

Teaching Literature, Teaching Values, and Advancing SDG 4: A Case Study of UNESCO Core Values in an Indonesian Islamic University

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To investigate lecturers' and students' views of UNESCO core values in literature teaching and to examine how these values are manifested in literary learning at a Muhammadiyah University in East Java, Indonesia. **Method:** Employing a qualitative case study design involving three literature lecturers and thirty-one undergraduate students. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, literary analysis activities, field notes, and document analysis. **Results:** The findings show that both lecturers and students strongly support the integration of UNESCO core values into literature teaching. Among the eight UNESCO core values, religiosity emerged as the most dominant value, reflecting the institutional philosophy of Muhammadiyah education. The values were integrated through literary analysis, classroom interaction, teaching materials, and lecturers' role modeling. Literature classrooms also promoted empathy, tolerance, responsibility, compassion, and social awareness while maintaining literary appreciation and critical inquiry. **Novelty:** Offering a novel contribution by examining the integration of UNESCO Core Values into literature teaching within an Indonesian Islamic higher education context, demonstrating how literature can function as a vehicle for values-based education while advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, which emphasizes education for sustainable development, global citizenship, cultural diversity, and the promotion of peace and human values. The findings extend the discourse on holistic education by illustrating how literary learning fosters students' literary competence, ethical awareness, character development, and social responsibility within a faith-based university setting.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian education is mandated to pursue goals deeper than students' cognitive achievement alone, aiming at the formation of human virtues such as kindness, honesty, compassion, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence. The National Education System Law (Undang-Undang Sisdiknas No. 20/2003) defines national education as education based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, rooted in religious values and national culture, and responsive to the demands of a changing world (DIKBUD, 2016). In line with these foundational ideas, literary teaching in higher education is expected to be concerned with value issues rather than focusing solely on literary theory or textual analysis. Literature, as a subject, is inherently loaded with cultural and human values and therefore offers rich potential for value education. Research shows that literary teaching has indeed been directed towards value-related goals such as cultural understanding and personal involvement (Svensson & Karlsson, 2020; Ali Imron & Nugrahani, 2019). Approaches like the Personal Growth Approach and the Dialogic Model emphasize the role of literature in engaging students' experiences, emotions, and moral reasoning (Yusufova, 2020; Seymour et al., 2020). In this sense, literary teaching has established itself as a field that should be explicitly connected to cultural and ethical values and not only to aesthetic or linguistic aspects.

This educational orientation is also consistent with the global agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education),

which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. More specifically, Target 4.7 emphasizes that learners should acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, and competencies needed to promote sustainable development, including education for global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity, peace, human rights, and responsible citizenship. Within this framework, literature teaching offers a meaningful pedagogical space for cultivating these competencies because literary texts encourage critical reflection, empathy, intercultural understanding, ethical reasoning, and respect for diverse perspectives. Consequently, integrating UNESCO core values into literature education represents not only an institutional educational objective but also a practical contribution to achieving SDG 4 through values-based and holistic higher education.

Despite this strong theoretical grounding, the practical implementation of value-oriented literary teaching is not always evident. A preliminary reflection in the English Department of a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (MUEJ), which forms the context of this study, indicates a lack of deliberate value discussions in literature classes. The department offers core literature courses such as Introduction to Literature, Prose Appreciation, Poetry Appreciation, and Drama Appreciation, and serves around 200 students from different regions of East Java and Indonesia, including some international students from ASEAN countries. All students are Muslims, generally affiliated with Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul Ulama, and four lecturers (three active, one inactive) are responsible for literature subjects.

During a pre-survey phase, class visits and informal conversations with lecturers and students were conducted to observe teaching strategies and classroom environments in relation to values and Muhammadiyah's core values. The classes were held weekly for 100 minutes over 16 meetings and typically used lecturing, discussion, and student presentations. Although the classes were interactive—lecturers did not dominate, students were encouraged to ask questions and share opinions, and presentations allowed for different interpretations of literary works—very few explicit value issues emerged in the discussions. Literary works tended to be treated as subject matter for analysis using various schools of criticism, with little attention to the values embedded in texts. In some instances, lecturers invited students to reflect on the “message” of a work, which may be seen as an initial step toward value exploration, but these moments were not systematically developed. This portrait suggests a gap between the value-laden nature of literature and the actual teaching practice in the department.

The situation in MUEJ echoes findings from other contexts. Basthomi's (2003) study of theses written by English Department students at Malang State University showed that literature-related research rarely addressed value education, focusing instead on literary analysis topics such as psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism. A similar pattern appeared in an initial investigation of bachelor theses at MUEJ, where students' final papers between 2018 and 2021 concentrated on theoretical approaches to literary works and almost never engaged explicitly with value issues (UMSurabaya, 2021). These findings indicate a wider tendency in English literature programs to neglect values in both classroom practice and research, despite the recognition that literature is value-bound.

