

## The Study of Surah Al-Ma'un as a Foundation for Strengthening Social Care Character in Islamic Educational Institutions

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### Abstract:

*This research is motivated by the problem of low social care character among students, which is reflected in declining empathy, a lack of concern for others, and the strengthening of individualistic attitudes within educational environments. This condition indicates the need for a character-strengthening model rooted in Qur'anic values, particularly Surah Al-Ma'un, which strongly emphasizes social awareness. The purpose of this study is to analyze the social values contained in Surah Al-Ma'un and their relevance as a foundation for strengthening social care character in Islamic educational institutions. This research employs a literature study method by collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing literature related to character education concepts, Qur'anic values, and interpretations of Surah Al-Ma'un. The results show that Surah Al-Ma'un contains values of empathy, prohibition of neglecting orphans, encouragement to support the poor, and prohibition of showing off in worship—all of which are relevant to developing social care character. The internalization of these values can be implemented through Islamic Religious Education (PAI), teacher role-modeling, habituation, and social activities in schools. The implications of this study indicate that Islamic educational institutions need to systematically integrate the values of Surah Al-Ma'un into their curriculum and learning practices to build a stronger culture of social concern among students.*

*Keywords: social care, Islamic education, character education, Qur'anic values.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the primary pillars in shaping human character that is morally upright and actively engaged in social life (Sahri, 2021; Sarbaitinil et al., 2023; Wabanhu, 2018). In the context of Islamic education, the internalization of moral values, empathy, and social concern is an integral part of the learning objectives (Anam et al., 2019; Jia et al., 2025; Vieira & Feldens, 2021). These values are comprehensively embedded in the teachings of the Qur'an, which serves as the life guide for Muslims (Anam et al., 2019). One of the surahs that emphasizes the importance of social sensitivity is Surah Al-Ma'un, which explicitly condemns indifference toward orphans and the needy. This surah conveys a powerful message about the relationship between ritual worship and social behaviour (Ekasari et al., 2024; Fadhillah & Nirwana, 2023). Islamic education

highlights not only cognitive aspects but also the affective dimensions that shape learners' real-life conduct (Badri & Malik, 2024). Therefore, examining Surah Al-Ma'un becomes relevant for reinforcing social concern in educational institutions. These values must be internalized from an early age to help the younger generation become morally grounded individuals who contribute positively to their surroundings.

Social concern is a crucial aspect in building civilized human beings capable of maintaining social harmony (Callahan, 2018; Huda et al., 2020). In the educational sphere, social concern is instilled not merely through theory but also through modeling, habituation, and activities that foster empathy (Maharani et al., 2025; Nursobah et al., 2025). Surah Al-Ma'un provides a strong theological foundation for emphasizing compassion toward others (Darmawan et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2025). Its verses assert that a person's worship is incomplete without social care. This indicates that the development of social concern must not be separated from religious understanding. Islamic educational institutions hold a strategic role in instilling this value through curriculum, habituation programs, and school culture (Huda, 2024; Surahman & Nayla, 2025). Thus, the study of Surah Al-Ma'un can serve as a basis for strengthening students' social character at various educational levels. The values of this surah may be contextually integrated into learning activities and daily practices.

In modern society, the need for social concern is becoming more urgent due to increasingly complex social challenges (Carvalho & Mazzon, 2020; Redondo-Sama et al., 2020). Individualism, hedonism, and declining empathy are phenomena commonly observed among adolescents and students (Chaikovska et al., 2020; de Jong, 2020). Surah Al-Ma'un emerges as a moral message that strongly rebukes indifference toward the suffering of others. This surah not only criticizes individuals who neglect social care but also links such behavior to insincerity in worship. Therefore, Islamic education must integrate Qur'anic messages such as those found in Surah Al-Ma'un to build a character that balances spirituality with social responsibility. Qur'an-based approaches are considered effective for cultivating students' moral sensitivity. Through such approaches, character education becomes not only normative but also grounded in strong theological foundations. This makes the study of Surah Al-Ma'un highly relevant in contemporary education.

Despite the integration of social concern values in schools, various issues still indicate weak implementation of this character. Instances of low empathy, indifference toward peers in need, and discriminatory behavior remain prevalent in educational environments. Character-building programs often operate superficially and fail to instill deep-rooted habits. Additionally, learning materials in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) sometimes prioritize cognitive aspects over affective and behavioral ones. As a result, students' understanding of Qur'anic teachings does not sufficiently manifest in their daily conduct. The lack of internalization of Surah Al-Ma'un's values is evident from students' limited participation in social activities. This shows that strengthening social concern still requires more relevant and contextual approaches. Therefore, strategies that connect Qur'anic messages with students' social realities are needed. Surah Al-Ma'un becomes an essential reference to address these challenges.

