

Reassessing the Role of Tafsir Tarbawi in Strengthening Character Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to elaborate the concept of *tafsir tarbawi* (educational exegesis), identify its derived character values, and formulate its contribution to strengthening character education in Indonesia. It employs a qualitative approach with library research, using the Qur'an and *tafsir tarbawi* literature as primary sources, supported by relevant books and journals. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings reveal eight core character values: religiosity, honesty and trustworthiness, responsibility and discipline, social care, humility, patience, devotion to parents, and justice. The study shows that *tafsir tarbawi* offers a contextual and transformative learning approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. It also proposes six implementation strategies: verse reflection, teacher role modeling, structured habituation, contextual discussion, verse-based social projects, and character portfolio assessment. The study concludes that *tafsir tarbawi* is a strategic approach to bridging Qur'anic values with educational practice, contributing both theoretically and practically to the development of character-based Islamic Religious Education curricula and serving as a reference for teachers in fostering holistic moral development. However, this research is limited by its library-based nature, relying on textual analysis without empirical validation. Its scope is confined to selected *tafsir tarbawi* works and lacks field-tested implementation, suggesting the need for further empirical studies to evaluate its effectiveness in diverse educational settings

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central issue in Indonesia's educational system, particularly amid the currents of globalization and the rapid advancement of digital technology, both of which have significantly impacted changes in the behavior of the younger generation. Various phenomena such as declining social ethics, a weak sense of responsibility, the prevalence of bullying, sexual violence in educational environments, and increasing consumerist and hedonistic behaviors, indicate that national education has not yet fully succeeded in optimally shaping students' character (Alfani, Mukhsin, et al., 2025). Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which should play a strategic role in character formation, often remains trapped in learning that is oriented solely toward cognitive aspects memorizing evidence, understanding translations, and working on theoretical questions without engaging the affective and psychomotor domains (Arifin & Nurhakim, 2025). Consequently, a separation occurs between religious knowledge (*knowing*) and its application in daily life (*acting*), so that students' character is not holistically formed even though their cognitive religious scores are relatively good (Hadi, 2024).

Several studies have examined the relationship between Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*) and character education. Aisyah (2025) found that conventional tafsir approaches remain dominated by theological and legal (*fiqh*) modes of interpretation, thus systematically lacking engagement with character education. Furthermore, research by Carmidin and Sukron (2025) revealed that PAI teachers experience difficulties in contextualizing Qur'anic values into daily learning activities due to the unavailability of an exegetical framework specifically designed for educational purposes. Meanwhile, Novriansyah affirmed that character education in Islam should be grounded in a tafsir method oriented toward moral cultivation (*tahdzib al-akhlak*), yet his study remains general and has not addressed practical implementation in schools. Anwar Al-Baz (2007) introduced the concept of *tafsir tarbawi* (educational exegesis) at a theoretical level, but research in Indonesia operationalizing this concept for character education remains very limited. At the international level, studies on character education and the integration of religious values have shown significant developments. Pawelski (2026) asserts that effective character education must integrate the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action into learning practices. Sajadi (2025) also demonstrates that the success of character education is largely determined by a comprehensive approach encompassing curriculum, teacher role-modeling, and school culture. In the context of Islamic education, Osman (2026) emphasizes that Islamic values need to be taught contextually and applicatively to effectively shape students' character. Furthermore, Andri Nirwana et al., (2024) in their study published in an international journal, highlight the importance of integrating religious texts with modern pedagogical approaches in Islamic education. Other studies by Muis (2026), Megawati and Sulisworo (2025), Demirel and Wright (2019) in reputable journals also affirm the need for interpretive models of religious texts that are transformative and relevant to contemporary educational challenges. However, none of these studies have specifically developed an operational framework of *tafsir tarbawi* for character education.

