

Reframing Qur'anic Discussions of Nifāq for Character Education: Toward a Value-Contrast Pedagogical Model

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ABSTRACT

Studies of *nifāq* (hypocrisy) in the Qur'an have largely remained within theological and descriptive discussions, with limited attention to translating Qur'anic insights into contemporary character-education theory. This study addresses that gap by examining how Qur'anic portrayals of hypocrisy can inform an educational framework for character formation. Using a qualitative library-based thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) approach, the study analyzes a selected thematic corpus of *nifāq*-related verses, identified through lexical and thematic searches using Qur'anic concordances, classical thematic indices, and exegetical judgment. The corpus focuses primarily on passages in Sūrah al-Baqarah, al-Nisā', al-Tawbah, and al-Munāfiqūn. 10 selected verses are interpreted through comparative analysis of classical and modern tafsīr (al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Sayyid Qutb, and M. Quraish Shihab) and recent scholarship (2020–2025). The analysis identifies a coherent taxonomy of hypocritical characteristics, including falsehood, arrogance, duplicity, mockery, corruption, and false oaths, as well as behaviors that obstruct obedience, encourage disbelief, and distort *amr ma'rūf nahy munkar*. These traits are associated with moral, social, spiritual, and religious consequences, reinforced by graduated Qur'anic warnings (*wa'id*). Based on these findings, the study proposes a value-contrast model of character education in which the Qur'an's juxtaposition of believers and hypocrites functions as a pedagogical strategy for cultivating honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sincerity (*ikhhlās*), consistency (*istiqlāmah*), and social responsibility. The study is limited to a selected thematic corpus and does not examine every Qur'anic passage related to hypocrisy, leaving broader corpus-based analysis for future research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tensions between professed values and actual behavior increasingly characterize contemporary moral life. Public discourse frequently expresses concern regarding

corruption, dishonesty, academic misconduct, and ethical violations across social institutions, including educational environments. However, such discrepancies should not be immediately equated with the Qur'anic concept of *nifāq*. In Qur'anic terminology, *nifāq* represents a specific theological and moral category that primarily concerns the concealment of disbelief beneath an appearance of faith (*nifāq i'tiqādī*). At the same time, Islamic scholarship also recognizes *nifāq 'amalī* as behavioral traits associated with hypocrisy, such as dishonesty, betrayal of trust, and inconsistency between speech and action. Therefore, contemporary phenomena such as plagiarism, performative religiosity, or unethical conduct are better understood as behavioral inconsistencies or traits structurally resembling hypocrisy rather than definitive evidence that individuals are *munāfiqūn*. The distinction is essential because ultimate judgment of inner belief belongs only to God, and educational contexts should encourage self-examination (*muḥāsabah*) rather than moral labeling of students, educators, or communities [1]. This phenomenon closely corresponds to the Qur'anic concept of *nifāq* (hypocrisy), which the Qur'an portrays not simply as personal inconsistency but as a profound moral and spiritual disorder threatening both individual faith and collective social cohesion.

The Qur'an addresses hypocrisy with exceptional seriousness, portraying the *munāfiqūn* as possessing a diseased heart (*marad al-qalb*) (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2:10) and receiving severe eschatological warnings (Q.S. al-Nisā'/4:145). Classical exegetes interpret these passages as emphasizing the destructive consequences of hidden moral corruption and the erosion of sincerity, trust, and communal integrity [2]. explains that Q.S. al-Baqarah/2:8–20 depicts hypocrisy as an internal disorder that damages both the relationship between humans and God and the social foundations of trust. Qurani [3] associates hypocrisy with fragile faith unable to sustain genuine obedience. Nur [4] highlights its danger because falsehood is concealed beneath external religious appearance. Similarly, Carré [5] argues that Qur'anic criticism of hypocrisy challenges religious formalism that lacks sincere transformation.

Growing scholarship demonstrates that *nifāq* remains significant within Qur'anic studies and Islamic education. Existing studies, however, have developed through several partially disconnected approaches. The first focuses on Islamic moral education. Nahar [6] argues that cultivating sincerity (*ikhlas*) and integrity from childhood may reduce students' tendencies toward dishonesty. Likewise, Solihin [7] emphasizes moral habituation and character development as central elements of Islamic education. Although these studies provide educational insights, they generally discuss virtues normatively without reconstructing the Qur'an's conceptual structure of hypocrisy as a pedagogical framework.

