (Doctor, it is not my buttocks that ache...). This question reflects an empirical mindset that demands a direct, visible connection between symptoms and interventions. Within that particular horizon, an action is deemed rational only if it aligns with visible indicators.

However, the conclusion of the narrative presents experience as a correction to this objection. Rationality, which initially relied on direct observation, shifts toward acknowledging an authority operating beyond sensory perception. This analogy bridges trust in medical authority with the acceptance of divine revelation. The process highlights how understanding is formed through the reconstruction of familiar, verifiable everyday experiences.

This process is further reinforced by the linguistic strategies chosen by the **commentator** to bridge the text and experience. The persuasive tone of the Sundanese language allows the normative mandates of the Qur'an to present themselves as reflective invitations closely aligned with the reader's reality. Through everyday metaphors, questions, and vignettes, ethical meanings are lived as part of an evolving life experience (Zakaria 2021).

This indicates that understanding possesses a temporal dimension within a hermeneutic framework. Meaning unfolds gradually through the reader's active engagement in practical experience, ensuring that reading the text and navigating daily life mutually deepen comprehension. The fusion of horizons in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* demonstrates how Qur'anic ethics are constructed through a dialogue between revelation and lived realities. In this context, exegesis functions as a crucible for forging ethical awareness within social life.

This process can be systematically mapped as follows:

Table 1. *Mechanisms of Moral Pedagogy in the Exegesis of Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*

No.	Exegetical Tool	Rhetorical Strategy	Shift in Meaning	Impact on the Reader
1	<i>Amtsals</i>	Analogies of the body, farming, and social relation	From literal meaning → spiritual meaning	Reorientation of perspective
2	<i>'Ibar</i>	Rhetorical questions and internal dialogue	From empirical logic → ethical consciousness	Activation of self-examination (<i>muhasabah</i>)
3	Everyday Narratives	Tales of the tiger-dog-cat, medical analogy	From concrete experience → theological meaning	Internalization of values
4	Dialogical Sundanese	A blend of familiar speech and moral counsel	From abstract norms → personal experience	Affective engagement

This mapping demonstrates that moral pedagogy in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* operates through a gradual transformation of consciousness. *Amtsals* and *'ibar* serve as pedagogical tools that tie daily routines to Qur'anic values through the reflection and reinterpretation of experience. Throughout this process, readers are positioned as active participants in the meaning-making process. From the cross-over between lived experience, ethical reflection, and the Qur'anic message, a new moral orientation emerges, forming the baseline for the moral subject.

3. The Formation of the Moral Subject in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*

Tasawuf akhlaqi places *tazkiyat al-nafs* at the heart of spiritual transformation and moral development through inner refinement, self-discipline, and ethical alignment. Within contemporary Islamic psychology, this process is understood as the cultivation of a reflective consciousness that steers individuals toward self-awareness and the regulation of moral choices (Skinner, 2019; Isgandarova, 2019). In an exegetical context, this approach frames the Qur'an as a medium for inner training that ethically informs social behavior.

This transformative process begins with an awareness of inner vulnerability. Aceng Zakaria illustrates this by drawing a sharp distinction between physical illnesses and spiritual diseases:

"Panyakit pisik mah urang sadar geringna, geuwat dibaruan ka dokter... Tapi panyakit rohani mah urang teu sadar naon nu keur karasa, boh takabur atawa hasud" (Zakaria 2021). "Physical illnesses are easily recognized, so we quickly seek a doctor's care... However, spiritual diseases, such as arrogance and envy, often go unnoticed by those who harbor them" (Author's translation).

This comparison underscores that inner maladies are frequently hidden from self-awareness, making self-reflection indispensable for assessing one's spiritual health. Within the framework of *tasawuf akhlaqi*, this reflective awareness marks the beginning of *muhāsabah* (self-examination) and the process of soul purification (Al Muhasibi 2023;

Al-Ghazālī 2005). This awareness then advances toward self-formation through acts of worship and the realignment of inner intents, as captured in the following relational analogy:

"Tah parentah ieu mah keur kauntungan budak anu dititah, keur indung mah teu untung naon, rek mandi atawa hente oge" (Zakaria 2021). "This command is fundamentally for the benefit of the child who is instructed; it brings no personal gain to the mother, whether the child bathes or not" (Author's translation).

