

Moral and Ecological Education in the Qur'an's Crow Narrative: A Thematic-Pedagogic Analysis

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Abstract. Moral and ecological education has become a crucial issue in shaping student character in today's educational world. One rich source of such values is the Qur'an, which not only provides religious guidance but also offers life lessons applicable in everyday life. One intriguing narrative is the crow's story in Surah Al-Mā'idah 5:31, which contains theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions. This study aims to analyze these dimensions through a thematic-pedagogic analysis in the context of education. The method used is thematic analysis with a pedagogical approach to explore how this narrative can be integrated into moral education and ecological awareness. The findings indicate that the crow's narrative teaches not only respect for death and burial practices but also invites students to understand the relationship between humans and nature more holistically. In conclusion, this study contributes to the development of a curriculum that incorporates moral and ecological values and strengthens the importance of education that integrates spiritual and environmental dimensions in shaping the character of future generations.

Keyword: *Ecological Education; Moral Education; Educational Curriculum; Crow Narrative; Surah Al-Mā'idah*

Abstrak. Pendidikan moral dan ekologis menjadi isu penting dalam pembentukan karakter siswa di dunia pendidikan saat ini. Salah satu sumber yang kaya akan nilai-nilai pendidikan tersebut adalah Al-Qur'an, yang tidak hanya memberikan petunjuk agama tetapi juga menyajikan pelajaran hidup yang dapat diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Salah satu narasi yang menarik adalah kisah gagak dalam Surah Al-Mā'idah 5:31, yang mengandung dimensi teologis, etis, dan ekologis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dimensi-dimensi tersebut melalui pendekatan analisis tematik-pedagogis dalam konteks pendidikan. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis tematik dengan pendekatan pedagogis untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana narasi ini dapat diintegrasikan dalam pendidikan moral dan kesadaran ekologis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa narasi gagak tidak hanya mengajarkan tentang penghormatan terhadap kematian dan proses penguburan, tetapi juga mengajak siswa untuk memahami hubungan manusia dengan alam secara lebih holistik. Kesimpulannya, studi ini memberikan kontribusi pada pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan yang mencakup nilai moral dan ekologis, serta memperkuat pentingnya pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan dimensi spiritual dan lingkungan dalam membentuk karakter generasi mendatang.

Kata Kunci: *Edukasi Ekologis; Edukasi Moral; Kurikulum Pendidikan; Narasi Gagak; Surah Al-Mā'idah*

Article history:

Received
10 August 2025

Revised
18 October 2025

Accepted
26 November 2025

Available online
15 December 2025

Introduction

Moral education and character development have gained significant attention in the face of the increasing challenges posed by modern societal issues, particularly the moral degradation observed among younger generations. The rapid advancement of technology and globalization has contributed to the emergence of various social problems, including bullying, drug abuse, and other unethical behaviors, which are prevalent in educational environments (Nashihin et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2024). In this context, moral education plays a crucial role in shaping strong, ethical characters that are both resilient and humane. One of the foundational sources for fostering such character development is the Qur'an, which not only provides religious guidance but also teaches moral values that can be applied in everyday life (Ahmadi, 2020).

In Surah Al-Mā'idah, verse 31, a particularly compelling narrative is presented: the story of a crow teaching Qābil, the son of Prophet Adam, how to bury his brother Hābil. This story serves as an important ethical lesson, imparting values of respect for death, responsibility, and integrity. Despite the widespread familiarity with this story from a young age, its profound moral lessons are often overlooked or not fully contemplated by modern readers. The Qur'an, through its use of narrative, is a powerful pedagogical tool that communicates complex moral and ecological values (Yusoff, 2023). Among its many stories, the crow narrative stands out as an example of how animal stories convey deep ethical teachings about human behavior and environmental respect (Ahmadi, 2020).

Recent scholarly discourse has begun to explore the role of narrative in Qur'anic pedagogy, yet there remains a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the specific pedagogical and ecological lessons derived from the crow narrative. While there is extensive research on the Qur'an's use of stories in moral education (Lischontina et al., 2025; Yusoff, 2023), the role of animals in these narratives, particularly in the crow story, has not been systematically examined from a pedagogic perspective (Shifa et al., 2025). This represents a key gap in the field, one that this study seeks to address by focusing specifically on the crow narrative as a case study for moral and ecological education.

