

Qur'anic reflections on moral crisis and their implications for character-based Islamic education

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Abstract

This article analyzes the relationship between religion and power and its implications for moral crisis from the perspective of Qur'anic civilization, positioning the narrative of the Children of Israel as an ethical reflection across time. The study employs a qualitative-conceptual approach through thematic exegesis (maudhu'i), historical-critical analysis, and civilizational ethical reflection to understand patterns of deviation from revealed values within social dynamics. The findings indicate that moral decline is not merely an individual problem but a civilizational crisis that emerges when religion is reduced to a symbol of identity and a tool for legitimizing power, thereby weakening the values of justice, trustworthiness (amanah), and social responsibility. Qur'anic reflection reveals patterns of deviation manifested in ritual formalism, manipulation of religious authority, and the neglect of moral integrity. Similar phenomena are evident in contemporary contexts, marked by ethical disorientation in public life and the erosion of social responsibility. This study emphasizes that Islamic education grounded in Qur'anic values—such as tawhid, honesty, trustworthiness, and justice—plays a strategic role in cultivating ethical character and social integrity. Thus, the reflection on Qur'anic civilization provides an ethical foundation for strengthening character education through an integrative approach that unites spirituality, moral conduct (akhlaq), and human responsibility.

Keywords: Prophetic Ethics; Moral Crisis; Qur'anic Values; Islamic Education; Character Education.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis relasi agama dan kekuasaan serta implikasinya terhadap krisis moral dalam perspektif peradaban Qur'ani, dengan menempatkan narasi Bani Israil sebagai refleksi etis lintas zaman. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-konseptual melalui tafsir tematik (maudhu'i), kajian historis-kritis, dan refleksi etika peradaban untuk memahami pola penyimpangan nilai wahyu dalam dinamika sosial. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kemerosotan moral bukan sekadar persoalan individual, melainkan krisis peradaban yang muncul ketika

agama direduksi menjadi simbol identitas dan legitimasi kekuasaan, sehingga melemahkan nilai keadilan, amanah, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Refleksi Qur'ani memperlihatkan pola penyimpangan melalui formalisme ritual, manipulasi otoritas keagamaan, dan pengabaian integritas moral. Fenomena serupa tampak dalam konteks kontemporer, ditandai disorientasi etika publik dan melemahnya tanggung jawab sosial. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan Islam berbasis nilai Qur'ani—seperti tauhid, amanah, kejujuran, dan keadilan—memiliki peran strategis dalam membangun karakter beradab dan integritas sosial. Dengan demikian, refleksi peradaban Qur'ani memberikan landasan etis bagi penguatan pendidikan karakter yang integratif antara dimensi spiritual, akhlak, dan tanggung jawab kemanusiaan.

Kata kunci: Etika Profetik; Krisis Moral; Nilai Qur'ani; Pendidikan Islam; Pendidikan Karakter.

Introduction

In recent decades, global society has faced an increasingly complex moral crisis, marked by rising corruption, abuse of power, symbolic violence in the name of religion, and the weakening of social integrity across various spheres of life (Agustina et al., 2024; Hoeft & Mill, 2024; Ilmiah & Kadi, 2025). Advances in technology, economics, and modern political systems are not always accompanied by progress in public ethics, resulting in value disorientation and a crisis of social trust (Jamanbalayeva et al., 2025; Stiles et al., 2025). Several recent studies suggest that contemporary moral crises are not merely related to individual behavior but are rooted in broader social, political, and cultural structures that allow ethical deviations to occur systematically and repeatedly (Estadieu et al., 2025; Ho, 2026; Lasthuizen et al., 2025). This condition indicates that moral decline is a civilizational issue intricately linked to value orientation and the legitimacy of power within social life.

Within this context, the relationship between religion and power has become a critical issue in the study of civilization and moral education (Anas et al., 2025). Normatively, religion functions as a source of public ethics and guidance for social justice. However, both in historical practice and contemporary realities, religion is often reduced to a symbol of identity, a tool for legitimizing power, and an instrument for mobilizing group interests. When religion loses its ethical and transformative functions, society risks experiencing moral disorientation and the collapse of public responsibility (Ardilla, 2024; Billahi et al., 2026; Hardiyanto et al., 2024). The transformation of religion from a source of ethical guidance into a symbol of political identity may also deepen social fragmentation and weaken social cohesion (Çakın et al., 2024; Sidik & Dilawati, 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that the misuse of religious authority can have far-reaching implications for social integrity and public trust.

