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A Study of Moral Values in Modern Indonesian Poetry and Its Relevance for Character Education

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the moral values contained in modern Indonesian poetry and to describe their relevance to character education. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with library research and literature study methods. The data sources consisted of modern Indonesian poetry texts, scholarly books, journal articles, and relevant educational documents discussing moral values, literary learning, and character education. Data were collected through careful reading, note-taking, classification, and interpretation of textual elements that represent moral meanings. The analysis was carried out using descriptive-interpretative techniques by identifying moral values in poetic expressions and relating them to the principles of character education. The findings indicate that modern Indonesian poetry contains various moral values, including religiosity, honesty, responsibility, empathy, social concern, compassion, perseverance, courage, self-awareness, justice, and respect for others. These values are expressed through diction, imagery, symbols, metaphors, themes, and the emotional experiences of the poetic speaker. The study also reveals that poetry can function as a reflective medium that enables readers, especially students, to understand moral issues in a deeper and more personal way. In the context of education, modern Indonesian poetry is relevant for strengthening character education because it integrates cognitive, affective, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions. Poetry learning can encourage students to appreciate literary works while developing moral sensitivity, emotional maturity, and social awareness. Therefore, modern Indonesian poetry should not only be positioned as an object of literary appreciation, but also as a meaningful educational resource for character formation.

Keywords: moral values; modern Indonesian poetry; character education; literature study; library research;



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1. Introduction

Education has an important role in shaping human beings who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have strong personalities, morals, and character. The purpose of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 emphasizes that education is directed to develop the potential of students to become human beings who have faith, fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). The mandate shows that character education is an integral part of the educational process, not just a complement to learning activities. In the current educational context, character strengthening is also in line with the Pancasila Student Profile which emphasizes six main dimensions, namely faith and fear of God Almighty as well as noble character, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Ministry of Education & Culture, 2020)

One of the media that can be used to support character education is literary works. Literature has the ability to present the experience of human life through beautiful, imaginative, and reflective language. Through literary works, readers can understand various human issues, such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, social concern, courage, justice, religiosity, and empathy. Among the various forms of literary works, poetry has the distinction of conveying inner experiences and moral ideas in a dense, symbolic, and meaningful manner. Therefore, modern Indonesian poetry can be seen as one of the potential media to instill moral values and support the formation of students' character.

Modern Indonesian poetry not only functions as an aesthetic work, but also as a means of reflection on the value of life. The concise and intense language of poetry allows the reader to interpret meaning deeply and connect it to personal and social experiences. In literary learning, poetry can be used to train sense of taste, expand understanding of human values, and foster moral awareness. This is in line with the view that literary learning can be directed to strengthen students' character through understanding the life values contained in literary texts (Ananda et al., 2024). Thus, the study of moral values in modern Indonesian poetry is important because it can show the contribution of literature in building the character of readers.

Several previous studies have shown that poetry contains moral values and character education values that are relevant to learning. Saputri et al. (2021) examined language style and moral values in the collection of poems *Ayat-Ayat Api* by Sapardi Djoko Damono as literary teaching materials in high school. The study found that Sapardi's poems contain moral values and have relevance as a literature teaching material in high school. This study shows that poetry can be used not only to understand aesthetic elements, but also to internalize moral values in literary learning (Saputri et al., 2021).



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Another study was conducted by Rasmi et al. (2023) who examined the stylistics and values of character education in the book of poetry *Amor Fati* by Wayan Jengki Sunarta. The results of the study show that *Amor Fati*'s poetry contains the value of character education, especially the value of hard work and curiosity. The research also confirms that poetry can be used as a literary teaching material if the values contained in it are in accordance with learning needs (Rasmi et al., 2023). In addition, Putri et al. (2024) examined the stylistics and moral values in the essay poem *Mata Luka Sengkon Karta* by Peri Sandi Huizche. The research shows that the essay poem contains moral values and is relevant to be used as teaching material in learning the linguistic elements of poetry texts in high school (Putri et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Ananda et al. (2024) examine the values of education in Angga Wijaya's poems with a hermeneutic approach. The research shows that Angga Wijaya's poems contain the values of self-awareness, spirituality, acceptance, appreciation, and compassion that are relevant to character formation. These findings strengthen the view that contemporary Indonesian poetry has an important role as a medium for character education (Ananda et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Juhera et al. (2025) examined the value of character education in the poem "You Are Not Special" by Natasha Rizky. The study concluded that poetry has the potential to have a positive impact on readers, especially in strengthening character education (Juhera et al., 2025).