Furthermore, while there has been an increasing interest in Islamic ecological ethics (Noor & Anwar, 2025), the intersection of moral education and ecological awareness within Qur'anic narratives remains underexplored. The crow's role as a teacher of proper burial practices offers a unique intersection of ecological agency and moral instruction, an area that has yet to be thoroughly examined. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated approach that explores how moral formation and ecological consciousness can be interwoven, particularly through specific narratives such as the crow story.

The existing body of literature on Islamic pedagogical approaches (Alkouatli, 2018; Ritonga et al., 2025; Surahman, 2019) has largely focused on broader ethical teachings and the application of these principles in educational settings. However, few studies have attempted to integrate thematic analysis of the Qur'anic text with pedagogical frameworks that translate these themes into actionable educational strategies. This gap points to the need for research that not only identifies the core themes of the crow narrative but also develops practical, evidence-based resources for educators to incorporate these lessons into their teaching practices.

This study aims to fill these gaps by conducting a focused thematic and pedagogical analysis of the crow narrative in Surah Al-Mā'idah (5:31). Specifically, it seeks to: (1) Examine the moral and ecological themes embedded in the crow narrative; (2) Analyze how these themes can be

effectively integrated into contemporary Islamic education curricula; and (3) Propose pedagogical frameworks and materials that can be used by educators to teach these values to students at various developmental stages.

By doing so, this research will contribute to the growing body of literature on Qur'anic pedagogy, Islamic ecological ethics, and moral education, offering a unique perspective on how Qur'anic narratives can be used to shape character development and ecological consciousness in modern educational contexts.

Methods

This study adopts a thematic exegesis approach (*tafsīr maudhū'i*) as the primary framework for analyzing Surah Al-Mā'idah, verse 31, with a particular focus on the symbolic and pedagogical role of the crow. This methodology was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the verse through multiple layers of interpretation, ranging from classical to contemporary and from literal to symbolic. In this context, thematic exegesis facilitates a cross-disciplinary analysis, encompassing theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions. The verse is examined not merely as a historical account or moral fable, but as a manifestation of divine values that transcend time, context, and culture.

The methodological approaches employed in this study include:

- i) **Classical Tafsir Analysis**
Primary references are drawn from traditional works. This analysis focuses on the literal meanings, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (context of revelation), and Qābil's emotional response to the crow's actions.
- ii) **Contemporary Exegetical Readings**
Modern exegeses are consulted to examine how this narrative is interpreted in relation to current issues, such as human dignity, moral decline, and ecological awareness. This approach integrates hermeneutical, sociological, and eco-theological perspectives to uncover the layered meanings within the verse.
- iii) **Integration of Modern Ethological Studies**
The study incorporates insights from ethology, particularly research on crow behavior (*genus Corvus*) in relation to death and burial. These empirical findings substantiate the argument that the Qur'anic depiction of the crow is not only spiritually symbolic but also grounded in biological and ecological realities.
- iv) **Contextual Hermeneutic Reflection**
This approach enables the author to construct meaningful interpretations based on contemporary lived experiences, without detaching from the original intent of the verse. Contextual hermeneutics bridges the scripture with the ethical and ecological crises facing modern humanity, providing a reflective reading of the text.

By synthesizing classical tafsir, contemporary scholarship, and scientific insights, this study seeks to understand the crow's narrative not merely as a formative tale from the dawn of human history but as an enduring story that bridges revelation and reason. It further demonstrates how the Qur'an educates humankind through creatures that, though seemingly ordinary, impart extraordinary lessons.

Results and Discussion

The Qur'anic Crow Narrative: Textual Foundation and Interpretive Traditions

The crow narrative appears in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:30-31), recounting the story of Adam's two sons, Cain and Abel, wherein a crow is depicted demonstrating to the murderer how to bury the body of his slain brother. This brief but powerful narrative has captured scholarly attention because of its multifaceted moral and spiritual dimensions. The narrative's economy of language conceals profound pedagogical potential. Traditional Islamic exegetes have long recognized that the crow functions not merely as a narrative element but as a teacher, a role that inverts conventional understandings of animal agency and non-human contribution to human moral development (Futhira et al., 2025). The crow's demonstration of burial practices introduces themes of dignity, respect for the deceased, and social responsibility, values foundational to Islamic ethics and environmental stewardship.