The Qur'an presents historical narratives as civilizational lessons (*'ibrah*), one of which is conveyed through the story of the Children of Israel (Bani Israil) (Syafri, 2014). This narrative is not merely intended as an ethnic or historical record but as a cross-temporal moral reflection on how a community that has received divine revelation can experience deviation when divine values are reduced to formal symbols and instruments of power. From the perspective of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, this story is understood as an ethical warning about the manipulation of religious authority, ritual formalism without moral integrity, and the neglect of justice and social trust (*amanah*) (Febriansyah et al., 2024; Ghozali, 2024; Marina et al., 2025). Thus, Qur'anic narratives provide a reflective framework for understanding the dynamics of moral deviation in modern society.

A number of studies have examined the relationship between religion and power as well as moral crises in contemporary society (Maulana & Hendri, 2025). Sociological studies of religion highlight the politicization of religious identity and the instrumentalization of religion in social conflicts (Al Mufida et al., 2025), while studies of public ethics emphasize the erosion of social responsibility in modern society (Cabrera-Luján et al., 2023). On the other hand, research on character education highlights the importance of integrating moral, emotional, and social values in shaping individual character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Retnaningrum & Hazhari, 2024). Other studies emphasize that effective moral education must integrate spirituality and social responsibility to ensure sustainable character formation (Hermawan et al., 2025; Mulawarman et al., 2024). Nevertheless, many of these studies still frame moral crises primarily within sociological or psychological perspectives, while Qur'anic reflections are often discussed within normative theological frameworks that remain disconnected from analyses of contemporary moral crises and the practice of character education.

These limitations indicate a conceptual gap between Qur'anic reflection, the analysis of modern moral crises, and the strengthening of character education. Some studies position Qur'anic narratives within a purely theological framework, while analyses of moral crises are mostly conducted through sociological or secular ethical perspectives, and character education studies tend to focus on psychological and pedagogical approaches. These approaches have not yet fully integrated Qur'anic civilizational reflection as an ethical framework for understanding distortions in the relationship between religion and power, as well as a normative foundation for responding to moral crises through education.

In contrast to previous studies, this article proposes an integrative perspective that positions Qur'anic civilizational reflection as an ethical framework for

interpreting contemporary moral crises and formulating the foundations of character-based Islamic education. The narrative of Bani Israil is interpreted not merely as a historical-theological account but as a cross-temporal reflection on the distortion of moral authority and the reduction of religion into a tool for legitimizing power. This approach offers a conceptual contribution by linking Qur'anic reflection, civilizational ethics, and character education within a coherent analytical framework.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in the development of an ethical framework that positions the values of *tawhid* (divine unity), *amanah* (trust), justice, and social responsibility as foundational principles of character education in responding to modern moral crises. This approach not only expands the discourse on character education within the perspective of Islamic education but also offers a normative framework relevant to strengthening social integrity and cultivating civilized individuals amid the value disorientation of contemporary society.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative-conceptual approach with a library research design to analyze the relationship between religion and power from the perspective of Qur'anic civilization and its implications for the contemporary moral crisis and character-based Islamic education. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on the analysis of texts, ideas, and ethical reflections derived from religious literature, Qur'anic exegesis, and studies on civilization and education. Library research in religious and educational studies is considered effective for examining concepts, values, and moral paradigms developed in scholarly literature and classical texts in a systematic and critical manner (Snyder, 2019; Subagiya, 2023).