A second body of research examines *nifāq* through historical and socio-political perspectives. Umbaru [8] analyzes the dynamics of hypocrisy in Madinah and the Prophet's responses toward internal opposition, while Farman and Yucel [9] examine the Prophet's diplomatic management of hypocritical groups during the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. These studies enrich historical understanding but primarily describe specific contexts rather than extracting transferable educational principles. A third approach investigates psychological and ethical dimensions. Mehrjerdi [10] interprets descriptions of the *munāfiqūn* through socio-moral psychology, identifying arrogance, self-interest, insecurity, and moral

inconsistency as factors associated with hypocritical tendencies. Similarly, Harahap et al. [11] connect hypocrisy-related traits with moral cognition and ethical decision-making. Recent bibliometric evidence further illustrates the current state of research on Islamic character education. Kistoro et al. [12] demonstrate, through a comprehensive bibliometric review, rapid growth in publications on Islamic character education over the last decade. Nevertheless, these studies provide limited integration between Qur'anic thematic interpretation and the development of a character-education model. Recent bibliometric studies on Islamic character education also indicate that although research productivity has increased significantly, theoretical integration among Qur'anic interpretation, educational philosophy, and the construction of pedagogical models remains limited.

Many studies emphasize curriculum implementation, moral values, or educational strategies without systematically deriving conceptual frameworks from Qur'anic thematic structures. Based on these limitations, four research gaps remain. First, the theoretical gap concerns the lack of an integrated framework that explains how Qur'anic depictions of hypocrisy function as moral pedagogy beyond mere theological condemnation. Second, the conceptual gap relates to the limited exploration of value contrast, despite the Qur'an's frequent juxtaposition between believers (*mu'minūn*) and hypocritical characteristics as contrasting moral representations. Third, the methodological gap concerns the limited application of systematic thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) to reconstruct Qur'anic terminology, behavioral patterns, rhetorical structures, and educational implications related to *nifāq*. Fourth, the practical gap concerns the dominant reliance on positive role models in character education, while insufficient attention has been given to how negative moral examples can encourage reflection, discernment, and self-correction.

Accordingly, this study proposes a Qur'an-based Value-Contrast Character Education Model derived from thematic analysis of *nifāq*-related verses. The study does not conceptualize hypocrisy as a tool for identifying or judging individuals; rather, it understands Qur'anic warnings about hypocrisy as a reflective framework for recognizing moral vulnerabilities within oneself. Through the contrast between virtuous and hypocritical characteristics, the Qur'an provides a pedagogical mechanism for developing moral awareness, ethical reasoning, and continuous self-improvement. The study addresses two questions: how can the Qur'anic thematic treatment of *nifāq*, including terminology, characteristics, behavioral patterns, and rhetorical presentation, be reconstructed into a pedagogically meaningful taxonomy; and how can the Qur'an's value contrast between belief and hypocrisy inform a conceptual model for contemporary Islamic character education. This study is limited to conceptual and exegetical analysis. It develops the theoretical architecture of the proposed model without empirically testing its effectiveness in educational settings. The analysis focuses on Qur'anic passages where *nifāq* and related lexical forms constitute the primary theme, while related concepts such as *kufr* and *fisq* are discussed only to clarify conceptual boundaries. By integrating thematic Qur'anic interpretation with character-education theory, this study contributes a framework that promotes moral reflection, self-evaluation, and ethical development rather than external judgment.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design using the thematic exegesis (tafsīr mawḍūʿī) method as formulated by Hidayatulloh et al. [13]. Thematic exegesis was chosen over verse-by-verse (taḥlīlī) exegesis because the research questions require a synthesized, cross-referenced account of nifāq's terminology, characteristics, and consequences an account that inherently spans multiple sūrahs and cannot be adequately reconstructed by reading any single sūrah in isolation. Primary data consist of Qur'anic verses in which nifāq or its lexical derivatives (nafaqa, yunāfiqū, munāfiqūn, nifāqan) are the grammatical or thematic subject. Verses addressing closely related but conceptually distinct categories (kufr, fisq) were included only where classical exegetes explicitly link them to the discussion of nifāq (e.g., Q.S. al-Tawbah/9:67, which identifies the munāfiqūn as fāsiqūn). Applying this criterion across the muṣḥaf yielded a thematic corpus concentrated in four sūrahs, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Corpus of Qur'anic Verses on Nifāq Analyzed in This Study

Sūrah	Representative verses	Primary sub-theme
Al-Baqarah (2)	8–10, 13–14	Terminology; disease of the heart; arrogance; duplicity
Al-Nisā' (4)	61, 89, 142–143, 145	Obstruction of obedience; incitement to disbelief; ritual insincerity; eschatological threat
Al-Tawbah (9)	67, 75–80, 84	Inversion of amar ma'rūf nahī munkar; broken promise; mockery; exclusion from forgiveness
Al-Munāfiqūn (63)	1–3	Composite portrait; false oaths as a shield; ideological falsehood

