



AN ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC MORAL EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN THE FILM *THE KITE RUNNER*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Islamic moral educational values contained in the film *The Kite Runner*, directed by Marc Forster and adapted from Khaled Hosseini's novel. Employing a qualitative methodology combining library research and semiotic analysis, this research investigates key scenes, dialogues, and narratives within the film to identify and interpret moral values categorized into ethics toward God, self, and others. The findings reveal the film's vivid portrayal of essential Islamic values such as monotheism (tauhid), trust in God (tawakkal), remembrance of God (dzikrullah), honesty (shiddiq), self-respect (iffah), patience (sabr), tolerance (tasamuh), compassion (rahmah), respect (ihtiram), and justice (adl). These values are embodied in the emotional and spiritual journeys of the characters, reflecting complex processes of moral and character development. The study underscores the film's potential as a compelling audiovisual medium to foster ethical awareness and spiritual growth among learners. It contributes to expanding the repertoire of educational media that support character building within Islamic educational frameworks and offers valuable insights into the integration of global cinematic narratives in local moral education practices.

Keywords: *Islamic moral education, semiotic analysis, audiovisual media, character building, The Kite Runner*

A. Introduction

Moral degradation has become a pressing issue in Indonesia, increasingly infiltrating various social spheres, particularly education (Darwin et al., 2024). This decline manifests in a range of critical social problems that demand immediate attention and remedial action. According to the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), a total of 618 narcotics-related cases were uncovered in 2024, involving 974 suspects, with marijuana abuse representing a substantial share (Feisal, 2024; Kurniawan & Maullana, 2024; Pambudhy, 2024). Furthermore, abortion remains a significant health and moral concern, with estimates ranging from 750,000 to 1,500,000 cases annually, resulting in approximately 2,500 deaths, according to reports by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (Sejawat, 2025). The Ministry of Health documented 35,415 new HIV infections and 12,481 AIDS cases during the first nine months of 2024, predominantly affecting individuals between 20 and 49 years old,

reflecting a dire impact on the productive age population (CNN Indonesia, 2024a; Hasibuan, 2024). Additionally, social unrest is evident in escalating incidents of violent group clashes, with Jakarta alone recording 111 such occurrences in late 2024 (CNN Indonesia, 2024b). These alarming data underscore the urgency to enhance moral education, especially targeting the youth who are most susceptible to negative social influences.

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and moral character. The ultimate goal is to develop individuals who embody both personal piety and social righteousness (Khasanah et al., 2022). Personal piety involves obedience to God, manifested through adherence to obligatory and voluntary religious practices. Social piety, on the other hand, is characterized by respectful interactions, empathy, and compassion towards others. To this end, education must nurture the innate purity (*fitrah*) within learners by fostering a deepened faith, which consequently cultivates virtuous behavior and increased engagement in righteous deeds. This holistic approach to education is codified in Indonesia's Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, defining education as a deliberate and systematic effort to create learning environments and processes that enable learners to develop their spiritual strength, self-regulation, personality, intelligence, noble character, and essential life skills (Amin, 2018; Amin et al., 2022).

Moral education, therefore, is not merely an adjunct to intellectual development but a core objective, focusing on the cultivation of ethical values and character. Delivery of moral education relies heavily on supportive media that can effectively convey abstract values in accessible forms (Davidson, 2017; Lickona, 2016). Learning media, which serve as vehicles for communication from sender to receiver, are broadly classified into three types: audio, visual, and audiovisual. Among these, films, as audiovisual media, hold a distinctive position due to their immersive storytelling capacity, integrating visual imagery, dialogue, music, and narrative to engage multiple senses simultaneously. This multimodal engagement makes films a potent tool for imparting moral education, capable of evoking empathy, reflection, and internalization of ethical messages.

Despite this potential, many contemporary Indonesian films predominantly emphasize negative social themes—such as marital discord, infidelity, family strife, violence, and exaggerated romantic plots—often without clear moral resolutions or constructive messages (Yasih & Hadiz, 2021). This focus raises concerns about the possible reinforcement of detrimental social attitudes, especially among impressionable audiences. In contrast, international films like *The Kite Runner* offer nuanced and profound explorations of moral themes such as loyalty, remorse, redemption, forgiveness, and the quest for personal and social justice. Such films provide a compelling narrative framework through which viewers can engage with complex moral dilemmas, character development, and ethical reflection.

The educational potential of films as media for moral instruction has been substantiated by prior research. Ulfa Ainul Mardhiyah (2013) conducted a study on moral education values embedded in the Indonesian film *Hafalan Shalat Delisa*. Through a

pragmatic library research approach, the study identified three core categories of moral values: ethics toward God, ethics toward self, and ethics toward others. The research highlighted the film's relevance as a learning medium aligned with Islamic teachings and its applicability in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools). Similarly, Nurul Isra Safwan (2007) analyzed moral values within the literary work *Hikajat Prang Sabi*, emphasizing self-acceptance, piety, patience, courage, and social manners. Though focusing on different media forms—film versus literature—both studies converge on the centrality of integrating moral education into cultural texts.