The data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) that discuss the narrative of the Children of Israel (Bani Israil) and the values of *amanah* (trust), justice, and social responsibility. Secondary sources include books and scholarly journal articles relevant to the relationship between religion and power, modern moral crises, civilizational ethics, and character education published within the last ten years. In contemporary moral education studies, academic literature highlights that the integration of moral, social, and spiritual values constitutes an essential foundation for shaping individual and societal character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through documentary analysis by identifying, classifying, and selecting literature based on thematic relevance. This method is

commonly employed in literature-based qualitative research to explore ideas, concepts, and discourses in the fields of education and religious studies (Snyder, 2019). Data analysis applied a thematic Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach to trace verses related to moral deviation and social responsibility. This approach was combined with historical-critical analysis to understand the civilizational context and the dynamics of the relationship between religion and power. The thematic interpretation approach allows researchers to examine Qur'anic verses comprehensively based on themes and relate them to contemporary social realities and ethical issues (Saeed & Akbar, 2021).

Furthermore, interpretative analysis was employed to interpret the ethical meanings of Qur'anic narratives in contemporary contexts, while conceptual synthesis was conducted to formulate the implications of Qur'anic values for strengthening character education. Recent studies in character education demonstrate that sustainable character formation requires the integration of moral, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions within educational processes (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Rianawati et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2025).

The validity of interpretation was maintained through source triangulation, comparison between classical and contemporary tafsir, and consistency of interpretation with the principles of social ethics and Islamic education. Triangulation in qualitative research aims to enhance interpretive validity by comparing different perspectives from literature and knowledge sources (Creswell, 2009). Through this analytical framework, Qur'anic reflection is positioned as an ethical and pedagogical source for understanding the contemporary moral crisis and for cultivating civilized character within the framework of Islamic education.

Finding and Discussion

A. Findings

The thematic interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to the narratives of communities that received divine revelation—particularly the Children of Israel (Bani Israil)—together with a synthesis of scholarly literature on the relationship between religion and power, reveals recurring patterns of the distortion of value-based authority that contribute to civilizational moral crises. The findings identify five major patterns of deviation that are not merely episodic or historically specific, but structural and recurrent within social dynamics across different periods. These patterns have direct implications for the weakening of social integrity, the erosion of the moral legitimacy of institutions, and the fragmentation of civilizational cohesion.

Table 1. Patterns of Deviations in the Relationship Between Religion and Power from a Qur'anic Perspective

Qur'anic Theme	Form of Deviation	Civilizational Impact	Contemporary Relevance	Educational Implications
Manipulation of Revelation	Misuse of religious authority	Loss of social justice	Religious legitimization of power	Education on integrity and <i>amanah</i> (trustworthiness)
Religious Formalism	Ritual practices without moral commitment	Decline of public ethics	Religious symbols without ethical substance	Development of moral awareness
Distortion of <i>Amanah</i> (Trust)	Interests placed above truth	Collapse of social trust	Corruption and abuse of authority	Education for social responsibility
Loss of Tawhid Values	Materialistic orientation	Spiritual crisis	Hedonism and materialism	Spiritual education
Exclusive Truth Claims	Group superiority	Social conflict	Identity polarization	Education for tolerance and justice

Source: Data Analysis Results

The thematic interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to the narratives of communities that received divine revelation, particularly the Children of Israel (Bani Israil), combined with a synthesis of scholarly literature on the relationship between religion and power, indicates that moral decline in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely understood as an individual failure but as a civilizational crisis rooted in the distortion of value-based authority. Qur'anic narratives reveal recurring patterns of deviation in the relationship between religion and power that have systemic impacts on social integrity and the moral legitimacy of a society. These deviations are not incidental or temporary but structural and transhistorical, making them highly relevant to contemporary social dynamics.

The first finding shows that the manipulation of revelation constitutes an initial form of civilizational distortion. In this pattern, religious authority no longer functions as a corrective force toward power but is instead employed to justify interests. Revelation, which should serve as a source of justice and moral guidance, is transformed into a symbolic legitimization of social and political dominance. The consequence of such manipulation is the weakening of social justice and the erosion of religion's ethical function as a moral control over power. In contemporary contexts, this pattern is reflected in the use of religious

symbols and narratives to justify policies, group interests, or actions that are not fully aligned with universal ethical values.