From the above explanation, a clear gap is evident between the normative potential of Qur'anic exegesis as a source of character education values and its

implementation in educational practice. National studies tend to be partial some critique the dominance of theological-normative exegesis, while others highlight teachers' practical constraints in contextualizing Qur'anic values. On the other hand, international literature affirms the importance of integrative, contextual, and transformative approaches to character education, including in Islamic education. However, these studies have not specifically formulated an operational and applicable *tafsir tarbawi* framework within the context of character education. Thus, a significant space remains for integrating the normative strength of Qur'anic exegesis with systematic and implementable pedagogical approaches. Based on this, this article aims to elaborate on the concept of *tafsir tarbawi* as an educational approach, to identify the character values that can be derived along with their supporting verses and interpretations, and to formulate its contributions and implementation in strengthening character education in Indonesia, both at the level of curriculum, learning processes, and school habituation practices.

This study is built upon several basic assumptions. First, the Qur'an contains not only theological and legal teachings but also a rich educational dimension encompassing values, methods, and aims for character formation. Second, the *tafsir tarbawi* approach, being oriented toward education, allows for a more contextual internalization of values compared to conventional tafsir, which tends to be normative. Third, the strengthening of character education in Indonesia can be enriched with a scriptural foundation through an approach that remains adaptive to a pluralistic social context. Thus, *tafsir tarbawi* is considered to possess strategic potential in addressing the contemporary challenges of character education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design (Moelong, 2014). The primary data sources are the Qur'an and books of tafsir tarbawi (educational exegesis). Secondary data sources include books on character education, accredited national journals, and scholarly articles relevant to the themes of *tafsir tarbawi* and character education in Indonesia. Data collection was conducted through documentation studies, namely collecting, reviewing, and recording Qur'anic verses along with their interpretations that contain educational values. Data analysis utilized content analysis method, comprising the following steps, first, identifying verses relevant to character education. second, interpreting these verses through the lens of tafsir tarbawi. third, categorizing the character values identified. Fourth, linking these findings to the context of character education in Indonesia. And fifth, drawing conclusions regarding the contribution of *tafsir tarbawi*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Tafsir Tarbawi as an Educational Approach

Tafsir tarbawi (educational exegesis) is an approach to Qur'anic interpretation that consciously and systematically emphasizes the educational dimension (*tarbiyah*) as the center of meaning-making (Yusuf, 2021). In contrast to conventional exegesis, which tends to be oriented toward legal (*fiqh*), theological (*kalam*), linguistic (*lughawī*), or even mystical (*sufi*) aspects, *tafsir tarbawi* explicitly seeks to uncover the methods, objectives, media, curriculum, and educational values

contained within the verses of the Qur'an. According to al-Nahlawi (1983) a pioneer of *tafsir tarbawi*, this mode of interpretation does not stop at textual or historical understanding but strives to transform the Qur'anic message into the actual behavior of learners through the processes of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) and *tahdzib* (moral cultivation).

Within the realm of contemporary tafsir, this approach aligns with Fazlur Rahman's concept of the double movement. The first movement involves understanding the meaning of a verse at the time of its revelation (historical context). The second movement consists of deriving its universal principles to be applied in present-day contexts. *Tafsir tarbawi* takes a further step by specifically focusing on how these universal principles can serve as a framework for character education. In other words, *tafsir tarbawi* represents an epistemological bridge between the sacred text and educational practice (Rahman, 2017).

One of the primary examples of an educational concept from the perspective of *tafsir tarbawi* is found in the story of Luqman (Alfani, Mukhsin, et al., 2025). In this narrative, Luqman does not merely convey advice, rather, he employs a comprehensive and structured educational method (Al-Baz, 2007).