Based on these previous studies, it can be seen that the study of moral values and character education in poetry has received attention from researchers. However, most research still focuses on a single work, a poet, or a specific collection of poems. In addition, some studies focus more on stylistic aspects, poetry structure, or the feasibility of poetry as a teaching material. Thus, there is still a research gap in the form of the need for studies that emphasize more on the mapping of moral values in modern Indonesian poetry and its relationship with character education in a more conceptual and comprehensive manner. This research gap is an important basis for the implementation of this research.

This research is urgent because literary learning should not only develop students' cognitive abilities but also strengthen their character amid moral challenges such as declining social concern, weak responsibility, lack of empathy, and individualism. Modern Indonesian poetry can serve as a reflective medium that helps students understand life values through aesthetic and emotional experiences. The novelty of this study lies in its broader effort to connect moral values in modern Indonesian poetry with character education, positioning poetry not only as an object of literary analysis but also as an educational medium for understanding, appreciating, and internalizing moral values.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Moral Values in Literary Works

Moral values are a set of teachings, principles, or views about good and bad that guide humans in behaving and acting. In literary works, moral values are not always



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conveyed directly, but can be present through conflicts, inner experiences, diction choices, symbols, atmospheres, and messages contained in the text. Literature is a space for the representation of human life because in it there are various human problems, such as honesty, responsibility, social concern, compassion, religiosity, courage, justice, and self-awareness.

Poetry as a form of literary work has a special ability to convey moral values. The dense, imaginative, symbolic, and reflective language of poetry allows poets to convey life experiences in depth. The moral value in poetry is not only evident through the content or theme, but also through the way the poet builds the atmosphere, presents imagery, and expresses inner experiences. Therefore, readers need to interpret critically in order to understand the moral values contained in poetry.

2.2 Modern Indonesian Poetry as a Media for Conveying the Value of Life

Modern Indonesian poetry is a form of poetry that develops with freedom of expression, both in terms of form, theme, and use of language. Unlike old poetry that tends to be bound by certain rules, modern poetry is more open in conveying ideas, feelings, social criticism, spiritual experiences, and reflections on humanity. This freedom makes modern poetry an effective medium to express life's problems broadly and deeply.

In the context of moral studies, modern Indonesian poetry can be understood as a medium that contains the values of life. Modern poetry often presents human experiences related to human relationships with God, oneself, fellow humans, the environment, and society. Through poetry, readers can understand moral issues more subtly because these values do not exist as direct advice, but as an aesthetic experience that invites the reader to think and reflect. Thus, modern Indonesian poetry can be used as a means of moral reflection for readers, especially students.

2.3 Character Education

Character education is the process of forming attitudes, personalities, and behaviors of students so that they have strong moral values in personal and social lives. Character education is not only related to the knowledge of right and wrong, but also includes the ability to live, choose, and apply good values in daily life. In the context of national education, character formation is an important part of the educational goals because students are expected to be not only academically intelligent, but also have noble character, responsibility, independence, creativity, and care for others.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) explained that the Pancasila Student Profile contains six main dimensions, namely faith and fear of God Almighty as well as noble character, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. These dimensions are closely related to moral values that can be found in literary works. Therefore, literary learning, including poetry learning, can be directed to support character education through reading, interpreting, discussing, and reflecting on life values in literary texts.



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2.4 The Relevance of Modern Indonesian Poetry for Character Education

Modern Indonesian poetry has relevance to character education because it is able to present moral experiences aesthetically and reflectively. Through poetry, students can be invited to understand the values of life, such as honesty, responsibility, religiosity, empathy, social care, hard work, courage, compassion, and appreciation for others. These values can help students build moral awareness and social sensitivity.