This analogy directs the understanding of divine commands toward self-formation and inner orientation. Worship is positioned as an internalizing mechanism that builds ethical clarity and guides action in daily affairs. This process develops in forming ethical dispositions such as gratitude, sincerity, patience, and humility, which define the *tasawuf akhlaqi* orientation in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*. Aceng Zakaria captures the relationship between material wealth and the experience of contentment through a paradoxical structure:

"Nu beunghar mah sagala aya, nikmat hese. Ari nu miskin mah sagala nikmat, dahareun euweuh" (Zakaria 2021).

"The wealthy have access to everything, yet they often find true enjoyment elusive. Conversely, the poor can find delight in many things, even when food is scarce" (Author's translation).

This paradox highlights the divergence between material ownership and the internal experience of contentment. Both abundance and scarcity present distinct challenges in cultivating gratitude. The structure shifts the definition of well-being away from material accumulation and toward the state of the heart and how one processes reality. This inward orientation resonates with Islamic conceptions of character formation that emphasize the cultivation of the heart as the foundation of moral development (Nugraha et al. 2024). Within *tasawuf akhlaqi*, gratitude is understood as an inner orientation that colors one's entire outlook on life, whereas sincerity, patience, and humility are refined by subduing the ego and restructuring one's desires (Al-Ghazālī 2005).

This inner transformation finds social articulation in reflections on power dynamics and the distribution of justice, as illustrated in the tale of the tiger, the dog, and the cat:

"Maung ngajak moro ka anjing jeung ucing..." (Zakaria 2021).

"A tiger invited a dog and a cat to go hunting together..." (Author's translation).

This narrative moves from the premise of collective work to a dispute over the distribution of the spoils. The dog proposes a proportional distribution based on contribution, while the tiger claims the entire share for himself. The cat then responds by surrendering the harvest to the dominant party, a response that can be read as an adaptation to an asymmetric power relation. The distribution of the spoils thus provides a narrative context for examining how contribution, power, and survival are negotiated within an unequal social relation.

From a *tasawuf akhlaqi* perspective, this narrative may be interpreted as symbolically reflecting different orientations of the moral self within an unequal social relation. The tiger may be read as representing the *nafs* driven by domination, the dog

as embodying an ethical rationality oriented toward fairness, and the cat as expressing a survival strategy shaped by unequal power. Read through this perspective, the distribution of the spoils provides a moral reflection on the relationship between inner self-restraint, ethical judgment, and social justice (Al-Ghazālī 2005).

Within this framework, social behavior is viewed as an extension of inner spiritual quality. Empathy for the weak, integrity in safeguarding trusts, and respect for the rights of others emerge as indicators of an internalized spiritual awareness. In this exegetical worldview, social behavior is understood as the output of an inner state shaped by spiritual values.

The pedagogical intent of this exegesis is stated explicitly by Aceng Zakaria:

“Ayat Alquran téh lain saukur keur dipikanyaho, tapi kudu nyerep kana hate sanubari sangkan jadi pituduh dina kahirupan” (Zakaria 2021).

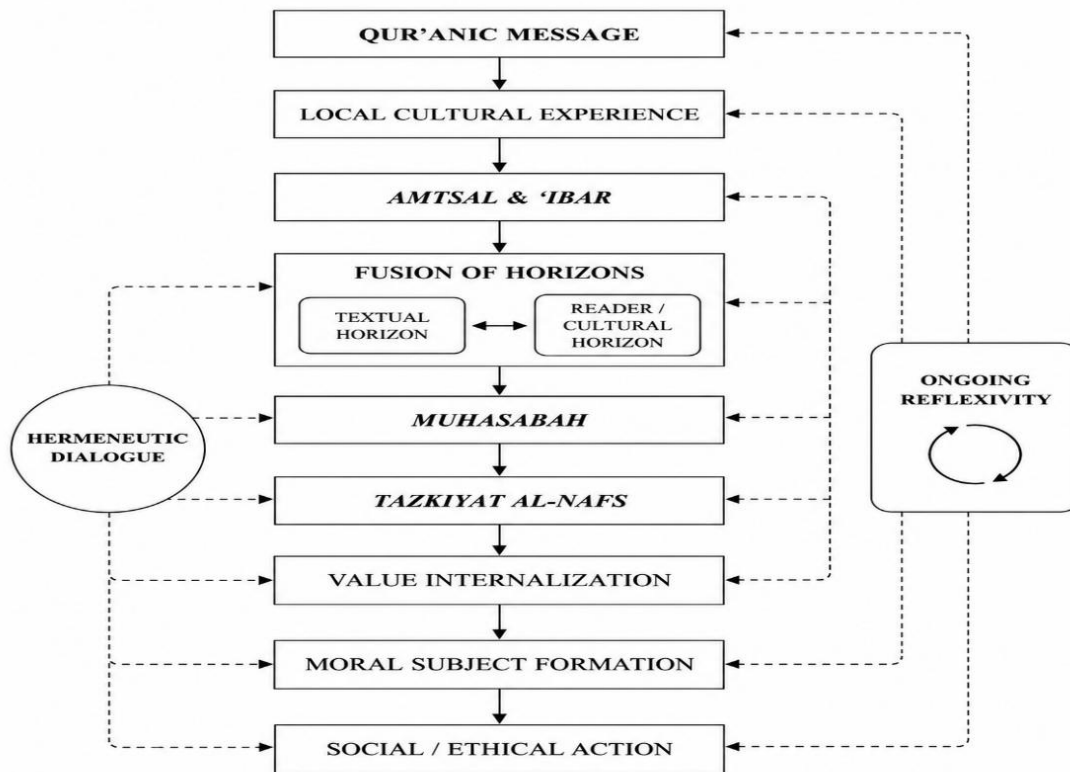
"The verses of the Qur'an are not merely meant for intellectual knowledge; they must seep deep into the conscience to serve as a guide for living" (Author's translation).