Table 1. Educational Methods in the Story of Luqman

Educational Method of Luqman	Content of the Verse
Direct advice (<i>mau'izhah</i>)	In QS. Luqman [31]: 13, Luqman calls his son with an affectionate address, "O my son." This indicates that education must be built upon compassion, not violence.
Role modeling (<i>uswah hasanah</i>)	In QS. Luqman [31]: 12, Luqman himself is known as a wise figure to whom Allah granted wisdom. He does not merely give orders but serves as a living model.
Habituation (<i>ta'wid</i>)	In QS. Luqman [31]: 17, Luqman commands his son to establish prayer, enjoin what is good, forbid what is evil, and to be patient. This demonstrates that character is not formed instantly but through practice and repetition.
Reinforcement of values through prohibitions	In QS. Luqman [31]: 13 and 18, Luqman prohibits his son from associating partners with Allah (shirk), behaving arrogantly, and walking haughtily. This shows that character education also encompasses a preventive aspect (avoiding evil).

Tafsir tarbawi interprets this story as an integral educational system encompassing the dimensions of *tauhid* (theological education), worship (ritual education), social interaction (muamalah education), and character (moral education). According to Quraish Shihab, the story of Luqman serves as evidence

that the Qur'an does not only address formal legal rulings but also speaks to educational psychology, parent-child communication, and strategies for character formation from an early age (Sholeh, 2023).

Tafsir tarbawi also identifies other educational methods within the Qur'an, such as the narrative method (*qashash*) exemplified by the stories of Prophet Yusuf, Prophet Musa, and the Ashabul Kahf (the Companions of the Cave) each of which contains moral lessons, the parable method (*amtsal*) as in the parable of those who associate partners with Allah, likened to a spider that builds a fragile house (QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]: 41), and the dialogue method (*hiwar*) as seen in the dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and his people, or between Allah and the angels concerning the creation of Adam (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30-34) (Al-Baz, 2007). Thus, it can be concluded that *tafsir tarbawi* is not merely an approach but rather a paradigm that positions education as the primary objective of Qur'anic interpretation.

Character Values in Tafsir Tarbawi

Based on an analysis of Qur'anic verses interpreted through the lens of *tafsir tarbawi*, several core character values have been identified that can be developed within the context of education in Indonesia. These values are not merely normative (as ideas) but also operational (applicable in practice). Table 2 below presents these values, enriched with more in-depth explanations.

Table 2. Character Values in Tafsir Tarbawi and Their Implementation

Character Value	Explanation in Tafsir Tarbawi	Examples of Implementation in Schools
Religiosity or Tauhid (QS. Luqman [31]: 13)	Tauhid is the foundation of all character. without it, other values lose their orientation and direction. <i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> emphasizes that all virtuous behavior must ultimately stem from an awareness of Allah's supervision (<i>muraqabah</i>).	Habituating prayers before and after studying, connecting every subject to the greatness of Allah, fostering the awareness that Allah sees all actions.
Honesty and Trustworthiness (QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 70)	Speaking the truth (<i>qawlan sadidan</i>) is the key to honesty. In <i>tafsir tarbawi</i> , honesty is not merely about not lying but also about consistency between words and deeds. Trustworthiness (<i>amanah</i>) is a moral responsibility for which one will be held accountable both in this world and the Hereafter.	Honesty canteen, honest acknowledgment of mistakes without fear of punishment, reward systems for honest students, refraining from cheating during exams.