Contemporary scholarship examining Qur'anic narratives has established that these stories operate on multiple semantic levels simultaneously (Humaedah, 2021). The crow narrative exemplifies this principle. At the surface level, it provides historical context for understanding human mortality and the consequences of transgression. At a deeper level, it communicates ecological principles regarding the respectful treatment of non-human creatures and the interconnectedness of all living beings within a divinely ordered cosmos. The narrative's inclusion in the Qur'an signals that moral lessons can be derived from observing the natural world and recognizing the agency and wisdom present in creatures often considered inferior to humans (Lischontina et al., 2025).

Moral Education Through Qur'anic Animal Narratives

The Qur'an's deployment of animals as moral teachers represents a sophisticated pedagogical strategy. Research on moral education through Qur'anic stories has demonstrated that narratives featuring animals possess particular power in communicating universal ethical principles (Futhira et al., 2025). The crow narrative specifically teaches several interrelated moral lessons: the inevitability of confronting consequences for one's actions, the importance of proper respect for the deceased regardless of circumstances, and the possibility of moral learning from unexpected sources. These lessons, drawn from a non-human actor, underscore a fundamental Islamic principle, that divine wisdom permeates all creation and that humans must remain humble in recognizing sources of moral knowledge.

The pedagogical effectiveness of animal narratives in Islamic contexts derives from their capacity to transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. Unlike human narratives bound by specific historical or social contexts, animal stories communicate through universal behavioral principles that resonate across diverse audiences (Danial et al., 2025). The crow's natural instinct to hide what is dead, when depicted as a response to divine guidance or natural inclination, becomes a teaching moment about proper mourning practices, dignity, and the natural moral sensibilities embedded within creation itself. This narrative approach aligns with contemporary pedagogical theory emphasizing experiential and emotionally engaging learning methodologies over purely cognitive instruction (Nihwan, 2024).

Islamic character education literature increasingly recognizes that stories featuring animals serve as effective instruments for internalization of values. The crow narrative particularly demonstrates how moral lessons become embedded in students' consciousness through narrative identification and emotional resonance (Shifa et al., 2025). When children encounter the crow narrative, they are not simply learning rules about funeral practices; they are experiencing a moment of moral education wherein a non-human creature demonstrates correct behavior,

thereby establishing the norm through action rather than prescription. This narrative methodology proves remarkably effective because it bypasses resistance to explicit moral instruction and instead allows moral principles to emerge organically from the story's unfolding action.

Ecological Ethics and Environmental Stewardship in the Crow Narrative

The crow narrative carries profound implications for Islamic environmental ethics, a domain increasingly recognized as central to Islamic education and sustainability (Ali & Agushi, 2024). The Qur'anic presentation of the crow as a creature capable of demonstrating wisdom to humans fundamentally challenges anthropocentric worldviews that position humans as the sole repository of moral knowledge and agency. Instead, the narrative implies that non-human creatures possess inherent value and contribute meaningfully to the moral order. This perspective aligns with Islamic principles of stewardship (*khalifah*) and balance (*mizān*), which emphasize human responsibility toward the natural world rather than dominion over it.

The crow's role in the narrative can be interpreted as exemplifying the principle of *amanah* (trust), wherein all creatures are understood as being entrusted to human care and responsibility (Sarvestani, 2024). By depicting the crow as teaching proper burial practices, the Qur'an implicitly communicates that ecological knowledge exists within nature itself, accessible to those who observe carefully and humbly. This teaching invokes what contemporary scholarship terms "ecological wisdom" or "spiritual ecology", the understanding that environmental care is not merely a technical or scientific matter but a spiritual and moral obligation rooted in reverence for divine creation (Hossain, 2025).

Recent scholarship on Islamic ecotheology has identified a fundamental shift in understanding the relationship between humans and the natural world within Islamic theology (Ritonga et al., 2025). Traditional anthropocentric readings are being reexamined through frameworks emphasizing the interconnectedness of all creation and the moral status of non-human beings. The crow narrative, in this renewed interpretive context, emerges as a scriptural foundation for understanding that environmental stewardship and moral development are inseparable concerns. The narrative suggests that observing and respecting the behaviors of other creatures constitutes a form of spiritual education, a pathway toward recognizing the signs (*ayat*) of divine wisdom embedded throughout creation (Nur et al., n.d.).