The research written by Yusmaliana, Desfa, et al. (2020) shows that QS. Al-Ma'un contains fundamental values regarding social care and moral responsibility that are relevant as a framework for the quality of education. The study also found that implementing these values in elementary school learning can significantly enhance students' caring character, empathy, and social attitudes (Yusmaliana et al., 2020). Hasil penelitian yang ditulis oleh Nasution, Rajab Al Fathin Muhammad, et al. (2025) menunjukkan bahwa Surah Al-Ma'un memiliki keterkaitan erat dengan konsep pemberdayaan harta sebagai bentuk kepedulian sosial dan tanggung jawab umat. Penelitian tersebut juga menemukan bahwa pengelolaan dan pendistribusian harta yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai Surah Al-Ma'un mampu mendorong kesejahteraan masyarakat dan mengurangi ketimpangan sosial (Nasution et al., 2025).

The research conducted by Rodhiyah, Mutmainni, et al. (2022) shows that the theology of Al-Ma'un serves as a philosophical foundation for Muhammadiyah's philanthropic practices at LAZISMU Kartasura, particularly in prioritizing services for the underprivileged. The study also found that the implementation of Al-Ma'un values in philanthropic activities can strengthen a culture of social care and enhance the effectiveness of community empowerment programs (Rodhiyah et al., 2022). Research conducted by Mala, Asnal, et al. (2024) shows that sustainable inclusive education in Islamic boarding schools still faces several challenges, particularly in the PAI learning methods, which are not yet fully adaptive to the diverse needs of

students. The study also found that the reconstruction of learning methods through collaborative approaches, differentiation, and the reinforcement of Islamic values can improve the quality and accessibility of education for all students (Mala et al., 2024).

Other studies highlight that thematic Qur'anic approaches in instruction can improve students' understanding and internalization of moral values. Research integrating social-themed verses shows improvements in empathy, social sensitivity, and cooperative behavior. However, many studies focus on other surahs such as Al-Hujurat or Luqman, leaving Surah Al-Ma'un relatively underexplored. Research on social concern often centers on extracurricular activities rather than integrating Qur'anic verses into classroom learning. Therefore, there is a need to examine the values of Surah Al-Ma'un more deeply and systematically within Islamic education. Such studies can provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between worship, morals, and students' social actions. Furthermore, previous studies rarely develop direct implementation models for teaching the values of Surah Al-Ma'un in schools. This opens opportunities for innovations in Qur'an-based character development. Considering these gaps, this study can provide significant contributions to character education development.

Based on the review of previous studies, it appears that limited research has specifically developed a concept for strengthening social concern based on Surah Al-Ma'un in Islamic educational institutions. Most studies discuss social care values in general without referring specifically to Surah Al-Ma'un's verses. Additionally, earlier research rarely establishes a direct link between the theological content of Surah Al-Ma'un and practical instructional strategies in Islamic Religious Education. No structured implementation model has been widely applied to embed the surah's messages in teaching activities. Another gap is the scarcity of studies connecting Qur'anic comprehension with students' actual social behavior in daily school life. This results in students' understanding of social concern remaining at the conceptual level. These limitations indicate an urgent need for more focused, in-depth, and applicable research. This study aims to address these gaps by constructing a model for strengthening social concern based on Surah Al-Ma'un. Therefore, this research holds strong academic and practical significance.

This study aims to examine the social values contained in Surah Al-Ma'un as the basis for strengthening social concern in Islamic educational institutions. Its primary objective is to identify

fundamental values in Surah Al-Ma'un that are relevant to student character development. The study also aims to develop a concept for internalizing social concern through practical approaches within Islamic Religious Education. Furthermore, it intends to describe effective strategies for integrating Surah Al-Ma'un's messages into educational activities. This study is expected to generate a conceptual model for strengthening social concern based on Qur'anic teachings. Through its findings, Islamic educational institutions can gain practical guidance for implementing social concern values in curricula and habituation programs. The study also strives to contribute academically to the development of Qur'an-based character education. Hence, this research holds both theoretical relevance and practical value for educators. Its outcomes are expected to foster stronger social awareness and responsibility among students.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research, which focuses on the analysis of literature as the primary source of data (Muhammad Mustofa, 2023). Library research was selected because this study aims to examine the social values contained in Surah Al-Ma'un based on scholarly references and religious texts. This approach allows the researcher to explore theological, moral, and pedagogical concepts in depth through various library sources (Mittwede, 2012). In this study, the Qur'an and its exegeses serve as the primary sources analyzed to understand the context and moral messages of Surah Al-Ma'un. In addition, books on Islamic education, journal articles, and previous research serve as secondary sources that enrich the discussion. This qualitative, literature-based method provides flexibility in conducting comprehensive and contextual text analysis. Through this approach, the study can produce a holistic understanding of the relevance of Surah Al-Ma'un's values in shaping social care character. The library research method also enables the researcher to develop conceptual arguments as the foundation for formulating a character-strengthening model. Through this method, analysis is carried out systematically and thoroughly based on relevant literature.