These verses were cross-read against classical exegetical works Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm (2004), al-Qurṭubī's al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān (2006), al-Ṭabarī's Jāmi' al-Bayān (2000), and Sayyid Quṭb's Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān (1998) alongside a modern Indonesian-language reference [4] to triangulate classical and contemporary interpretive perspectives across different exegetical schools (riwāyah-oriented, legal-thematic, and modern socio-literary). Secondary data comprise peer-reviewed scholarship on nifāq, character education, and moral pedagogy published between 2020 and 2025, incorporated to situate the exegetical findings within current academic discourse and to test the study's conceptual contribution against the existing literature. Data analysis followed five stages, mapped directly onto [14] methodological sequence for tafsīr mawḍūʿī: (1) theme determination selecting nifāq as the unit of thematic analysis; (2) verse collection tracing all Makkiyyah and Madaniyyah verses relevant to the theme according to the inclusion criteria above; (3) contextual ordering arranging verse according to revelation context (asbāb al-nuzūl) and internal Qur'anic cross-reference (tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān); (4) exegetical synthesis reading the ordered verses against the classical and modern tafsīr works to extract a consolidated taxonomy of traits, strategic behaviors, and consequences; and (5) conceptual

translation reframing the resulting taxonomy against character-education theory [15] to derive the value-contrast pedagogical model presented. This fifth stage constitutes the study's principal methodological departure from purely exegetical or purely historical treatments of *nifāq*: it treats the exegetical taxonomy not as an endpoint but as raw material for pedagogical model-building.

Given the interpretive nature of library-based qualitative research, trustworthiness was addressed through three strategies analogous to credibility and dependability criteria in qualitative inquiry: (1) source triangulation, cross-reading every verse against at least three exegetical works spanning classical *riwāyah*-based, classical *ra'y*-based, and modern interpretive traditions, so that no single exegete's reading determines the resulting taxonomy; (2) auditability, maintaining a documented thematic trail from verse selection through exegetical synthesis to conceptual translation, allowing each claim in Section 4 to be traced back to a specific verse and exegetical source; and (3) expert consultation, in which the exegetical classification and its pedagogical translation were reviewed against the assessment of the doctoral supervisory team during the dissertation process from which this study is derived, functioning as an analog to peer debriefing.

7 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1 Thematic Reconstruction of the Qur'anic Terminology of *Nifāq*

The thematic analysis of the selected Qur'anic corpus indicates that *nifāq* is presented not merely as a lexical designation for hypocrisy but as a complex moral and theological category concerning the relationship between outward expression and inner reality. This conclusion is derived through thematic reconstruction rather than chronological sequencing. Although the analyzed passages are discussed primarily from the canonical arrangement of the Qur'an, this order should not be interpreted as a linear developmental progression of the concept of *nifāq*. Likewise, differences in revelation context among Madinan passages require careful consideration. Therefore, this study employs *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* to facilitate a consolidated comparison of multiple sūrahs and to identify recurring conceptual patterns, terminology, characteristics, and moral implications related to *nifāq*.

The linguistic foundation of *nifāq* supports this thematic reconstruction. Classical Arabic lexicographers derive the term from the root *naḥaqa* (نَفَقَ), originally referring to a tunnel or burrow with multiple openings, symbolizing concealed movement between visible and hidden spaces [16], [17]. Similarly, *nifāq*, through the metaphor of entering through one opening and leaving through another, is defined by Key [18] as the outward display of faith accompanied by concealed rejection. Cornell [19] further observes that derivatives of the root (*munāfiq*, *yunāfiqu*, and *nifāq*) preserve the semantic relationship between external appearance and internal reality. However, thematic analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic usage expands this lexical meaning into a broader framework involving spiritual concealment, moral inconsistency, and destructive social behavior. In Q.S. al-Baqarah (2):8–10, *nifāq* is associated with *marāḍ al-qalb* (disease of the heart), indicating an internal spiritual condition rather than merely a verbal act of deception. Q.S. al-Nisā' (4):142–143 highlights performative worship and inconsistency in religious commitment, while Q.S. al-

Tawbah (9):67 describes hypocritical characteristics involving the promotion of wrongdoing and obstruction of virtue.

Meanwhile, Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn (63):1–3 emphasizes deceptive speech and false oaths as strategies for concealing internal opposition. These passages, when examined together, reveal interconnected dimensions of nifāq without implying that the concept emerged through a chronological sequence. Comparative analysis of classical and contemporary tafsīr reveals both convergence and interpretive differences. Ibn Kathīr generally emphasizes *nifāq i' tiqādī*, describing hypocrites primarily as those who conceal disbelief while displaying Islam outwardly. Al-Ṭabarī similarly focuses on the contradiction between internal conviction and external declaration but provides greater attention to the historical circumstances surrounding specific verses. Al-Qurṭubī expands the discussion by emphasizing both doctrinal hypocrisy and behavioral manifestations that weaken moral commitment. Sayyid Quṭb interprets nifāq more broadly as an ideological and social phenomenon that threatens the integrity of the Muslim community, while M. Quraish Shihab highlights its ethical relevance for contemporary Muslim life.