Poetry learning that is oriented towards character education not only emphasizes the analysis of intrinsic elements, such as themes, diction, imagery, language style, and mandate, but also directs students to find the moral meaning contained in the text. Thus, poetry can be a learning medium that connects cognitive, affective, and moral aspects. Students not only understand the structure of poetry, but also learn to relate the message of poetry to life experiences and daily behaviors.

3. Research Method

3.1 Types and Research Approaches

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research and literature study method. The qualitative approach is used because this research seeks to understand, interpret, and describe the meaning of moral values contained in modern Indonesian poetry and its relevance to character education. Creswell & Poth (2018) explain that qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning that emerges from a social, cultural, or humanitarian phenomenon in depth. In the context of this study, the phenomenon studied is the moral value in the text of poetry and its relationship with the formation of students' character.

This research also includes literature research because the main data is obtained from various written sources, both in the form of literary works and relevant scientific references. Zed (2014) stated that literature research is research that relies on searching, reading, recording, and processing library materials as the main source of research. Therefore, this study does not use field data, but relies on modern Indonesian poetry texts and scientific literature as the main study material.

3.2 Research Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is in the form of modern Indonesian poems that contain moral values and have relevance to character education. The poems were chosen based on their relationship with moral values, such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, social concern, compassion, hard work, courage, justice, and self-awareness.

Secondary data sources are books, journal articles, previous research results, education policy documents, and other scientific references that support discussions on moral values, modern Indonesian poetry, and character education. Secondary literature



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is used to strengthen theoretical foundations, compare research findings, and explain the relevance of moral values in poetry to character education. The use of written sources is in accordance with the character of literature research which makes library materials the main basis for data collection and analysis (Zed, 2014).

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through reading, recording, and data classification techniques. Reading techniques are carried out by carefully reading modern Indonesian poems that are the object of study. The reading is carried out repeatedly to understand the literal, symbolic, and contextual meanings contained in the lines of the poem. Through this process, the researcher seeks to find parts of the text that contain moral value.

The note-taking technique is carried out by recording words, phrases, lines, verses, or entire poems that show the existence of moral values. The data that has been recorded is then classified based on the category of moral values, such as religious values, honesty, responsibility, social concern, compassion, courage, hard work, justice, and self-awareness. In addition, the researcher also noted supporting literature related to moral value theory, poetry theory, and character education concepts. This step is carried out so that the data obtained can be analyzed systematically and in accordance with the focus of the research.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis with a qualitative analysis model. Content analysis is used because the object of research is in the form of a poem text that needs to be interpreted based on the meaning, message, and value contained in it. Through content analysis, the researcher identifies the elements of the text that represent moral values, then relates them to the concept of character education.

The stages of data analysis in this study refer to the Miles et al. (2014) model which includes three main stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, researchers select, simplify, and focus data in the form of arrays or poem verses that contain moral values. At the data presentation stage, the data is compiled in the form of a descriptive description based on the category of moral values and their relevance to character education. At the stage of drawing conclusions and verification, the researcher interprets the meaning of the data thoroughly to obtain conclusions about the form of moral values in modern Indonesian poetry and its contribution to character education.

The analysis was carried out interpretively by paying attention to the relationship between the text of the poem, the context of moral values, and the needs of character education. Each data found is not only explained based on textual meaning, but also associated with character values that can be developed in learning. Thus, the analysis in



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this study does not stop at the identification of moral values, but is also directed to explain how these values can contribute to the formation of students' character.

3.5 Research Procedure

The research procedure is carried out through several steps. First, the researcher determines the focus of the study, namely moral values in modern Indonesian poetry and its relevance to character education. Second, the researcher collected modern Indonesian poetry and scientific literature that was in accordance with the focus of the research. Third, researchers read and examine the text of the poem to find data that contains moral value. Fourth, the researcher classifies the data based on the type of moral values that appear in the poem. Fifth, the researcher analyzed the data by connecting moral values in poetry with the concept of character education. Sixth, the researcher draws conclusions based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out.