The primary data sources in this study consist of two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. (Setiawan, 2018) Primary sources include the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir works, and literature that directly discusses Surah Al-Ma'un. Secondary sources include books on Islamic education, scholarly journals, previous research articles, and

academic publications related to the theme of social care character. Data collection techniques were carried out through searches of physical and digital literature from libraries, academic repositories, e-journals, and scientific databases. Data were collected through a process of identifying, selecting, and classifying literature in accordance with the focus of the study. The selection process considered relevance, source credibility, and publication recency. All collected literature was then documented, analyzed, and synthesized to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social values in Surah Al-Ma'un. This data collection technique provides a strong foundation for analysis based on scholarly evidence. Through this method, all information obtained can be academically justified.

The data analysis technique used in this library research is content analysis, which focuses on interpreting the meaning of texts and their relevance to the educational context. The analysis involves a close reading of the verses of Surah Al-Ma'un, examining the interpretations of scholars, and identifying the social values embedded within them. Supporting literature is then analyzed to determine how these values can be implemented in character education within Islamic educational institutions. Collected data are reduced by selecting relevant information and excluding data not directly related to the topic. The data are then categorized based on themes such as social concern, social ethics, and the internalization of values in education. The next step is interpreting the findings to construct systematic and logical arguments. The results of the analysis are then formulated into conceptual conclusions that support the study's objectives. This analysis technique enables the researcher to understand the connection between the moral messages of Surah Al-Ma'un and the strengthening of social care character. Thus, the study produces a thorough, structured analysis that can serve as a foundation for character education development.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. The Concept of Character Education in Islamic Education**

The concept of character education in Islam has a strong philosophical foundation because it is based on the understanding that human beings are created not only as intellectual beings but also as spiritual and social beings who bear moral responsibility. Character education is viewed as a process of shaping the learners' personality so that they possess noble character reflected in their daily behavior (Dewi & Alam, 2020; Hanafiah et al., 2024). In Islam,



character is not merely an outward behavior but a manifestation of faith and piety that reside in the heart. This aligns with the view of scholars who assert that good character is the fruit of sincere faith; therefore, character education must be directed toward strengthening spiritual conviction and internalization. Character education is not understood as a separate activity but is embedded in the entire educational process, from teaching and learning activities to teacher–student interactions and the culture of the educational institution. Thus, character education is a comprehensive effort to develop the inherent human potential that inclines toward goodness and avoids wrongdoing. Through this approach, students are expected to develop a balanced personality encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects as part of holistic education.

From the perspective of Islamic education, character formation cannot be separated from the objectives of sharia (maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah), which seek to preserve religion, intellect, life, wealth, and lineage. This concept shows that character is not merely a matter of individual morality but is also related to the continuity of societal well-being. Therefore, character education aims to shape individuals who are not only pious personally but also socially, by contributing positively to those around them. Character education includes strengthening values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, compassion, cooperation, and justice. These values are derived from the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, which provide clear moral foundations for Muslims. In practice, character education is implemented through teacher role modeling, habituation of good behavior, moral guidance, and the application of Islamic values in all school activities. This process requires educators to consistently serve as role models who reflect noble character, as role modeling is the most effective method for shaping students’ character.

Character education in Islam also emphasizes the inseparable relationship between faith, worship, and morality as a unified whole (Alhamuddin et al., 2025; Maksudin, 2022). Faith provides the foundation of belief, worship strengthens spiritual awareness, while morality represents the visible manifestation of both. Accordingly, a person cannot be considered to possess Islamic character if their behavior does not reflect the values of true faith and worship. This concept is reinforced in various Qur’anic verses that state that spiritual success must be

demonstrated through good social conduct, such as honesty, courtesy, and care for others. In an educational context, internalizing these values requires a systematic process through meaningful learning, particularly within Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Character strengthening must not remain theoretical but should be realized through students' real-life experiences and interactions in school. Therefore, character education must become an integral part of the curriculum, teaching methods, school activities, and institutional culture to nurture a generation of truly virtuous individuals.