The next finding highlights the presence of religious formalism that separates ritual practice from moral integrity. Qur'anic narratives demonstrate that religiosity limited to symbols and rituals without ethical transformation may produce a form of formal religiosity that has minor impact on social life. When acts of worship do not lead to justice, honesty, and social responsibility, religion loses its transformative power. The civilizational consequence of this pattern is the decline of public ethics and the emergence of a gap between religious identity and social behavior. A similar phenomenon can be observed in modern societies, where expressions of religious symbolism increase, yet they are not always accompanied by corresponding improvements in social integrity.

The analysis also indicates that the distortion of *amanah* (trustworthiness) represents a critical point in the collapse of social trust. In the Qur'anic perspective, *amanah* is not merely related to personal responsibility but constitutes the foundation of social legitimacy and the sustainability of civilizational structures. When *amanah* is replaced by personal or group interests, authority loses its moral credibility. The collapse of public trust is therefore not simply the result of individual misconduct but of systemic failure in maintaining ethical responsibility. In contemporary contexts, this pattern can be observed in practices of corruption, abuse of authority, and the weakening of transparency in decision-making processes. The crisis of *amanah* thus represents not merely a violation of norms but a crisis of moral legitimacy that undermines social cohesion.

Another finding shows that the loss of tawhid orientation leads to a shift in value orientation from spiritual-transcendental perspectives toward materialistic and pragmatic ones. In Qur'anic reflection, tawhid is not only a theological affirmation but also a moral consciousness that all human actions are accountable before God. When this consciousness weakens, life orientations tend to be dominated by pragmatic interests, material gains, and utilitarian logic. The consequence is a spiritual crisis that shapes how power, justice, and social responsibility are perceived. This pattern illustrates how shifts in theological values can directly affect the moral structure of civilization.

Furthermore, the claim of exclusive truth without ethical responsibility emerges as another significant pattern of deviation. Qur'anic narratives indicate that group superiority detached from principles of justice and humility may lead to social conflict. When religion is reduced to an exclusive identity that separates and legitimizes domination, social dialogue weakens and polarization intensifies. In contemporary contexts, this phenomenon can be observed in

identity-based social fragmentation that reinforces segregation and horizontal conflict.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that moral crises from the perspective of Qur'anic civilization are rooted in distortions in the relationship between religion and power, resulting in the reduction of the values of tawhid, *amanah*, justice, and social responsibility. These deviations from recurring patterns throughout the history of civilization and remain highly relevant to the dynamics of modern society. When religion loses its ethical function and is reduced to a symbol of legitimization, social integrity weakens and public trust declines. Conversely, Qur'anic reflection positions spiritual values and social ethics as the foundation for the sustainability of civilization. These findings affirm that character education grounded in Qur'anic values is not merely a normative response but a structural necessity for rebuilding moral integrity and social cohesion in societies experiencing ethical disorientation.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that moral crises cannot be understood merely as individual failures but rather as broader crises embedded within the structure of civilization. When religion loses its ethical function and is instead used to justify power or group interests, a shift in values occurs that affects social life. In modern scholarship, this condition is often associated with a crisis of legitimacy and the weakening of public trust in social institutions (Fox et al., 2024; Yogevev, 2024). Casanova (as discussed in Emiroğlu, 2021) explains that religion in the public sphere can play a positive role as a moral force, but it may also experience distortion when it is instrumentalized for political interests. The findings of this study are consistent with this view, as Qur'anic narratives demonstrate that deviation occurs when religious authority no longer safeguards justice but instead follows the interests of power.

This condition is also related to what Sandel (2013) describes as a shift in values in modern society, where the logic of interest and utility replaces moral considerations. In secular societies, this shift is often influenced by the dominance of market logic; however, in religious contexts, a similar shift may occur when religion is practiced merely as a symbolic identity (Jong, 2025). The findings of this study show that rituals without moral integrity produce a form of formal religiosity that does not necessarily cultivate just and responsible character. From the perspective of character education, Lickona (as cited in Astriya, 2023) emphasizes that moral education must reach the dimension of action, not merely knowledge. This strengthens the finding that religion limited to symbolic expression is insufficient for building social integrity.