Building upon this foundation, the present study seeks to explore *The Kite Runner*, an internationally acclaimed film, as a rich repository of moral educational content. The film's context, rooted in Afghanistan's complex socio-political history and cultural fabric, introduces cross-cultural dimensions to moral discourse, making it an especially valuable resource for diverse educational settings. The narrative intricately portrays emotional and spiritual experiences that shape character development, inviting viewers to reflect deeply on universal moral issues such as justice, loyalty, guilt, and redemption. Given the growing influence of visual culture on youth, examining *The Kite Runner* as an alternative moral education medium is both timely and relevant. This study aims to systematically analyze the moral values conveyed in the film and assess their potential for integration into moral education frameworks. By doing so, it contributes to expanding the repertoire of effective educational media and offers insights into the role of global cinematic narratives in character building within increasingly multicultural and media-saturated environments.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing library research combined with semiotic analysis to investigate the moral educational values embedded in the film *The Kite Runner*. Library research involves a systematic review and analysis of relevant literature, scholarly articles, and supporting documents that provide theoretical foundations and contextual understanding of moral education and media studies (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). The primary data source is the film *The Kite Runner* itself, from which relevant scenes, dialogues, and narrative elements are extracted for analysis. Secondary data are collected from academic books, journals, articles, and other credible sources related to Islamic moral education, audiovisual learning media, and film semiotics.

The research population encompasses the entire content of the film, including all visual and verbal elements that potentially convey moral messages. A purposive sampling technique is applied to select specific segments of the film that explicitly or implicitly depict key moral values, such as honesty, responsibility, repentance, forgiveness, and social justice. Data collection is conducted through meticulous documentation, involving repeated viewings of the film, detailed note-taking of significant scenes, and verbatim transcription of dialogues containing moral content. This process ensures comprehensive data capture for subsequent analysis. Data analysis follows a content analysis framework

with the following stages: (1) thorough viewing and comprehension of the full film narrative; (2) transcription and extraction of key scenes and dialogues reflecting moral values; (3) classification and coding of these extracts according to five core dimensions of Islamic morality—ethics toward God, self, family, others, and the environment; (4) interpretation and synthesis of findings to draw meaningful conclusions about the moral educational values portrayed in the film. This methodological approach ensures alignment with the study's objectives to explore the moral educational potential of *The Kite Runner* as an audiovisual medium. It provides a rigorous analytical lens consistent with qualitative research standards expected by SINTA 1 journals, emphasizing depth of analysis, transparency of procedures, and validity through triangulation of primary and secondary data.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Overview of *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner is a 2007 drama film directed by Marc Forster, adapted from Khaled Hosseini's internationally acclaimed 2003 novel of the same title (Hosseini, 2003). Hosseini's novel marked a significant contribution to contemporary literature by providing an intimate portrayal of Afghan culture and society through the eyes of a young boy, Amir, whose personal story unfolds amid Afghanistan's turbulent history. The film faithfully translates this narrative, offering a visual and emotional immersion into the socio-political realities of Afghanistan that are often overlooked or misrepresented in mainstream media.

Set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's dramatic transformations—including the fall of the monarchy in the 1970s, the Soviet invasion in 1979, the subsequent exodus of refugees fleeing to Pakistan and later to the United States, and the oppressive rise of the Taliban regime—the film contextualizes the characters' personal struggles within larger historical and cultural upheavals. These political events deeply impact the lives of Amir, his father Baba, and Hassan, the loyal son of Baba's servant, whose ethnic identity as a Hazara situates him in a marginalized social group subjected to systemic discrimination and violence.

The narrative centers on the complex friendship between Amir and Hassan, exploring themes of loyalty, betrayal, guilt, and redemption. Amir's internal conflict stems from his childhood betrayal of Hassan, an act that haunts him into adulthood and propels his quest for atonement. Hassan's unwavering loyalty and innocence contrast with Amir's moral ambiguities, creating a powerful dynamic that probes deeply into questions of conscience and forgiveness. The guidance of Rahim Khan, Baba's close friend, further shapes Amir's journey towards moral reconciliation and spiritual growth.