At the level of implementation, Islamic character education necessitates synergy between families, schools, and communities as the three main pillars of personality formation. A supportive educational environment fosters learning experiences that allow students to practice moral values in their daily lives. Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in guiding students toward noble character, especially through strengthening Qur'anic values that form the core of Islamic teachings. In the school environment, character education is conducted through habituation programs such as greeting etiquette, polite behavior, social activities, and the use of Qur'anic surahs as the basis for moral instruction. All of these activities aim to build positive habits that gradually shape students' character. Additionally, character education emphasizes self-control, honesty, and responsibility as essential moral competencies for societal interaction. Through this integrative approach, Islamic character education not only produces students who understand religious teachings but also students who can apply them in real life as an expression of devotion to Allah and contribution to society.

## **B. Social Values in Surah Al-Ma'un**

Social values are a set of principles that form the basis of human behavior in societal life, serving to maintain harmony, foster care, and strengthen solidarity among individuals. These values include empathy, mutual assistance, justice, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for human dignity as social beings. In the context of character development, social values encourage a person not only to think of personal interests but also to be aware of the needs and conditions of others, thereby creating a social environment that is harmonious, inclusive, and filled with a sense of humanity. The existence of social values is very important for forming a civilized society, as they serve as moral guidelines in daily interactions and as a



foundation for creating a just and mutually respectful life. As stated in Surah Al-Ma'un, which reads:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْإِيمَانِ ﴿١﴾ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ﴿٣﴾  
فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٥﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾

Meaning: (1) Do you know the one who denies religion? (2) That is the one who harshly treats the orphan (3) and does not encourage feeding the poor (4) Woe to those who pray (5) but are neglectful of their prayers (6) who show off (in their deeds) (7) and are unwilling to help

Surah Al-Ma'un is one of the short chapters in the Qur'an that carries a very strong social message. Although consisting of only seven verses, its content emphasizes the close relationship between spiritual and social dimensions in the life of a Muslim. This surah criticizes those who focus solely on ritual worship while neglecting their social responsibilities toward others. From the perspective of Islamic education, this surah offers a highly relevant moral framework for cultivating students' social awareness. Its verses stress that righteousness cannot be separated from social concern, particularly toward the vulnerable and those in need of assistance. The surah also demonstrates that social behavior reflects the quality of a person's faith and their adherence to the teachings of the Qur'an. Therefore, Surah Al-Ma'un serves as a rich source of moral values to be inculcated within Islamic educational institutions.

One of the central values in Surah Al-Ma'un is its emphasis on caring for orphans, who represent the most vulnerable members of society. The opening verses condemn harshness, indifference, and neglect toward orphans as forms of moral failure. In educational contexts, this value teaches students to cultivate empathy, compassion, and social responsibility toward individuals who require support. Students are taught that a lack of concern for orphans is not merely a moral shortcoming but also a violation of Islamic principles. Thus, Surah Al-Ma'un provides a foundation for building caring and humane character through strengthening empathy and solidarity toward those who are weak. This value is essential for shaping a

generation that is not only intellectually capable but also socially sensitive. The surah becomes an important reference in instilling social values from an early age.

Another social value found in Surah Al-Ma'un is concern for the poor and the underprivileged. The surah criticizes those who do not encourage others to feed the poor, indicating that social care is not only an individual responsibility but also part of a collective effort. In teaching practice, this value can be integrated into character-building programs so that students become accustomed to real acts of kindness such as sharing, helping, and participating in social activities. When students understand that Islamic teachings connect faith with concern for the poor, they begin to view worship as inseparable from social contribution. Surah Al-Ma'un teaches that social sensitivity must be expressed through concrete actions rather than remaining at the level of discourse or theory. Thus, these values can foster an educational environment rooted in a culture of care and togetherness.

Surah Al-Ma'un also emphasizes the danger of hypocrisy (riya), which is performing acts of worship merely to be seen by others. Its verses describe how riya renders worship meaningless because its motivation is not sincerity. In character education, this value is important for teaching students about moral integrity and honesty in worship and good deeds. The surah asserts that true piety does not lie in outward display but in genuine sincerity and consistent actions. The trait of riya can corrupt one's character and void the social impact of their worship. Therefore, the anti-riya value is highly relevant for shaping individuals who are humble, honest, and not motivated by external recognition. Strengthening the value of sincerity through the study of Surah Al-Ma'un can help students perform good deeds selflessly and maintain integrity in their daily lives.