Responsibility and Discipline (QS. Al-'Asr [103]: 1-3)	Time is a human responsibility. Surah Al-'Asr affirms that every human being is in a state of loss except those who believe, perform righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to truth and patience. <i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> interprets this as an obligation for time management and social responsibility.	Submitting assignments on time, classroom duties as shared responsibility, weekly self-evaluation journals, personal targets to be achieved.
Social Care (QS. Al-Ma'un [107]: 1-7)	Superficial religion is that which neglects orphans and the poor. Tafsir Al-Misbah emphasizes that social care is evidence of authentic faith. <i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> teaches that ritual acts of worship (prayer, almsgiving) lose their meaning if not accompanied by concern for others.	Daily or Friday charity programs, social service visits to orphanages, sponsoring underprivileged peers, blood donation activities, disaster fundraising.
Humility or Tawadhu' (QS. Luqman [31]: 18)	The prohibition against turning one's face away in arrogance or walking haughtily. <i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> explains that arrogance is the root of many negative behaviors, such as bullying, discrimination, and refusal to admit mistakes. Humility, conversely, elevates a person's status.	Respecting friends' opinions even when they differ, not belittling others, initiating greetings, acknowledging one's own shortcomings, being willing to learn from anyone.
Patience (<i>Sabr</i>) (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 153)	In <i>tafsir tarbawi</i> , patience is not merely self-restraint but the ability to remain consistent with virtuous values amidst difficulty. Patience is divided into three types: patience in obedience, patience in refraining from sin, and patience in facing trials.	Not giving up easily on difficult tasks, learning from failure, not becoming angry when ridiculed, completing long-term projects, reflecting on life's trials.
Devotion to Parents (QS. Luqman [31]: 14)	This verse depicts the sacrifice of a mother who carries her child in weakness upon weakness. <i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> emphasizes that devotion to parents is the first laboratory of character formation. If a person cannot be	Helping with household chores, speaking politely to parents, praying for parents after each prayer, making greeting cards or thank-you letters, not

	grateful to their parents, they will not be able to be grateful to their teachers, leaders, or God.	being selective in offering help.
Justice (QS. Al-Ma'idah [5]: 8)	<i>Tafsir tarbawi</i> teaches that justice must be upheld even against one's enemies. Justice is a character trait that balances rights and obligations.	Teachers treating students fairly without favoritism, fair distribution of group tasks, resolving peer conflicts objectively, not defending a friend who is wrong simply because of friendship.

Based on Table 2 above, it can be concluded that *tafsir tarbawi* offers eight core character values derived from the Qur'an, namely: religiosity (tauhid), honesty and trustworthiness, responsibility and discipline, social care, humility (tawadhu'), patience (sabr), devotion to parents (birr al-walidayn), and justice ('adl). Each character value is not only grounded in specific Qur'anic verses but is also accompanied by an in-depth explanation from the perspective of *tafsir tarbawi*, which simultaneously emphasizes spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions. What distinguishes this approach from conventional character education is the direct connection between character values and the awareness of Allah's supervision (*muraqabah*), as well as the obligation to practice them through concrete actions within the school environment. Thus, this table demonstrates that *tafsir tarbawi* is capable of holistically bridging the three educational domains cognitive (understanding of the verses), affective (internalization of values through spiritual awareness), and psychomotor (practical implementation in schools) so that character education is no longer merely theoretical but becomes a lived experience that holistically shapes students' personalities.

The Contribution of Tafsir Tarbawi to Character Education

Based on the findings regarding the concept of *tafsir tarbawi* as an educational approach and the character values it espouses, the contribution of *tafsir tarbawi* can be understood within the framework of integrative moral and values education, which positions character education as a process of value internalization through the interaction between normative sources, pedagogical design, and learning experiences (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; J. Mark Halstead, 2007; Lickona, 2013). Within this framework, the contribution of *tafsir tarbawi* is not singular but rather systemic and multilayered.

The strength of *tafsir tarbawi* lies in its ability to connect the normative-transcendent dimension of the Qur'an with the empirical context of modern education. This is evident in its role as a source of values based on revelation with a transcendent character, its contextual and transformative approach to learning, and its holistic integration of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Ali, 2018). Furthermore, *tafsir tarbawi* also contributes to the strengthening of curriculum and teacher professionalism, while simultaneously presenting a spiritual dimension as the basis for intrinsic motivation in character formation (Mujrimin, 2025). Thus, the

following discussion will systematically elaborate on these five layers of contribution as a conceptual framework demonstrating the strategic position of *tafsir tarbawi* in strengthening character education comprehensively and sustainably.

Source of Values Based on Revelation with a Transcendent Character

Tafsir tarbawi provides a value foundation derived from revelation, which, from the perspective of religious moral education, is referred to as a *transcendent moral* (J. Mark Halstead, 2007). In contrast to secular approaches that tend to be based on social consensus, values such as honesty, justice, and responsibility in the Qur'an possess a more stable normative legitimacy. However, as Narvaez and Bock (2014) affirm, universal values still require a process of contextual internalization so that they do not remain at a doctrinal level. Thus, the strength of *tafsir tarbawi* lies in its ability to bridge the authority of revelation and the social reality of learners.