Pedagogical Dimensions: Teaching Methods and Learning Outcomes

The crow narrative's effectiveness as a pedagogical tool relates directly to its narrative structure and the cognitive processes it activates in listeners or readers. Research on Islamic pedagogical approaches has established that Qur'anic stories function optimally when integrated into active learning environments that encourage reflection, discussion, and personal application (Sugiarto, 2025). The crow narrative, being brief and deceptively simple, invites multiple layers of interpretation and discussion, making it suitable for learners at various developmental stages (Futhira et al., 2025).

For early childhood education specifically, the crow narrative presents accessible imagery while containing profound moral complexity. Teachers employing this narrative can use storytelling methodologies enhanced with visual aids, role-play, and guided discussion to help young children internalize principles of respect, responsibility, and the moral agency of non-human creatures (Nihwan, 2024). As learners mature, the same narrative permits increasingly sophisticated interpretations, ranging from practical funeral customs to abstract principles of environmental ethics and the nature of moral knowledge itself. This scalability, the narrative's capacity to serve educational purposes across multiple developmental levels, represents a particular strength of Qur'anic narrative pedagogy (Danial et al., 2025).

Contemporary research on thematic interpretation (*tafsir maudhu'i*) of Qur'anic narratives demonstrates that this approach, when applied to the crow narrative, yields rich insights applicable to contemporary educational contexts (Rahmawati & Khusniyah, 2025). Teachers employing

thematic analysis of the crow narrative can identify recurring principles, respect for the dead, learning from nature, proper mourning, dignity across all circumstances, and then trace these themes throughout the Qur'an and Islamic tradition, creating a coherent educational framework that connects the specific narrative to broader theological and ethical systems.

Integration with Environmental Education and Character Formation

The crow narrative's potential for integration into environmental education curricula has become increasingly recognized in scholarship on Islamic education and sustainability (Jamilah et al., 2023). Environmental education grounded in Islamic values differs significantly from secular environmental curricula by emphasizing spiritual motivation and theological grounding alongside practical ecological knowledge (Noor & Anwar, 2025). The crow narrative contributes to this integration by connecting environmental respect directly to moral and spiritual development rather than framing environmental care as a separate technical concern.

Research on ecological literacy programs in Islamic educational contexts reveals that narratives functioning as moral exemplars, whether human or non-human, prove highly effective in cultivating environmental awareness and responsibility (Taufikin & YUSDANI, 2025). The crow, depicted as a morally wise creature, becomes an ecological exemplar whose behavior instructs humans not only about funeral practices but about humility before nature and recognition of the value inherent in all creatures. This narrative approach to environmental education activates both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, establishing emotional connections to environmental principles that motivate behavioral change more effectively than abstract environmental information alone (Noor & Anwar, 2025).

The integration of the crow narrative into character education programs demonstrates how Islamic values and environmental consciousness can be unified within coherent pedagogical frameworks. When students encounter the crow narrative in contexts emphasizing its ecological dimensions, they simultaneously learn about respectful treatment of animal bodies, recognition of animal agency and wisdom, and the fundamental Islamic principle that all creation deserves respectful stewardship (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023). This integrated approach produces what scholars term "ecological character formation", the development of moral dispositions toward the environment grounded in spiritual and ethical principles rather than mere practical concerns (Ritonga et al., 2025).

Narrative Pedagogy and Spiritual Development

The use of narrative in Islamic education carries particular spiritual significance that extends beyond conventional pedagogy (Yusoff, 2023). The crow narrative, through its depiction of a non-human creature performing correct action, invites spiritual reflection on the nature of guidance, the accessibility of moral knowledge, and the humility required to learn from unexpected sources. This spiritual dimension of narrative pedagogy distinguishes Islamic educational approaches from secular alternatives and contributes to its comprehensive character-forming potential.

Research on tawhid-based environmental literacy specifically emphasizes how narratives serve as vehicles for integrating spiritual awareness with ecological consciousness (Taufikin & YUSDANI, 2025). The crow narrative exemplifies this integration by presenting environmental stewardship not as a separate concern but as an expression of submission to divine order and recognition of divine wisdom manifest in creation. For students engaging with this narrative from within a *tawhid*-centered educational framework, the crow's actions become legible as signs (*ayat*) demonstrating divine wisdom and the proper relationship all creatures should maintain toward creation.