The overall social values of Surah Al-Ma'un ultimately form a foundational framework for character education that promotes social care within Islamic educational institutions. This surah establishes the idea that ritual worship, such as prayer, must have real implications for a person's social behavior. In educational practice, these values can guide the development of curricula, learning methods, and social programs that cultivate empathy, care, and solidarity. The surah conveys the spirit that education should produce learners who not only understand religion cognitively but also practice it socially. By embedding the values of Al-Ma'un into

learning activities, educational institutions can build a strong moral culture where students are trained to integrate faith with humanitarian action. These values ultimately contribute to shaping a generation that is religious, humane, and capable of making positive contributions to society.

### **C. Socially Caring Character in the Perspective of Islamic Education**

The character of social care in the perspective of Islamic education is a foundational aspect of moral development that emphasizes the importance of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and concern for fellow human beings (Sehati et al., 2024). In Islamic teachings, caring for others is not merely a moral action but also a reflection of a believer's faith, as affirmed in many Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions. Islamic education views individuals with strong social concern as those capable of establishing harmonious relationships with their surroundings because they understand the importance of each person's role in maintaining social balance. The cultivation of this character is essential because Islam emphasizes that piety is not demonstrated solely through ritual worship but also through one's tangible contributions to the welfare of society. Therefore, the education of social care should not be considered an additional component of the learning process but rather the core of moral education that shapes a complete Muslim personality. Within educational institutions, social care values become the foundation for building a humanistic and inclusive school culture. Thus, the character of social care holds a strategic position in creating a generation that is religious, empathetic, and actively engaged in social life.

In Islamic education, the development of social care character is carried out through various approaches integrated with the teaching and daily life of the school environment. One of the main methods is habituation, which involves instilling caring behavior through daily actions so that it becomes part of students' personalities. Teachers serve as role models because students tend to imitate their attitudes and behaviors. This exemplary approach is essential since, in Islam, moral conduct is taught not only through theory but also through real-life examples. Additionally, advice and guidance play an important role in forming students' moral understanding regarding the significance of caring for others. Islamic education also stresses that social concern should be nurtured from an early age so that the values become deeply

rooted and enduring. Through gradual and continuous processes, students become accustomed to being empathetic, polite, helpful, and sensitive to others' needs. Thus, building the character of social care requires a long-term process involving all components of the educational system.

The character of social care in Islamic education is also closely related to the internalization of Qur'anic values, particularly verses that speak about caring for the weak, promoting social justice, and encouraging cooperation in goodness. The Islamic Education curriculum (PAI) plays an important role in integrating these values into learning materials, enabling students not only to understand religious teachings cognitively but also to apply them in real life. The internalization of Qur'anic values is carried out through contextual learning methods, reflective readings (*tadabbur*), discussions, and social projects that allow students to directly experience the meaning of social care. Through such approaches, education does not stop at delivering knowledge but moves toward deep moral appreciation and implementation. Students are guided to reflect on the meaning of Qur'anic verses and relate them to the social realities they encounter daily. This approach is highly effective in nurturing social care because students learn that Islamic teachings have direct relevance to societal life. Therefore, Qur'anic value education becomes a key pillar in strengthening social care character within Islamic educational environments.

A caring social attitude is also an important indicator of the success of moral education in Islam, as it reflects students' ability to practice religious values in concrete actions. A student is considered successful in moral development when they demonstrate social sensitivity, willingly help others without expecting anything in return, and participate in community activities. Hence, Islamic educational institutions must provide sufficient opportunities for social practice such as community service, humanitarian fundraising, visits to orphanages, and public service programs. These activities not only foster empathy but also build awareness that each individual has moral responsibility toward their social environment. In the long term, the character of social care contributes to creating a more harmonious, just, and supportive society in line with Islam's mission as a *\*rahmatan lil 'alamin\** (mercy to all creation). Therefore, instilling social care character is an integral part of the primary goal of Islamic education—producing generations with strong faith, noble morals, and deep concern for others.

## CONCLUSION

Surah Al-Ma'un plays a fundamental role in shaping students' social care character through Qur'anic values that emphasize empathy, sensitivity, and responsibility toward others. Islamic education views social care not only as a moral aspect but also as a reflection of faith that must be manifested through real actions. Through the integration of Qur'anic values, the habituation of caring attitudes, teacher role-modeling, and practical social activities, Islamic educational institutions can develop learners who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and spiritually mature. Surah Al-Ma'un provides a strong foundation for instilling the understanding that worship cannot be separated from social concern, enabling Islamic education to produce generations with noble character, humanistic values, and readiness to contribute positively to society.

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