These differences demonstrate that classical exegetes do not approach nifāq from an identical perspective. Some emphasize theological hypocrisy (*nifāq i' tiqādī*), while others give greater attention to behavioral tendencies (*nifāq 'amalī*). They also differ regarding whether Qur'anic warnings should be understood primarily within the Madinan historical context or as continuing moral guidance applicable to later communities. Such diversity strengthens rather than weakens the thematic analysis, as it reveals multiple interpretive dimensions that can inform character education. From the perspective of character education, the findings suggest that Qur'anic treatment of nifāq provides a framework for moral reflection rather than a mechanism for labeling individuals. The contrast between sincere belief and hypocritical tendencies enables learners to examine the alignment between intention, speech, and action. Accordingly, values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *istiqāmah* (consistency) can be understood as responses to the moral fragmentation represented by hypocrisy. This thematic reconstruction provides the conceptual foundation for the Value-Contrast Character Education Model by demonstrating how Qur'anic negative moral representations function as reflective tools for self-evaluation, ethical awareness, and continuous character development.

3.1.2 Characteristics and Behavioral Strategies of the Munāfiqūn

The thematic reconstruction of the selected Qur'anic corpus identifies several recurring characteristics and behavioral patterns associated with the munāfiqūn. These characteristics include falsehood (*kadhib*), moral corruption (*fasād*), arrogance (*kibr*), inconsistency between outward expression and inner disposition, mockery toward believers, and deceptive oath-taking. These findings are derived from a thematic comparison of relevant Qur'anic passages rather than from a chronological assumption about the development of the concept. Although the passages appear in different locations within the canonical arrangement of the Qur'an and emerged in varying historical contexts of revelation, the thematic method facilitates a consolidated comparison across multiple sūrahs to identify recurring moral patterns related to nifāq.

One significant example appears in Q.S. al-Tawbah (9):75–77, where a broken commitment to promised charity is linked to the establishment of hypocrisy in the heart. The verse does not suggest that every broken promise automatically constitutes *nifāq*; rather, it illustrates how repeated moral failure, refusal to fulfill commitments, and rejection of accountability may become characteristics structurally resembling hypocritical tendencies. Cornell [19] interprets this passage as demonstrating the relationship between moral weakness and the gradual hardening of the heart. Thus, breach of promise (*ingkar janji*) and betrayal of trust (*khiyānat al-amānah*) should be understood as ethical indicators within the Qur’anic discussion of hypocrisy rather than as automatic judgments upon individuals. Beyond individual characteristics, the Qur’an also describes several behavioral strategies through which hypocrisy affects communal life. These include resistance toward obedience to God and the Messenger (Q.S. al-Nisā’/4:61), attempts to create confusion regarding religious commitment, and the inversion of moral responsibility through “commanding wrong and forbidding right” (Q.S. al-Tawbah/9:67). The latter represents a significant dimension of Qur’anic criticism because hypocrisy is portrayed not merely as personal inconsistency but as a pattern that can undermine collective moral values. However, this description should be interpreted within the Qur’anic portrayal of hypocritical tendencies and not as a basis for identifying specific contemporary individuals as *munāfiqūn*.

Exegetical analysis reveals both shared interpretations and important differences among scholars. Ibn Kathīr primarily emphasizes *nifāq i ‘tiqādī*, interpreting the *munāfiqūn* as those who conceal disbelief while outwardly presenting themselves as believers. Al-Ṭabarī similarly focuses on concealed rejection but gives greater attention to the historical circumstances surrounding the verses and the behavior of specific groups in Madinah. In contrast, al-Qurṭubī discusses both doctrinal hypocrisy and behavioral manifestations, suggesting that certain hypocritical qualities may appear as moral diseases even among those who maintain outward faith. Kafrawi [20] expands the discussion by emphasizing the ideological and social dimensions of hypocrisy, while Taufiq [21] highlights its continuing ethical relevance in contemporary Muslim societies. These exegetical differences also appear in discussions regarding the causes of hypocrisy and the scope of Qur’anic warnings. Some commentators emphasize disbelief hidden beneath religious appearance, while others stress psychological and moral weaknesses such as insincerity, self-interest, and lack of moral consistency. Likewise, interpretations differ over whether severe warnings against the *munāfiqūn* should be understood primarily in the historical context of Madinah or as broader moral guidance for later communities. Recognizing these differences prevents an overly simplistic interpretation of *nifāq* and allows the concept to function as a framework for ethical ¹²lection.