Contemporary Applications and Curriculum Development

Modern Islamic educators have begun systematically incorporating the crow narrative and similar animal stories into curriculum development aimed at fostering both moral development and

ecological consciousness (Albar et al., 2024). The narrative's brevity and conceptual richness make it particularly amenable to adaptation across various educational settings and age groups. Early childhood education programs employ the crow narrative to establish foundational principles of respect and responsibility in accessible, story-based formats. Secondary and tertiary education programs use the same narrative to stimulate philosophical discussion about moral epistemology, environmental ethics, and the relationship between spiritual development and ecological responsibility (Sugianto, 2025).

The integration of the crow narrative into Islamic environmental education curricula responds to recognized needs within contemporary Islamic societies for educational approaches that unite spiritual formation with sustainability consciousness (Taisir et al., 2024). Rather than treating environmental education as an add-on to religious instruction, curricular approaches incorporating narratives like the crow story position ecological stewardship as intrinsic to Islamic spiritual and moral development. This integration proves particularly significant in contexts where environmental degradation threatens social stability and community wellbeing (Karman et al., 2023).

Challenges and Future Directions in Pedagogical Application

While the crow narrative possesses substantial pedagogical potential, realizing this potential requires thoughtful attention to several interpretive and practical challenges. First, the narrative's brevity and apparent simplicity risk superficial interpretation if not accompanied by guided scholarly study and reflection (Rahmawati & Khusniyah, 2025). Teachers utilizing the crow narrative must possess sufficient knowledge of Islamic exegetical traditions and contemporary ecological ethics to guide students toward meaningful interpretations rather than merely retelling the story without encouraging deeper engagement.

Second, the narrative's cultural and historical specificity requires careful contextualization to ensure relevance across diverse educational settings and cultural contexts. While the principles embedded in the crow narrative possess universal significance, their application must be thoughtfully adapted to local circumstances, existing cultural practices, and specific environmental or social challenges facing particular communities (Taufikin & YUSDANI, 2025). Future research should investigate how the crow narrative functions within diverse cultural and educational contexts, identifying culturally specific instantiations of the universal principles it communicates.

Third, systematic research measuring the specific impact of crow narrative-based pedagogy on students' moral development and environmental consciousness remains limited. While research on Qur'anic narrative pedagogy more broadly demonstrates significant positive effects on character formation, empirical studies specifically targeting the crow narrative would strengthen evidence supporting its integration into formal curricula (Noor & Anwar, 2025). Such research would need to employ mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative measures of behavioral change with qualitative analysis of students' interpretive frameworks and value internalization.

Toward a Holistic Understanding of the Crow Narrative's Educational Significance

The crow narrative stands as a remarkable example of how the Qur'an communicates complex moral and ecological principles through economical narrative means. The scholarly literature examined in this review demonstrates that this brief story carries profound implications for Islamic moral education, environmental ethics, and spiritual development. The narrative's power derives partly from its deployment of a non-human character as moral exemplar, thereby challenging anthropocentric perspectives and inviting recognition of wisdom and value throughout creation. Through the crow's action, the narrative communicates principles of respect, dignity, responsibility, and humility, values central to both Islamic spirituality and contemporary environmental consciousness.

The pedagogical effectiveness of the crow narrative rests upon its capacity to operate simultaneously at multiple levels of interpretation and meaning-making. For young children, it

teaches respect for the dead and recognition of proper practices. For mature scholars, it invites philosophical reflection on moral epistemology and the accessibility of divine guidance. For educators concerned with environmental consciousness, it establishes scriptural grounding for understanding stewardship as a spiritual obligation rooted in recognition of creation's intrinsic value. This multivalence makes the narrative particularly suitable for application across diverse educational contexts and developmental stages.

Moving forward, educators and scholars should undertake systematic efforts to integrate the crow narrative more thoroughly into Islamic educational curricula, coupled with empirical research investigating the specific impacts of narrative-based pedagogy on students' moral and ecological development. Greater attention to the narrative's potential for establishing connections between spiritual formation and environmental consciousness could contribute significantly to addressing both contemporary moral crises and ecological challenges facing Muslim-majority societies. The crow narrative reminds us that moral wisdom exists in unexpected places and that true spiritual development requires humility, careful observation of the natural world, and recognition that guidance comes to those who remain attentive to the signs of divine wisdom embedded throughout creation.