The distortion of *amanah* (trustworthiness) identified in this study is also linked to the crisis of social trust. Putnam and Garrett (2020) argue that declining public trust is a sign of weakening social cohesion in modern societies. When *amanah* is violated, social trust collapses as well. In the Qur'anic perspective, *amanah* is not merely an administrative responsibility but a moral principle that forms the basis of the legitimacy of power and social relations (Parveen & Naqvi, 2022). The findings of this research demonstrate that the violation of *amanah* is not only a legal issue but also a moral problem that affects the structure of civilization.

Furthermore, the loss of tawhid orientation reveals a shift in values from spiritual consciousness toward materialistic orientation (Mubarok et al., 2026). In many studies of modern ethics, moral crises are often associated with the dominance of pragmatic rationality and individual interests (Krettenauer & Stichter, 2023; Narvaez, 2021). Nucci and Narvaez (2014) explain that sustainable moral education requires the integration of spiritual dimensions and social responsibility. The findings of this study indicate that tawhid, as an awareness of accountability before God, forms a deeper moral orientation. When this consciousness weakens, values such as honesty, justice, and social responsibility gradually erode.

The findings concerning exclusive truth claims can also be understood in the context of modern social polarization. Haynes (2020) shows that religious identity can strengthen solidarity but may also trigger conflict when it becomes politicized. Qur'anic narratives warn that claims of group superiority without ethical responsibility may lead to social conflict and fragmentation (Mukhtar & Triana, 2023). The findings of this research demonstrate that religion does not automatically become a source of peace or conflict; rather, it depends on how the values of justice and *amanah* are upheld in social practice.

Overall, this discussion shows that the research findings align with various modern theories regarding moral crises, the legitimacy of power, and social trust. However, this study also offers an important addition: the transcendental ethical dimension derived from Qur'anic reflection. While secular theories explain moral crises primarily from social and structural perspectives, Qur'anic reflection introduces a spiritual dimension as the foundation of moral orientation. The integration of these two perspectives suggests that character-based Islamic education does not merely aim to shape individuals who are personally pious but also to build social integrity and strengthen societal cohesion.

Therefore, character education grounded in the values of tawhid, *amanah*, justice, and social responsibility becomes highly relevant in addressing contemporary moral crises. Education should not only emphasize religious

knowledge but must also cultivate ethical awareness capable of critically confronting the misuse of power and safeguarding integrity in social life. In this context, Qur'anic reflection should not only function as normative teaching material but also as an ethical framework for reorienting the direction of civilization.

Conclusion

This study affirms that moral decline in modern societies is not merely an individual problem, but a civilizational crisis associated with distortions in the relationship between religion and power. From the perspective of Qur'anic civilization, the narratives concerning communities that received divine revelation reveal recurring patterns such as the manipulation of religious authority, the formalization of rituals without ethical integrity, and the neglect of justice and social trust (*amanah*). When religion is reduced to a symbol for legitimizing power and group identity, its ethical and transformative functions weaken, leading to moral disorientation and the erosion of social trust. Qur'anic reflection emphasizes that the core problem does not lie in religion as a source of values but in the misuse of moral authority and the separation of religion from ethical responsibility. Therefore, character education grounded in Qur'anic civilizational reflection becomes a strategic foundation for building a civilization that is ethical, just, and socially responsible.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of Qur'anic civilizational reflection with the analysis of contemporary moral crises within the framework of civilizational ethics and character education. This study interprets Qur'anic narratives as cross-temporal moral lessons (*ibrah*) for understanding distortions in the relationship between religion and power while simultaneously developing a character education approach grounded in Qur'anic values as a response to modern moral decadence. In doing so, this research expands the discourse on character education by incorporating the dimensions of spiritual ethics and civilizational responsibility as normative foundations for the development of social integrity.

The findings of this study indicate that strengthening character education based on the values of tawhid, *amanah*, honesty, justice, and social responsibility have the potential to reinforce both individual moral integrity and the social cohesion of society. Education that emphasizes the internalization of ethical values and critical religious awareness can reduce religious formalism, enhance moral sensitivity, and strengthen societal resilience against the misuse of authority and the manipulation of religious symbols. Consequently, Qur'anic civilizational reflection is not only relevant as an ethical framework but also holds

strategic significance for fostering societies characterized by integrity, justice, and civility.

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