This quote highlights two interconnected layers of understanding: cognitive comprehension related to knowledge, and inner absorption related to the internalization of values into consciousness (Maslo et al. 2024). This structure illustrates the process of self-formation by converting intellectual knowledge into ethical and spiritual orientations. These findings indicate that the values of *tasawuf akhlaqi* in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* are articulated through pedagogical mechanisms that connect personal transformation with the formation of social orientation. This relationship is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. *The Transformation of Tasawuf Akhlaqi into Moral Pedagogy in Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*

No.	Phase of Transformation	Internal Process	Exegetical Mechanism	Ethical Output
1	Faith as a normative horizon	Belief in divine revelation	Amtsal and ‘ibar unlock reflective understanding	Value orientation
2	Tazkiyat al-nafs	Ordering and purifying the heart	Identifying inner spiritual diseases (arrogance, envy, negligence)	Stable moral disposition
3	Value internalization	Anchoring meaning within consciousness	Narrative dialogues and everyday analogies	Ethical identity
4	Social actualization	Restraint of the ego (nafs) and accountability	Reflection on social dynamics (justice, empathy)	Qur'anic character in practice

The synthesis of these findings is represented in Figure 2.



Viewed holistically, the moral pedagogy process in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* reveals a mechanism of moral subject formation that connects Qur'anic messages, lived experience, and the Sundanese cultural context as horizons of understanding. Through *amtsal* and *'ibar*, this encounter cultivates reflective consciousness (*muhasabah*) and develop into *tazkiyat al-nafs*, value internalization, and social and ethical action. Moral formation thus unfolds as an ongoing transformation of consciousness in which textual understanding, self-reflection, inner cultivation, and social responsibility become interconnected dimensions of pedagogical experience.

Analysis

1. The Horizon of Interpretation and the Basis of Moral Pedagogy

From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, every act of interpretation involves the interpreter's pre-understanding, which is shaped by a specific historical horizon and tradition (Gadamer 2013). Consequently, analyzing *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* requires an initial exploration of Aceng Zakaria's intellectual configuration as the interpretive horizon framing his engagement with the Qur'anic text.

This configuration was formed at the crossroads of the traditional Sundanese *pesantren* heritage and the reformist movement of PERSIS. His strong *pesantren* background, sustained by family scholarly networks and prominent mentors in the Priangan region, provided a traditional foundation in classical Islamic sciences. This foundation later interacted with modernist reformism when he pursued education at the PERSIS Pajagalan Pesantren in Bandung under the mentorship of E. Abdurrahman.

This encounter birthed an intellectual outlook that harmonized classical scholarship with a commitment to rationalization and doctrinal purification (Fauzan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2025; Rohmana, 2021). This intellectual footprint shaped Aceng Zakaria's exegetical style, steering his readings of the Qur'an toward the moral refinement and ethical awakening of society.

This pre-understanding is mirrored in how Aceng Zakaria frames the Qur'an as a book of guidance that demands intellectual rigor alongside spiritual receptivity. His assertion that the rejection of the Qur'an stems more from an unwillingness to understand rather than an inability to do so underlines the importance of ethical attitude and inner openness in the process of understanding revelation (Zakaria 2021). Within this context, exegesis is understood as a means of character formation that directs the reader's moral awareness.