With this procedure, this research is expected to be able to produce a systematic, objective, and scientifically accountable study. The use of qualitative approaches, literature research, and literature studies is considered appropriate because this research aims to understand the meaning of moral values in poetry texts and explain their relevance for character education in depth.

4. Result

4.1 Religious and Spiritual Moral Values

The analysis shows that religious and spiritual values are among the important moral values found in modern Indonesian poetry. These values are reflected through poetic expressions that present human awareness of God, gratitude, humility, prayer, repentance, and recognition of human limitations. In modern Indonesian poetry, religiosity is not always expressed directly through religious terminology. It often appears through symbols of nature, silence, light, darkness, rain, distance, and inner contemplation. These poetic images create a reflective atmosphere that encourages readers to think about the relationship between human beings and divine power.

Religious and spiritual values in poetry also appear through the speaker's awareness of life, death, suffering, and hope. Such awareness shows that poetry can become a medium for moral and spiritual reflection. The poetic speaker often experiences inner conflict, but that conflict leads to a deeper understanding of patience, sincerity, and surrender. Therefore, modern Indonesian poetry can be understood as a literary space that presents religiosity in an aesthetic and humanistic form.

4.2 Honesty, Responsibility, and Self-Control

The second finding shows that modern Indonesian poetry contains moral values related to honesty, responsibility, and self-control. These values are often presented through the speaker's inner struggle in facing truth, guilt, regret, or moral choices.



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Honesty is reflected in the courage to recognize reality and accept personal weaknesses. Responsibility appears in the awareness that every action has consequences, while self-control is represented through the ability to restrain anger, ego, desire, or selfishness.

In many poems, these values are not delivered as direct advice. Instead, they are presented through symbolic situations and emotional experiences. This indirect expression allows readers to interpret moral meaning independently. As a result, poetry does not merely teach morality in a didactic way, but invites readers to experience moral reflection through language, imagery, and emotion.

4.3 Empathy, Social Concern, and Humanity

The analysis also reveals the presence of empathy, social concern, and humanity in modern Indonesian poetry. Many poems raise social issues such as poverty, injustice, loneliness, oppression, violence, and marginalization. Through these themes, poetry represents human suffering and invites readers to develop sensitivity toward the lives of others. The poetic voice often becomes a medium to express concern for individuals or groups who experience social pressure.

These values show that modern Indonesian poetry is closely connected to social reality. Poetry does not only speak about private feelings, but also records collective experiences and social problems. The presence of empathy and humanity in poetry indicates that literary works can encourage readers to understand different human conditions. Therefore, poetry plays an important role in developing moral awareness that is oriented toward social responsibility.

4.4 Perseverance, Courage, and Hope

Another finding indicates that modern Indonesian poetry contains values of perseverance, courage, and hope. These values are commonly represented through images of struggle, wounds, darkness, journey, waiting, and renewal. The poetic speaker may face suffering, loss, uncertainty, or failure, yet the poem often presents an attitude of endurance. This shows that poetry can become a medium for expressing resilience in facing life's difficulties.

Courage in modern Indonesian poetry is not always presented as physical bravery. It may appear as the courage to accept reality, speak the truth, endure suffering, and continue living despite hardship. Hope is also an important moral value because it gives meaning to struggle. Through these values, poetry teaches that human beings can grow through difficult experiences and find strength in moments of weakness.

4.5 Love, Compassion, and Respect for Others

The findings further show that modern Indonesian poetry expresses values of love, compassion, and respect for others. Love in poetry is not limited to romantic love, but also includes love for family, humanity, nature, homeland, and life. Compassion is reflected in the poetic speaker's sensitivity toward pain, longing, memory, and suffering.



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Meanwhile, respect for others appears through the recognition of human dignity and acceptance of differences.