From the perspective of character education, these findings indicate that Qur’anic descriptions of hypocritical characteristics operate as negative moral exemplars intended for self-assessment rather than external labeling. According to Hasan and Fuad [23], who identify patterns of moral fragmentation between intention, speech, and action, the Qur’an provides a reflective framework for cultivating sincerity (*ikhhlās*), honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), and consistency (*istiqlāmah*). Therefore, the characteristics and strategies associated with the *munāfiqūn* form an important conceptual component of the

Value-Contrast Character Education Model, not as a mechanism of judgment, but as a pedagogical tool for strengthening moral awareness and personal accountability.

Table 2. Taxonomy of Hypocritical Traits and Strategic Behaviors (verified against primary tafsīr sources)

Trait / Strategy	Verse(s)	Verified exegetical reading
Falsehood (kadhib) as ideological deception	Q.S. al-Munāfiqūn/63:1–3	[20] a lie whose danger is more corrosive than open unbelief
Arrogance/contempt for believers	Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 13	Tafsir At-Tanwir [21] mocking belief itself as foolishness
Duplicity (bermuka dua)	Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 14	[22] two faces shown to believers and to their own faction
Mockery of believers	Q.S. al-Tawbah/9:79	[23] ridiculing believers' charity regardless of the amount given
Broken promise → internalized nifāq	Q.S. al-Tawbah/9:75–77	[24] breach of vow signals unreliability and licenses further betrayal
Incitement to disbelief	Q.S. al-Nisā'/4:89	[25] a hostility deep enough to want others to share their own misguidance
Inversion of amar ma'rūf nahī munkar	Q.S. al-Tawbah/9:67	[5] a systemic inversion of communal moral order, not isolated deviance
Ritual insincerity (riyā')	Q.S. al-Nisā'/4:142	[4] worship reduced to social display rather than sincere conviction

3.1.3 Multidimensional Impact and the Structure of Qur'anic Warning (Wa'id)

The thematic reconstruction of the selected Qur'anic passages indicates that the consequences associated with nifāq can be understood through four interconnected dimensions: faith, worship, social relations, and psycho-spiritual conditions. This classification does not represent a chronological development of Qur'anic discourse, as the passages appear in different locations within the canonical arrangement of the Qur'an and emerged within distinct historical contexts of revelation. Rather, it represents a thematic synthesis that facilitates a consolidated comparison across multiple sūrahs concerning the moral consequences and warnings associated with hypocrisy. The first dimension concerns faith, particularly the contradiction between external religious identification and internal spiritual commitment. In the Qur'anic portrayal of *nifāq i'tiqādī*, hypocrisy represents concealed rejection beneath an appearance of belief, while references to *nifāq 'amalī* highlight behavioral tendencies that reflect inconsistency between moral commitments and actual conduct. The second dimension relates to worship, as illustrated in Q.S. al-Nisā' (4):142, where hypocrites are described as performing prayer with reluctance and seeking social recognition rather than sincere devotion.

The third dimension concerns social life, where hypocrisy is associated with the weakening of trust, communal solidarity, and ethical responsibility. The fourth dimension

involves psycho-spiritual consequences, including inner instability, moral anxiety, and the eventual exposure of concealed contradictions. Exegetical discussions demonstrate both agreement and diversity regarding these consequences. Ibn Kathīr primarily interprets the severe consequences of nifāq within the framework of concealed disbelief, emphasizing the danger of individuals who outwardly participate in the Muslim community while internally rejecting faith. Al-Ṭabarī similarly focuses on doctrinal hypocrisy but gives greater attention to the historical circumstances of the verses and the specific groups addressed in Madinan society. Meanwhile, al-Qurṭubī discusses both theological and behavioral dimensions, suggesting that certain hypocritical characteristics may appear as moral weaknesses even among believers. Sayyid Quṭb emphasizes the social and ideological impact of hypocrisy, whereas M. Quraish Shihab highlights its ethical implications for contemporary Muslim life.

The Qur'anic structure of warning (*wa'īd*) reinforces the seriousness of hypocrisy without reducing all forms of inconsistency to theological hypocrisy. At the worldly level, the Qur'an describes hypocritical figures as experiencing humiliation, instability, and exposure of deception. At the eschatological level, Q.S. al-Nisā' (4):145 places the munāfiqūn among those receiving the most severe warning, while Q.S. al-Tawbah (9):80 emphasizes the seriousness of divine displeasure. However, exegetes differ in their explanations of the reason for this severity. Some, such as Ibn Kathīr, emphasize that hypocrisy combines concealment of disbelief with deception toward the believing community. Others, including al-Qurṭubī, discuss the moral and social dimensions of betrayal, insincerity, and disruption of communal trust. These interpretations demonstrate that the severity of Qur'anic warning is understood through multiple theological and ethical perspectives.