This focus was further strengthened by Zakaria's extensive experience as an educator, preacher, and leadership mentor within PERSIS, roles that treated moral training as an inseparable component of religious practice. This leaning is also evident in his publications focusing on education and family dynamics, which show a sustained attention to character building. These professional experiences reinforced an exegetical orientation that places moral instruction at the heart of religious education.

Beyond the academic and institutional dimension, the Sundanese cultural horizon heavily influenced his communicative style. The choice of the Sundanese language in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* represents an instance of the vernacularization process of exegesis across the Malay world—a process that entails translating and adapting the Qur'anic message into the linguistic and cultural realities of the local communities. In the context of Southeast Asian Islam, this dynamic unfolded through complex interactions between scholarly networks, reformist, and local traditions (Azra 2004), including the PERSIS movement's emphasis on doctrinal purification and rationalized religious understanding (Federspiel 2001). Selecting a language rooted in everyday community speech reveals a communicative intent grounded in the reader's sociolinguistic reality, where language serves as a marker of identity and communal solidarity (Fishman 1989).

Within this matrix, the exegesis in *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* operates as a dialogical practice that casts the commentator as a mediator between the revealed text and the reader's social reality. This pattern is evident in the regular deployment of reflective questions and everyday illustrations that draw readers into active meaning-making. In a Gadamerian sense, this condition facilitates a fusion of horizons between the text and the reader's experience, molding ethical orientation and reinforcing the role of exegesis as an instrument of moral pedagogy (Gadamer 2013; Nikolaidis 2021; Mitchell 2021).

2. Popular Exegesis as a Form of Cultural Moral Pedagogy

The evolution of Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia points to the growth of popular forms that prioritize public preaching (*da'wah*) and social ethics alongside highly structured academic models (Ali and Isnaini 2024; Lukman 2018). Through this shift,

exegesis manifests as a cultural practice that operationalizes revelation within contemporary social life and public spheres.

This dynamic is equally deep-seated in local settings, particularly within West Java, via vernacular commentaries designed "by and for the Sundanese people" (Rohmana, 2020). Within this environment, Aceng Zakaria's *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* stands out as a prime representative of a popular, *da'wah*-oriented exegesis that values moral cultivation and existential reflection. This pedagogical orientation is explicitly articulated in the preface to *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*, where Aceng Zakaria writes:

"*Ayat Alquran téh lenyepaneun sangkan kaharti ku ati kahontal ku akal. Dina Alquran téh loba Amtsal jeung 'Ibar (contoh jeung perbandingan) sangkan leuwih kaharti jeung nyerep kana hate sanubari sakaligus jadi pituduh keur kahirupan manusa, lahir jeung batinna, dunya jeung aheratna*" (Zakaria 2021).

"The verses of the Qur'an are revealed to be deeply contemplated so that they may be embraced by the heart and reached by the mind. Within it lie numerous *amtsal* and *'ibar* (parables and lessons) to render its meaning easily understood and deeply absorbed into the conscience, serving simultaneously as a guide for human life, outwardly and inwardly, in this world and the next" (Author's translation).

This passage illustrates an elegant integration of the rational (*kahontal ku akal*) and the affective (*kaharti ku ati*). Interpretation is geared toward a meeting between intellectual understanding and existential experience, positioning exegesis as an agent for consciousness transformation. This approach highlights the deep connection between textual analysis and the reader's lived realities during the interpretive process (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; (Syamsuddin 2017; Carmody 2025).

Using Sundanese as the primary medium strengthens the cultural *da'wah* character of this work. Language becomes a hermeneutic space where revealed texts interact with the community's social experience. In the Nusantara exegetical tradition, this choice represents a form of vernacularization that allows values to be seamlessly absorbed within cultural experience. The author's reflections on utilizing a mixed Sundanese-Indonesian idiom underscore the role of language as a matrix for meaning construction, guiding readers as they digest the Qur'anic message.

Beyond its *da'wah* function, *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* possesses a distinct moral pedagogy dimension that is woven directly into the exegesis. Verse explanations are designed to build characters and reinforce value systems through recurring patterns of advice, warnings, and moral reflections, turning the exegesis into an educational vehicle that ties textual literacy to ethical awareness. This process converts religious knowledge into a reflective form of moral consciousness (Metcalf et al. 2024).

In this light, the commentary works as a moral pedagogy that builds moral awareness through reflection and the reader's real-world experiences. This orientation sets the stage for the practical application of *tasawuf akhlaqi* values (McDonnell 2023).