The Qur'anic narratives are not mere historical accounts but divinely revealed texts that carry profound moral and theological insights, offering timeless wisdom. One such narrative, though brief, yet rich in meaning, is the account of Qābil and the crow in Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31. This verse transcends the mere description of the first murder in human history; it illustrates how Allah imparts moral education through an unexpected creature, a crow. This study examines this verse through three critical dimensions, utilizing a thematic exegesis (*tafsīr maudhu'ī*) approach: (a) the theological dimension, which explores the crow as an instrument of divine pedagogy; (b) the ethical dimension, focusing on Qābil's remorse as the beginning of moral awareness; and (c) the ecological dimension, which considers nature as a medium of divine instruction. By integrating classical *tafsīr* with contemporary scholarship and modern scientific insights, this study aims to demonstrate how this narrative presents a holistic worldview about human relationships with divine revelation, moral conduct, and the natural environment.

a. The Theological Dimension

A central theological aspect of the crow narrative in Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31, is Allah's deliberate choice of a creature, often marginalized in human perception, a crow, as an agent of divine guidance. In modern epistemology, this choice can be interpreted as a challenge to the traditional hierarchies that govern the transmission of knowledge. It subverts the assumption that only humans, prophets, or beings of elevated status are worthy of conveying divine wisdom. Instead, the crow functions as a mediator between the heavens and the earth, between divine command and human confusion. Qābil, stunned after killing his brother, does not receive verbal revelation but learns through the symbolic act of a crow digging the earth and burying a body. This event demonstrates that divine instruction and moral correction need not always come through spoken or written revelations but can be conveyed through symbolic acts and observation of the natural world (Nasr, 1996b).

This theological perspective underscores humility as a prerequisite for acquiring knowledge. Human beings often adhere to the belief that truth must descend from what is "high", in terms of status, title, or form, overlooking the fact that, within the framework of *tawhīd* (divine unity), wisdom can emanate from the most unassuming sources. This aligns with the Islamic tradition's emphasis on *tawādu'* (humility), which asserts that only those who humble themselves are truly capable of grasping the essence of knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2000). Furthermore, the narrative challenges classical anthropocentrism in epistemology, highlighting that knowledge is not the exclusive domain of humans. The crow, traditionally viewed with disdain, becomes a moral teacher, revealing that the natural world is not merely a utilitarian entity but a semiotic text (*āyāt*

kauniyyah) to be read with both intellect and heart (Izutsu, 2002). This narrative, thus, highlights the universality of divine guidance, showing that Allah's wisdom is not confined to specific forms or exclusive channels.

b. The Ethical Dimension

The ethical core of Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31, emerges poignantly when Qābil, having just committed the first murder in human history, witnesses a crow digging into the earth to bury another crow. In this moment of silent pedagogy, Qābil awakens from his moral stupor, exclaiming, "Woe unto me! Am I not even capable of doing what this crow has done?" This statement is not merely an expression of frustration but a profound cry of existential despair. Qābil is not only lamenting the act of killing his brother; he is confronting his moral failure. His guilt arises not from fear of punishment, but from an internal realization of his moral deficiency. In Islamic ethics, this represents *nadam*, true remorse born from inner awareness rather than external compulsion (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

The ethical turning point in this narrative is particularly striking due to its simplicity. Qābil is not rebuked through divine speech or prophetic correction; instead, he is silently corrected by the crow's instinctive behavior, which reflects a value Qābil failed to uphold: respect for the dead. As Ibn Kathīr (1999) explains in his tafsir, Allah sent the crow not only to teach burial rites but also to awaken in Qābil the conscience he had suppressed. From a broader ethical perspective, this narrative suggests that moral awareness is often ignited not by complex arguments but by intimate, affective experiences, especially those that provoke shame, empathy, or sudden self-realization. Charles Taylor (1989) posits that ethical identity is shaped by "moral sources" that are affective and embodied, rather than purely cognitive. In this case, Qābil's moral awakening is prompted by an act of observation: he learns through seeing, understanding, and feeling the weight of his wrongdoing.