Regarding applicability beyond the Madinan context, exegetical perspectives also vary. Some interpretations maintain a stronger connection between these verses and the historical reality of Madinan hypocritical groups, while others view the moral patterns described in these passages as continuing ethical guidance for later communities. This distinction is important because contemporary educational applications should focus on recognizing hypocritical tendencies, strengthening sincerity, and encouraging self-reflection rather than identifying individuals as munāfiqūn. From the perspective of character education, the Qur'anic structure of *wa'īd* functions as a moral reflection mechanism. The warnings associated with nifāq encourage learners to examine the coherence between intention, speech, and action while developing virtues such as sincerity (*ikhhlās*), honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), and consistency (*istiḳāmah*). Therefore, the multidimensional consequences of nifāq and the Qur'anic warning structure provide a conceptual basis for the Value-Contrast Character Education Model by presenting negative moral patterns as opportunities for ethical awareness and continuous self-improvement [26].

3.1.4 From Theological Category to Pedagogical Construct: The Value-Contrast Model

The central contribution of this study is to reframe the preceding exegetical findings as a structured pedagogical resource rather than a closed theological verdict. The Qur'an does not merely catalogue hypocritical traits in isolation; it persistently juxtaposes them against the traits of sincere believers dishonesty against ṣidq, betrayal against amānah,

ostentation against *ikhlaṣ*, inconsistency against *istiḳāmah*, so that moral value is apprehended through contrast rather than through abstract prescription alone. This juxtaposition constitutes what this study terms a value-contrast model of character education: a pedagogical structure in which a negative exemplar (the *munāfiq*) is deliberately paired with a positive exemplar (the *mu'min*) to sharpen moral discernment through comparison. This model performs at least three pedagogical functions. First, it operates as moral mapping: the Qur'an's detailed enumeration of hypocritical traits (falsehood, corruption, arrogance, duplicity, mockery, false oaths) equips learners with a concrete vocabulary for recognizing deviant behavior in themselves and others, rather than leaving moral vigilance to vague intuition.

Second, it functions as a deterrence mechanism by pairing the description of hypocritical traits with explicit worldly and eschatological consequences. The Qur'an couples cognitive recognition with affective and motivational weight, which the Islamic educational tradition designates as the dual method of *targhīb wa tarhīb* (encouragement and warning) [26]. Third, it fosters differentiated moral reasoning: because the *mu'min* and the *munāfiq* are drawn as structurally parallel but ethically opposed figures, learners are trained to reason comparatively to ask not only “*what is right*” but “*what distinguishes right from its counterfeit*,” a mode of reasoning increasingly recognized in character-education scholarship as more durable than reasoning built on positive exemplars alone [27]. This reframing also clarifies why *nifāq* is pedagogically distinctive among negative models. Unlike *kufr*, which the Qur'an treats as an external and declared opposition to faith, *nifāq* is an internal counterfeit of faith it mimics the outward form of the very virtue it undermines. Pedagogically, this makes *nifāq* an especially productive negative exemplar for character education aimed at integrity: it teaches not simply “avoid this vice” but “recognize when virtue's outward form has been separated from its inward substance,” a distinction directly relevant to phenomena such as academic dishonesty and performative piety, in which appearance and reality diverge under superficially compliant behavior.

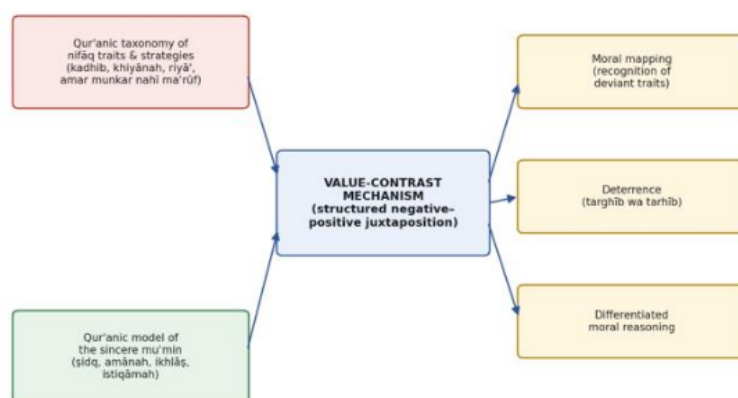


Figure 1. The Value-Contrast Model of Character Education
(Conceptual Synthesis Derived from Thematic of *Nifāq*)

Figure 1. The value-contrast model as a conceptual synthesis: the Qur'an's negative taxonomy of *nifāq* and its positive counterpart, the *mu'min*, converge in a structured contrast mechanism that yields three pedagogical functions (moral mapping, deterrence, differentiated moral reasoning). This diagram represents the study's own conceptual synthesis derived from Thematic of *Nifāq*; it is not a reproduction of empirical or survey data.