3. Local Exegesis and Contemporary Moral Education

In addition to its ethical values, *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* can be positioned as a pedagogical text operating effectively within non-formal education. As conceptualized by Coombs and Ahmed (1974), non-formal education focuses on community needs and

operates through diverse learning activities outside formal schooling. This feature is clear in how *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* functions within community preaching circles, study groups (*pengajian*), and independent reading. In these spaces, the exegesis serves as a dialogical and contextual moral pedagogy, bringing Qur'anic values within close reach of the community's social realities.

In its delivery structure, *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* employs a dialogical-reflective instructional pattern that treats the reader as an active participant. Aceng Zakaria builds a narrative-driven approach using anecdotes and parables rooted in daily life to help readers connect with core values. This step-by-step reflective model guides readers to grasp Qur'anic values across cognitive, personal, and contextual levels.

This pedagogical strategy is evident in Aceng Zakaria's discussion of gratitude (*syukur*) and *zakat*. He begins by acknowledging a common social assumption that gratitude, expressed through charitable giving, appears to diminish rather than increase one's wealth (Zakaria 2021). By taking this empirical perception as the starting point, the commentary opens a dialogical space between everyday experience and the Qur'anic promise, enabling the meaning of gratitude to be reinterpreted in terms of *barakah* and inner transformation rather than material accumulation.

This view intersects neatly with *tasawuf akhlaqi*, which establishes *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the core of character formation (Al-Ghazālī 2005). Moral character is seen as the product of habituation, value appreciation, and inner alignment that guides daily choices (Maslo et al. 2024). In *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*, this process comes alive through the use of local vernacular, domestic parables, and a narrative-reflective approach that grounds Qur'anic values in concrete human experience (Pilotti and Almubarak 2021). Cultural locality functions as a pedagogical theater that allows value cultivation to remain dialogical and contextual, a feature of immense value in multicultural societies (Banks 2019; Memon and Chown 2023).

In today's educational landscape, which frequently underscores standardization and measurable efficiency, moral development can be reframed as a subject-formation process where individuals consciously live out values (Biesta 2010). This perspective reaffirms the value of local exegesis as a rich repository for cultural and spiritual reflection in building ethical orientations.

The transformation of *tasawuf akhlaqi* values through local exegesis proves that moral pedagogy can draw strength from the rich traditions of Qur'anic interpretation woven into community life. Through a hermeneutic reading of *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing*, this study shows that local exegesis can provide a solid pedagogical framework for cultivating a moral consciousness that is culturally rooted, highly reflective, and responsive to the ethical challenges of contemporary society.

4. Implications for Islamic Religious Education

The findings of this study show that *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* functions effectively as a tool for moral pedagogy, guiding readers toward moral clarity through direct engagement with Qur'anic messages. Through *amtsal*, narratives, and *'ibar*, this exegesis delivers an educational process that triggers self-reflection, value appreciation, and the consolidation of ethical behavior in daily life. This process shows how exegesis

can serve as an educational asset that ties religious literacy directly to character development.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, these findings offer a fresh perspective: religious instruction can be advanced via reflective approaches that cast Qur'anic values as sources for moral awareness building. The narratives, parables, and words of wisdom utilized throughout the exegesis work as pedagogical instruments that help students understand, embrace, and manifest Islamic values in their social lives.

This research also generates a structured moral pedagogy framework mapping out the stages of moral subject formation: progressing from understanding the Qur'anic messages, self-examination (*muḥāsabah*), soul purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), value internalization, and finally, ethical social action. This framework demonstrates that character development is a step-by-step transformative journey linking religious literacy with ethical choices and deeds (Choo and Chua 2025). Consequently, this model can serve as a conceptual benchmark for developing Qur'an-based character education across school systems, traditional *pesantrens*, and non-formal Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study shows how *Pepeling jeung Panggeuing* functions as a form of local Qur'anic moral pedagogy by bringing hermeneutic reflection and *tasawuf akhlaqi* into the formation of the moral subject. Through *amtsal*, *'ibar*, and the fusion of horizons, Qur'anic messages are brought into dialogue with lived cultural experience, encouraging *muhasabah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and the internalization of values. The process links Qur'anic understanding with moral consciousness and its expression in social and ethical action, including justice, empathy, self-restraint, and social responsibility. From this process, the study proposes a conceptual model of moral subject formation in which local exegesis serves as a pedagogical medium connecting Qur'anic meaning, cultural experience, inner refinement, ethical identity, and social praxis. The model extends contemporary Islamic moral pedagogy by showing how local exegesis can provide a culturally grounded space for integrating spiritual awareness, moral formation, and social responsibility in formal and non-formal Islamic education.

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