In this context, *tafsir tarbawi* functions not only as a source of values but also as a pedagogical mechanism that mediates between the authority of revelation and the lived realities of students. This approach encourages a dialogical and reflective process of meaning-making, rather than mere one-way knowledge transmission. Abnisa (2024), demonstrates that learning based on *tafsir tarbawi* directs students to connect the message of the verses with their concrete experiences. For example, in the discussion of QS. Al-Ma'un, students not only understand the textual meaning but are also invited to reflect on practices of social care in their daily lives, including within the context of contemporary social interactions. Thus, the Qur'anic verse is positioned not as a static normative text but as a *living guidance* that shapes students' critical awareness and moral orientation in a contextual and sustainable manner.

Contextual and Transformative Learning Approach

Pedagogically, *tafsir tarbawi* aligns with constructivist theory (Vygotsky) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow), which view learning as an active process through dialogue, critical reflection, and connection to students' lived experiences. Within this framework, the interpretation of Qur'anic verses does not stop at information transfer but moves toward a process of consciousness transformation. This is supported by the findings of Zul et al. (2026), which affirm that effective religious education requires the integration of religious texts with the realities of life, enabling students to construct meaning that is existentially relevant. Thus, the Qur'an is positioned as a living text that activates ethical, reflective, and contextual awareness, while simultaneously encouraging the development of higher-order thinking in character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014).

This approach inherently integrates the three educational domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. As Salirawati (2021) argues, character education will not be effective if it stops at the cognitive aspect without touching the affective and behavioral dimensions. In *tafsir tarbawi*, this integration occurs systematically: in the cognitive domain, students understand the meaning of the verse, *ashāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), and its moral message, in the affective domain, they are invited to reflect on the value personally, fostering awareness and inner

commitment, while in the psychomotor domain, the value is manifested in concrete actions through habituation in daily life.

This holistic integration aligns with Lickona's (2013) framework of character education concerning moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Thus, *tafsir tarbawi* not only enriches students' cognitive understanding but also shapes moral sensitivity and behavioral consistency, so that the educational process moves from merely knowing to being.

Holistic Integration of Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Domains

Tafsir tarbawi inherently integrates the three main educational domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. This model aligns with the concepts of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2013), and is supported by findings Berkowitz and Bier (2004), affirming that effective character education must be comprehensive and touch all dimensions of student development. The advantage of *tafsir tarbawi* lies in its reinforcement of the spiritual dimension, which deepens the affective aspect, so that values are not only understood rationally but also internalized and consistently manifested in behavior.

This integration enables the development of learning that does not stop at the cognitive aspect. Students not only understand the meaning of the verses and their context of revelation but are also invited to reflect on their personal relevance, thereby forming moral commitment. At the subsequent stage, these values are internalized through concrete practice in daily life (Alfani et al., 2025). In this context, *tafsir tarbawi* has the potential to serve as a conceptual framework for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials that are more integrative and character-based (Al-Baz, 2007). However, overgeneralization should be avoided, given that these findings are still based on a literature review and have not yet been fully tested in various school contexts (Mirza & Wijaya, 2025).

Furthermore, the implementation of this approach demands the strengthening of PAI teacher competencies. Teachers are not only tasked with delivering material but also with acting as facilitators of value internalization. Therefore, training is required that encompasses hermeneutic skills in selecting and understanding verses, pedagogical skills in facilitating reflection and contextual discussion, and the ability to design habituation and authentic assessment. This aligns with Hattie's (2012) findings, which emphasize that teacher quality and instructional design are key factors in the success of character education. Thus, the holistic integration within *tafsir tarbawi* will only be effective if supported by adequate pedagogical readiness and teacher professionalism.