Table 3. The Value-Contrast Model: Structural Pairing of Negative and Positive Exemplars

Munāfiq trait (negative exemplar)	Mu'min counterpart (positive exemplar)	Target character value
Kadhib (falsehood)	Ṣidq (truthful speech and conduct)	Honesty
Khiyānat al-amānah (betrayal of trust)	Amānah (trustworthiness)	Integrity/trustworthiness
Riyā' (ritual display)	Ikhhlāṣ (sincerity of intention)	Sincerity
Inconsistency between vow and conduct	Istiḳāmah (moral consistency)	Consistency
Obstruction of communal moral order	Amar ma'rūf nahī munkar upheld sincerely	Social responsibility

Translated into practice, the value-contrast model supports five interrelated pedagogical emphases already implicit in the Qur'anic material examined above: (1) honesty (*ṣidq*) education, cultivated through direct contrast with the Qur'an's depiction of *kadhib* and its social consequences; (2) trustworthiness and integrity (*amānah*) education, grounded in the analysis of *khiyānat al-amānah* as a systemic rather than incidental failure; (3) sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) education, addressing the specific problem of ritual or academic performance oriented toward external recognition rather than inward conviction; (4) moral consistency (*istiḳāmah*) education, targeting the inconsistency between declared commitment and sustained conduct; and (5) social-responsibility education, addressing *nifāq*'s communal dimension its capacity to erode collective trust from within.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Reframing Hypocrisy in the Qur'an: A Thematic-Exegetical Foundation for Character Education

The findings of this study suggest that the Qur'an conceptualizes *nifāq* through a substantially richer framework than is commonly reflected in contemporary Islamic education literature. Rather than functioning merely as a theological label for concealed disbelief, *nifāq* emerges from the thematic synthesis of Qur'anic verses as a multidimensional moral construct encompassing internal disposition, behavioral strategy, communal influence, and spiritual consequence. This broader reconstruction confirms that the Qur'an presents hypocrisy not simply as an individual moral failure but as a systematic form of ethical fragmentation in which belief, speech, and action gradually lose their coherence.

This interpretation extends previous scholarship that has predominantly examined *nifāq* from isolated disciplinary perspectives. Educational studies have generally emphasized sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) and moral habituation as preventive strategies against hypocrisy [6], [7] while historical studies have concentrated on the Prophet's management of the *munāfiqūn* within the socio-political context of Madinah [9], [8]. Likewise, psychological analyses have interpreted hypocrisy primarily as a manifestation of arrogance, insecurity, and self-interest [10], [11]. Although these studies contribute valuable insights, they generally treat theological, educational, historical, and psychological dimensions independently. By employing thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*), the present study integrates these dimensions into a single conceptual taxonomy derived directly from the Qur'anic corpus, thereby addressing the theoretical fragmentation previously identified by Hidayatulloh et al. [28].

One of the most significant findings concerns the Qur'an's progressive construction of *nifāq*. The thematic analysis demonstrates that the Qur'an does not define hypocrisy through a single behavioral indicator but develops it through interconnected stages. Beginning with the internal disease of the heart (*marad al-qalb*) in Q.S. al-Baqarah, the narrative progresses toward ritual insincerity in Q.S. al-Nisā', systemic moral inversion in Q.S. al-Tawbah, and finally ideological deception in Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn. This progression indicates that hypocrisy is portrayed as a cumulative moral process rather than an isolated ethical violation. Such a thematic progression could not have been reconstructed through verse-by-verse (*tahlīlī*) interpretation alone, thereby demonstrating the methodological advantage of *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* for identifying conceptual relationships distributed across multiple sūrahs. The findings also reveal that the Qur'an distinguishes between personal hypocrisy and its wider social consequences. The characteristics identified in this study falsehood, betrayal of trust, arrogance, duplicity, mockery, false oaths, ritual ostentation, and the inversion of *amar ma'rūf nahī munkar* are not presented merely as individual sins but as mechanisms through which communal moral order is gradually undermined. This observation supports classical exegetical interpretations that regard hypocrisy as more dangerous than open disbelief because its destructive effects operate internally while maintaining the appearance of religious commitment. Consequently, the Qur'anic treatment of *nifāq* should be understood not only as moral instruction for individuals but also as guidance for protecting the ethical integrity of the community.