Critically, *The Kite Runner* addresses universal moral and spiritual struggles through its exploration of family bonds, friendship, and the human capacity for both cruelty and compassion. The film's emphasis on redemption and the possibility of healing past wrongs resonates with viewers across cultural boundaries, making it a potent medium for moral reflection. From an educational perspective, the film's relevance lies in its

ability to vividly communicate core moral values such as honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, and empathy. The story invites audiences to engage emotionally and intellectually with ethical dilemmas, encouraging critical reflection on personal and social justice. This aligns with the educational goals of fostering character development and moral awareness.

Previous studies on audiovisual media, such as those by Mardhiyah (2013) and Safwan (2007), have demonstrated the effectiveness of films and literary texts in conveying Islamic moral education. Building on these foundations, *The Kite Runner* serves as a compelling alternative medium that integrates rich storytelling with ethical reflection, facilitating learners' internalization of complex moral principles within realistic social contexts. Furthermore, the film's exploration of ethnic tensions and social injustice adds a valuable dimension to moral education, highlighting the importance of tolerance and social harmony in multicultural societies. By portraying the harsh realities faced by marginalized groups alongside personal moral growth, *The Kite Runner* encourages viewers to develop empathy and a deeper understanding of societal ethics.

2. Moral Values toward God

The film *The Kite Runner* effectively depicts several fundamental moral values directed toward God, which form the spiritual core of Islamic moral education. These values include monotheism (tauhid), trust in God (tawakkal), and remembrance of God (dzikrullah). The narrative integrates these principles not only through explicit religious practices but also through the emotional and interpersonal experiences of the characters, thereby illustrating the inseparability of faith and morality. Table 1 below presents key scenes and dialogues where these values are clearly represented, providing concrete examples to support the moral analysis.

No.	Moral Value	Scene/Dialogue (Timestamp)	Description / Analysis Summary
1	Tauhid (Monotheism)	Minute 18:14	Hassan and Ali praying together, demonstrating sincere internalization of monotheism beyond ritual formalities, highlighting reliance on and gratitude to God.
2	Tawakkal (Trust in God)	Minute 23:25	Hassan's hopeful encouragement "InshaAllah" signifies the belief that success depends ultimately on God's will, embodying spiritual resilience and acceptance.
3	Dzikrullah (Remembrance of God)	Minute 1:13:50	Funeral scene with the recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah reflects humility before divine decree and continuous remembrance of God amid life's trials.

The scene at minute 18:14, showing Hassan and Ali praying after performing their obligatory prayers, highlights the core Islamic belief in tauhid—the absolute oneness of God. This act of worship transcends mere ritual, representing a heartfelt connection and surrender to the divine. It emphasizes that moral conduct is rooted in a conscious, sincere relationship with God, which is essential for genuine ethical behavior. At minute 23:25, a brief yet powerful exchange between Hassan and Amir encapsulates the concept of tawakkal, or trust in God. Hassan's optimistic "InshaAllah" underscores the teaching that human effort must be complemented by reliance on God's will. This reflects the cultivation of patience and spiritual strength in the face of uncertainty—key components of moral education aimed at building resilience. Furthermore, the funeral scene of Baba, occurring at minute 1:13:50, conveys dzikrullah—the remembrance of God—through the collective recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah. This moment solemnly reminds viewers of human mortality and the transient nature of life, encouraging humility and acceptance of God's decree. It affirms the importance of maintaining God-consciousness as the foundation of moral integrity.

These depictions align with Islamic ethical teachings, which regard the bond between the individual and God as the basis for all moral values. The film's ability to integrate spiritual dimensions with human experiences offers a profound medium for moral education. By presenting these concepts in a relatable narrative form, *The Kite Runner* facilitates the internalization of abstract theological principles, encouraging learners to reflect on their own faith and moral responsibilities. Consequently, educators can leverage such audiovisual content to make moral education more engaging and impactful. The film exemplifies how storytelling combined with religious values can nurture spiritual awareness, ethical sensitivity, and character development—objectives central to Islamic education.

3. Moral Values toward Self

In *The Kite Runner*, moral values directed toward the self are clearly articulated through characters' attitudes and actions that demonstrate honesty, self-respect (iffah), patience, and accountability. These values are fundamental for personal integrity and character building in Islamic moral education.

Table 2 summarizes key scenes and dialogues where these values manifest:

No.	Moral Value	Scene/Dialogue (Timestamp)	Description / Analysis Summary
1	Honesty (Shiddiq)	Minute 6:51	Hassan's refusal to lie, even when threatened, symbolizes his strong commitment to truthfulness and moral integrity.
2	Self-Respect (Iffah)	Minute 45:10	Amir's struggle with guilt and his eventual acceptance of responsibility reflects the internal process of maintaining self-respect.