These values are conveyed through emotional and symbolic language that touches the reader's affective dimension. Poetry enables readers to understand feelings that are often difficult to express in ordinary language. Therefore, modern Indonesian poetry becomes a medium that strengthens emotional sensitivity and interpersonal awareness. The presence of love and compassion in poetry confirms that moral values are closely related to human relationships.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Meaning of Moral Values in Modern Indonesian Poetry

The findings show that modern Indonesian poetry contains various moral values that are closely related to human life. Religious awareness, honesty, responsibility, empathy, perseverance, love, and respect for others are not presented as abstract concepts, but as lived experiences expressed through poetic language. This indicates that poetry has the ability to transform moral ideas into aesthetic experience. Readers do not only receive moral messages, but also feel, interpret, and reflect on them.

The moral values in modern Indonesian poetry are generally expressed indirectly. Symbols, metaphors, imagery, and tone become important elements in presenting moral meaning. This indirectness makes poetry different from ordinary moral instruction. Instead of commanding readers to behave in a certain way, poetry invites them to think, feel, and evaluate human experiences. Therefore, moral values in poetry function as reflective values that encourage deeper personal interpretation.

5.2 Relevance to Character Education

The moral values found in modern Indonesian poetry have strong relevance to character education. Values such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, empathy, courage, and compassion are in line with the goal of education, which is to form learners who are intellectually capable, morally responsible, emotionally mature, and socially aware. Poetry can support this goal because it combines cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions in one learning experience.

In character education, students need learning materials that do not only provide information, but also encourage reflection. Modern Indonesian poetry can fulfill this need because it presents moral issues through meaningful language and emotional experience. By reading poetry, students can learn to understand themselves, respect others, respond to social problems, and reflect on moral choices. Thus, poetry can become an effective medium for strengthening character education in schools.



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5.3 Implications for Literature Learning

The findings imply that poetry learning should not be limited to the identification of intrinsic elements, diction, imagery, rhyme, or figurative language. Although these elements are important, poetry learning should also guide students to discover moral values and relate them to real-life experiences. This approach can make literature learning more meaningful because students are encouraged to connect textual analysis with ethical reflection.

Teachers can use modern Indonesian poetry as teaching material by asking students to identify moral values, discuss the meaning of selected lines, and relate the values to daily life. Students may also be encouraged to write reflective responses or compose poems inspired by moral issues. Through such activities, poetry learning becomes more than literary appreciation. It becomes a process of developing sensitivity, empathy, responsibility, and moral awareness.

5.4 The Contribution of Poetry to Moral and Emotional Development

Modern Indonesian poetry contributes to moral and emotional development because it allows readers to experience human problems through imagination. When students read poems about suffering, hope, love, or injustice, they are invited to enter emotional situations beyond their own experiences. This process can develop empathy and moral imagination. Students learn to understand that every human being has feelings, struggles, and dignity.

In addition, poetry can help students develop emotional maturity. The language of poetry often expresses complex feelings such as sadness, longing, fear, gratitude, regret, and hope. By interpreting these feelings, students can better understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. This emotional understanding is important in character education because moral behavior is closely related to empathy, self-control, and sensitivity toward others.

5.5 Position of the Study

This study strengthens the view that modern Indonesian poetry is not only an aesthetic object, but also a source of moral learning. The analysis shows that poetry contains values that are relevant to character education and can be used as reflective material in literature learning. Therefore, the study positions poetry as a cultural and educational text that contributes to the formation of students' moral awareness.

The position of this study also lies in its broader focus on moral values in modern Indonesian poetry and their relevance to character education. Previous studies often focused on one poem, one poet, or one poetry collection. This study seeks to provide a more general understanding of how modern Indonesian poetry can be interpreted as a source of moral values. Thus, the findings may support the development of literature learning that is more humanistic, reflective, and character-oriented.



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6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that modern Indonesian poetry contains a variety of moral values that are relevant to character education, including religiosity, honesty, responsibility, social concern, empathy, compassion, courage, hard work, self-awareness, and respect for others. These values are not always conveyed directly, but are present through diction, symbols, imagery, atmosphere, and inner experiences that the poet constructs. Modern Indonesian poetry can be a reflective medium that helps readers, especially students, understand life's problems more deeply and internalize the values of kindness in daily behavior. Thus, poetry learning not only serves to increase literary appreciation, but also plays a role in forming individuals who have character, empathy, responsibility, and moral sensitivity to oneself, others, the environment, and social life.

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