Strengthening the Curriculum and Professionalism of PAI Teachers

In the context of curriculum, *tafsir tarbawi* has the potential to serve as a conceptual framework for developing integrative character-based learning. This approach aligns with values-based education, which emphasizes the integration of values throughout the entire learning process, not merely as supplementary material (Hammar Chiriach et al., 2023). With *tafsir tarbawi*, Qur'anic verses can be organized into thematic learning units that target not only cognitive achievements but also the formation of attitudes and behaviors. However, it is important to emphasize that this contribution remains at the conceptual level and cannot yet be

widely generalized, given the limitations of literature-based research that has not been extensively tested in diverse classroom practices.

Curriculum strengthening must be accompanied by enhanced professionalism among PAI teachers. Teachers are no longer sufficient in the role of material deliverers but must act as facilitators of reflective and transformative value learning. This demands more complex competencies, including the ability to understand texts contextually, skills in facilitating critical dialogue, and the capacity to design authentic assessments capable of measuring character change, not merely mastery of content (Nair et al., 2025).

One distinctive contribution of *tafsir tarbawi* in curriculum strengthening is the integration of the spiritual dimension as a basis for learning motivation. Unlike secular approaches that often rely on external controls such as rewards and punishments, *tafsir tarbawi* cultivates internal awareness based on faith values. From the perspective of self-determination theory, such intrinsic motivation is more sustainable and effective in shaping behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, students are encouraged to behave honestly, justly, and with care not merely because of external pressure but because of an internalized moral-spiritual awareness. It is this integration of curriculum, teacher competence, and spiritual dimension that gives *tafsir tarbawi* its strategic potential to strengthen character education in a more profound and sustainable manner (Al-Baz, 2007).

Strengthening the Spiritual Dimension as Intrinsic Motivation

The most distinctive contribution of *tafsir tarbawi* is the strengthening of the spiritual dimension as the basis for intrinsic motivation. From the perspective of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), intrinsic motivation is more sustainable than extrinsic motivation based on rewards and punishments. In this context, the concept of divine awareness (*murāqabah*) encourages consistent moral behavior even without external supervision. This finding aligns with studies by Osman (2026) and Martini et al. (2023), which demonstrate that the integration of spirituality in Islamic education significantly contributes to the formation of authentic and resilient character.

The spiritual dimension in *tafsir tarbawi* functions not only as a source of motivation but also as the foundation for the formation of moral identity. In the study of moral psychology, a strong moral identity correlates with consistent ethical behavior across various situations (Narvaez & Bock, 2014). By linking moral values to the transcendent relationship between humans and God, *tafsir tarbawi* helps students understand moral action as part of an existential commitment, not merely social compliance. This strengthens the internalization of values to the level of self-concept. The implication of this is the need to design learning that not only transmits values but also builds spiritual awareness through reflection, religious experience, and habituation. Thus, *tafsir tarbawi* not only produces short-term behavioral compliance but also shapes character deeply rooted in inner awareness and a sustainable transcendent orientation.

CONCLUSION

Tafsir tarbawi (educational exegesis) is an approach to Qur'anic interpretation oriented toward extracting educational values and methods. Based on the analysis

of QS. Luqman, QS. Al-'Asr, QS. Al-Ma'un, and QS. Al-Ahzab, this approach yields core character values such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, social care, humility, and patience. This study contributes by formulating *tafsir tarbawi* as an integrative framework that connects the normative dimension (revelation), the pedagogical dimension (reflective learning), and the psychological dimension (cognitive, affective, and behavioral internalization of values) within character education. These findings have implications for the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and instruction through contextual strategies such as verse reflection, role modeling, habituation, and case-based discussions, while also affirming the importance of enhancing teacher competence in applicatively implementing Qur'anic values. Thus, *tafsir tarbawi* has the potential to serve as a strategic approach in bridging the gap between the normative values of the Qur'an and the practice of character education in Indonesia, although further empirical validation is still required.

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