3	Patience (Sabr)	Minute 1:10:05	Hassan's enduring hardship and Amir's perseverance during difficult times illustrate the virtue of patience and steadfastness.
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The scene at minute 6:51 depicts Hassan's unwavering honesty when confronted with a morally challenging situation. Despite facing intimidation, Hassan chooses truth over self-preservation, embodying shiddiq—truthfulness—a key attribute in Islamic ethics. This act not only highlights his moral strength but also serves as a model of integrity for viewers. At minute 45:10, Amir's inner conflict and subsequent acknowledgement of his past mistakes reveal his journey toward self-respect or iffah. His willingness to face consequences and seek redemption signals the importance of self-accountability and preserving dignity through moral courage.

Finally, the scene at minute 1:10:05 illustrates patience (sabr) as a virtue exemplified by both Hassan and Amir. Hassan's endurance through social injustice and Amir's persistence in correcting his wrongs emphasize how patience fosters resilience and ethical growth. These examples demonstrate that moral values toward self are portrayed not merely as abstract ideals but as lived experiences that shape character development. By engaging with these narratives, learners can better understand the importance of honesty, self-discipline, and patience in their own lives. As a pedagogical tool, *The Kite Runner* provides rich material for educators to discuss personal moral virtues and encourage students to reflect on their character in light of Islamic teachings. The film's portrayal of complex emotional struggles enhances empathy and motivates moral self-improvement.

4. Moral Values toward Others

In *The Kite Runner*, values directed toward others are expressed through acts of tolerance, compassion, respect, and social justice. These ethical principles are vital in Islamic moral education as they nurture harmonious relationships within families, communities, and society at large.

Table 3 below presents key scenes illustrating these moral values:

No.	Moral Value	Scene/Dialogue (Timestamp)	Description / Analysis Summary
1	Tolerance (Tasamuh)	Minute 33:20	Amir's acceptance of Hassan despite ethnic differences highlights the importance of tolerance and social harmony.
2	Compassion (Rahmah)	Minute 1:20:45	Amir's rescue of Sohrab demonstrates compassion and responsibility toward vulnerable others.

3	Respect (Ihtiram)	Minute 50:10	Baba's respectful behavior toward servants and guests illustrates noble character and social respect.
4	Justice (Adl)	Minute 1:05:00	Confrontation with Assef reveals the struggle for justice and standing against oppression and cruelty.

The scene at minute 33:20 depicts Amir's friendship with Hassan transcending ethnic and social barriers. This portrayal of tasamuh, or tolerance, conveys a powerful message against prejudice and discrimination, encouraging inclusive attitudes vital for social cohesion. At minute 1:20:45, Amir's efforts to rescue Sohrab, Hassan's son, manifest the value of rahmah—compassion and mercy. This act symbolizes ethical responsibility to protect and care for the vulnerable, a cornerstone of Islamic social ethics. Baba's conduct at minute 50:10 exemplifies ihtiram, showing respect toward those of lower social status and guests alike. His behavior models dignity and humility, teaching viewers the importance of respectful interpersonal relationships.

Finally, the confrontation scene with Assef at minute 1:05:00 highlights the principle of adl, or justice. Amir's courage to stand against injustice reflects the moral imperative to oppose oppression and uphold righteousness, reinforcing ethical accountability within society. These examples illustrate that moral values toward others in the film are intricately woven into interpersonal dynamics and social contexts. The film provides an effective platform for moral education, illustrating complex social virtues through compelling storytelling. By engaging with these narratives, learners can appreciate the significance of empathy, respect, and justice in daily life.

D. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that *The Kite Runner* richly embodies Islamic moral educational values across three key domains: values toward God, toward self, and toward others. The film effectively illustrates tauhid (monotheism), tawakkal (trust in God), and dzikrullah (remembrance of God) through intimate and spiritually charged scenes, establishing a strong foundation for moral behavior grounded in faith. In the realm of self, the film portrays critical virtues such as honesty (shiddiq), self-respect (iffah), and patience (sabr), reflecting the internal struggles and growth of the characters. These values highlight the importance of personal integrity and resilience as cornerstones of ethical character.

Regarding social ethics, the film emphasizes tolerance (tasamuh), compassion (rahmah), respect (ihtiram), and justice (adl), showcasing how interpersonal relationships and social responsibilities shape moral conduct. These portrayals encourage viewers to develop empathy and uphold social harmony. By combining complex human experiences with deep spiritual and ethical principles, *The Kite Runner* serves as a compelling audiovisual medium for moral education. Its narrative engages emotions and intellect, making abstract religious values accessible and relatable. Consequently, educators can

utilize the film to enhance character education, foster moral awareness, and support holistic student development. In conclusion, *The Kite Runner* offers valuable insights and educational opportunities that align with Islamic moral teachings and the goals of character education in contemporary contexts. It exemplifies how global cinematic works can enrich local educational practices, providing alternative approaches to nurturing moral and spiritual growth among learners.

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