From an educational-theoretical perspective, these findings significantly broaden current approaches to Islamic character education. Contemporary character education models, including those inspired by Lickona's framework, generally emphasize positive virtues through role modelling, habituation, and moral exemplification. The present study demonstrates that the Qur'an employs an additional pedagogical strategy that has received comparatively little scholarly attention: education through structured moral contrast. Rather than presenting virtues in isolation, the Qur'an repeatedly juxtaposes the characteristics of the believer (*mu'min*) with those of the hypocrite (*munāfiq*), allowing learners to recognize virtue through comparison with its moral counterfeit. In this sense, the educational function of the *munāfiq* is not simply to provide a warning but to sharpen ethical discernment by exposing the difference between authentic and performative morality. This interpretation constitutes the principal conceptual contribution of the study.

Previous research has often treated descriptions of hypocrisy as doctrinal warnings or historical narratives, whereas the present study demonstrates that these descriptions collectively form a pedagogical architecture. The proposed Value-Contrast Character Education Model therefore reconceptualizes Qur'anic warnings (*wa'id*) as constructive educational resources. Negative exemplars are not employed merely to generate fear but to cultivate reflective moral judgment, enabling learners to identify subtle forms of ethical inconsistency before they develop into stable dispositions. This perspective complements rather than replaces positive role-modelling, suggesting that effective character education requires both aspirational exemplars and cautionary exemplars.

The value-contrast model also provides a theoretical explanation for why the Qur'an devotes extensive attention to hypocrisy despite the existence of other categories of moral deviation such as *kuf*r and *fisq*. Unlike open disbelief, hypocrisy imitates the external appearance of virtue while concealing its internal negation. Consequently, it represents the most relevant negative exemplar for educational contexts where ethical failures often occur behind outward conformity. Contemporary phenomena including academic dishonesty, plagiarism, performative religiosity, manipulation of institutional ethics, and symbolic compliance with moral norms closely resemble the structural characteristics of *nifāq* identified in the Qur'an.

Although this study does not empirically examine these phenomena, the thematic findings indicate that the Qur'anic framework possesses considerable explanatory relevance for understanding current challenges in moral and character education. Theoretically, this study contributes to Qur'anic scholarship by extending thematic exegesis beyond descriptive interpretation toward the construction of conceptual models. Methodologically, it demonstrates that *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* can function not only as a method for organizing Qur'anic themes but also as a bridge connecting Qur'anic interpretation with educational theory. Pedagogically, it proposes an exegetically grounded framework that integrates negative and positive moral exemplars within a coherent Value-Contrast Character Education Model. Together, these contributions address the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and practical gaps identified in the introduction and establish a foundation for future empirical studies examining the implementation and effectiveness of the model in contemporary Islamic educational settings.

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4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Qur'anic treatment of *nifāq*, although traditionally examined within theological, exegetical, and normative frameworks, contains significant pedagogical implications for contemporary character education. Through thematic reconstruction of selected *nifāq*-related verses, the study identifies interconnected dimensions of hypocritical characteristics, behavioral patterns, moral consequences, and Qur'anic warnings (*wa'id*). Rather than functioning as a mechanism for labeling individuals, the Qur'anic discourse on *nifāq* provides a reflective framework for learners to examine the alignment among intention, speech, and action.

Based on this analysis, the study proposes a Value-Contrast Character Education Model in which the Qur'anic contrast between virtuous and hypocritical characteristics

operates as a pedagogical strategy for developing moral awareness, ethical reasoning, and self-evaluation. The model extends existing discussions of Islamic character education by demonstrating how negative moral representations can complement positive exemplars in cultivating virtues such as *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ikhhlās* (sincerity), and *istiqāmah* (consistency). In this sense, the study provides a conceptual bridge between thematic Qur'anic interpretation and character-education theory. However, the study has an important limitation. The Qur'anic corpus analyzed is a selected thematic corpus focused on passages in which *nifāq* and its lexical forms constitute the primary theme.

Although this approach enables focused conceptual reconstruction, it does not claim to represent every Qur'anic passage potentially related to hypocrisy or associated moral concepts. Therefore, future studies should first expand, complete, and validate the broader Qur'anic corpus through systematic lexical and thematic procedures before further theoretical development. Subsequent research should proceed through several stages: independent exegetical review of the reconstructed corpus; validation of the proposed model by Islamic education experts; consultation with teachers regarding pedagogical feasibility; development and pilot testing of age-appropriate learning materials; examination of learner responses; and assessment of potential unintended effects. Such empirical and interdisciplinary investigation is necessary to determine how Qur'anic value-contrast approaches can contribute responsibly to contemporary Islamic character education.

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