Moreover, this episode critiques moral arrogance and emotional detachment, traits often associated with the ego (*nafsi*). Qābil's violence stems from jealousy, pride, and self-ignorance, while his remorse marks a return to vulnerability, humility, and self-awareness. The crow, thus, serves as a mirror, reflecting not only the actions that Qābil should have taken but also the person he ought to have been. In conclusion, the ethical dimension of this verse teaches that moral reckoning often comes not from external punishment but from self-reflection, sometimes sparked through the most unexpected channels.

c. Ecological Dimension

An often-overlooked but profoundly relevant aspect of Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31, is its ecological resonance. This interpretation encourages readers to consider how divine guidance can emerge not only from scripture (*al-āyāt al-matluwwah*) but also from creation itself (*al-āyāt al-manzūrah*). In this verse, the crow is presented not merely as a functional character in the narrative, but as a pedagogical agent embedded in the natural world. This approach invites an eco-theological reading of the Qur'an (Foltz, 2003; Nasr, 1996a).

From an ecological perspective, crows (genus *Corvus*) are not simple creatures. Ethological studies have documented their intelligence, complex social behavior, and remarkable communication skills (Emery & Clayton, 2004). More strikingly, research has observed what appear to be "funerary behaviors" among crows, where they gather around deceased members of their species, engage in moments of stillness, and sometimes cover the bodies with leaves or twigs, behaviors suggesting awareness, social learning, and possibly grief (Iglesias et al., 2012). The Qur'anic depiction of the crow's role in burial practices aligns with these scientific findings, suggesting that the crow's behavior reflects a deeper, divinely inspired intelligence.

This ecological interpretation challenges anthropocentric perspectives that place humans as the sole possessors of knowledge and moral capacity. In the Qur'an, the crow serves as a moral teacher, and through its instinctive actions, it becomes part of a larger pedagogical system where

even the most unassuming creatures can convey profound lessons. As the Qur'an affirms, "And there is no creature on Earth, nor bird that flies with its wings, except that they are communities like you" (Qur'an 6:38), reinforcing the idea that animals, too, possess knowledge and agency. This reading aligns with Islamic metaphysics, where all of creation, including animals, is in a state of continuous glorification of God (*tasbiḥ*), even if humans fail to perceive it (Qur'an 17:44).

Thus, the crow's role in this narrative disrupts anthropocentric hierarchies, repositioning nature as a legitimate source of divine wisdom. It teaches humility in our relationship with the natural world and emphasizes that every creature has a divine purpose in the cosmic order. As Khalid (2002) argues, the natural world is a repository of divine signs, and humanity's role as *khalifah* is not to dominate, but to learn, protect, and live in harmony with creation.

Cultural perceptions often associate crows with negativity, symbols of death, misfortune, and ill omens. Yet, the Qur'an upends this reductionist view, elevating the crow to a position of divine importance. In Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31, the crow is not merely a passive observer but an active moral instructor, imparting lessons on burial and prompting Qābil's moral awakening. This narrative challenges traditional understandings of where wisdom can be found, showing that divine instruction can come from the most unexpected sources. Through a synthesis of classical exegesis, contemporary scholarship, and ethological insights, this study demonstrates that the crow's role in the Qur'an is not merely symbolic but deeply interdisciplinary, engaging with theology, ethics, and ecology in a unified Islamic worldview. This story serves as a reminder that wisdom is not confined to traditional channels but can emerge from the humble, the overlooked, and the seemingly insignificant, if we remain open to learning.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the crow narrative in Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 31, functions not only as a moral tale but also as a pedagogical tool rich in theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions. Through the thematic exegesis approach, this research demonstrates that moral understanding, ecological awareness, and human relationships with the Creator can be explored through the symbolism of nature, without relying solely on verbal or written revelation. The primary contribution of this study lies in emphasizing the importance of integrating modern scientific insights, such as ethology, with religious studies to create a more holistic understanding of moral education in Islam. However, this study has its limitations, particularly in the availability of scientific data regarding crow behavior and its influence on moral learning. Further research is needed to explore how other natural elements in the Qur'an can be interpreted for moral educational purposes. The practical implications of this study involve the application of a multidisciplinary approach in Islamic education, integrating theology, ethics, and ecology. Incorporating these ideas into the educational curriculum can help develop the character of the younger generation, making them more attuned to the environment and wiser in acting according to universal moral principles. As a policy recommendation, it is crucial to integrate ecological and moral values into religious education, enabling students to develop a balanced spiritual and ecological awareness.

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