Scholars argue that this situation reflects a broader gap between pedagogy and the inherent character of literary teaching as highly value-laden. Contemporary literary teaching tends to have a strong disciplinary focus emphasizing literary history, theory, and criticism while paying less attention to the affective and ethical dimensions that literature can foster (Towndrow & Kwek, 2017). In the Indonesian context, Suwadi (2021) reminds us that the

main purpose of teaching and learning literature is to appreciate values contained in society, suggesting that affective dimensions should be prioritized over purely cognitive aspects. Against this backdrop, there is an increasing concern to revisit fundamental questions: What is the purpose of teaching literature? Is it sufficient to build students' competence in literary analysis while ignoring the value aspects of literary texts? If the essential goal of education is to help students develop fully as members of society, then literature teaching should offer space for exploration of human values through the "various problems of the world" and "man's unconquerable mind" with its humanizing influence and revelation of everyday life, as portrayed in literary works (Hart et al., 2020).

Values can be transferred through what has been called "poetic thinking," which favors harmony over power and receptiveness over imposition, and through "narrative thinking," which engages readers with people, events, and motives to provide deeper insights into life (Trzebiński et al., 2021; Prahaladaiah, 2021). Within literary criticism, values have long been discussed, including through religious approaches and the study of religious influences in early modern literature (Ziolkowski, 2021; Blamires, 2020; Walton, 2019; Chakraborty, 2021). Yet in many classrooms, discussions tend to focus on political, racial, or post-colonial issues while leaving aside human complexities related to values and aesthetic excellence (Cox, 2011). Mambu (2014) illustrates the challenges lecturers face when addressing religious values in class, encountering student resistance and highlighting the scarcity of research on values in literary teaching, particularly in religiously affiliated universities. Little awareness of value issues risks wasting the potential of literature as a source of inspiration for achieving the fundamental educational goal of forming the whole person body and soul, physical and spiritual.

Within this context, the present study positions itself as an exploration of core values as an embedded factor in literary teaching, particularly in a Muhammadiyah \university setting. Muhammadiyah, although rooted in local and religious contexts, has a strong historical and ideological openness to global culture and dialogue with other civilizations. Its values share significant common ground with UNESCO's eight core values – health and harmony with nature, truth and wisdom, love and compassion, creativity and appreciation of beauty, peace and justice, sustainable human development, national unity and global solidarity, and global religiosity – making UNESCO's framework a relevant reference for this study (UNESCO, 2002). Considering that Muhammadiyah values are already studied intensively in "Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyahan" courses, this research focuses instead on how UNESCO's core values can be revealed in literature teaching in a Muhammadiyah university. This study concerns the major problem of how core values can be contained in literary works and possibly revealed during the teaching-learning process. The main research problem is specified in the following question: What are the views of literary lecturers and students of a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (MUEJ) about UNESCO's core values and their inclusion in teaching literature?

The study therefore responds to the increasing concern about values in literature teaching by investigating lecturers' and students' views on core values and examining how these values emerge overtly or covertly in literary analysis, classroom experiences, and the selection of materials. By doing so, it seeks to address the gap between the value-oriented foundations of Indonesian and Muhammadiyah education and the current practice of literary teaching, and to contribute to the development of a more explicitly value-oriented model of literature teaching in higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews scholarly discussions relevant to core values in literary teaching.

Values and core values

Core values grow out of the wider notion of values. Values have been described as culturally conditioned "mental programs" or "software of the mind" that guide judgments about what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable (Hofstede et al., 2010). They are learned rather than inherited, acquired early in life through a complex network of family, peers, education, and religious practices, and usually operate at a largely subconscious level (Rokeach & Hofstede, 2010). Like the grammar of a language, values are often mastered and applied without being explicitly articulated; they provide the basic "social criteria" and "cultural assumptions" used to decide what is acceptable in a given society (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Because of their deep and often implicit nature, values tend to be relatively stable in adult life. Inglehart (2008) argues that value systems are shaped primarily during childhood and adolescence; major changes occur more often across generations than within a single lifespan. Values can be defined as conceptions of the desirable that influence choices and behaviors (Deth & Scarbrough, 1995) or as enduring beliefs that a particular mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable to its opposite (Rokeach, 1973). Despite the variety of formulations, there is broad agreement that values are closely linked to moral concerns, responsibility, and what people find worthy of pursuit (Bertens, 2000; Bieling et al., 2020; Turchin, 2019).

The literature distinguishes between general values and "core values" or "consensus values" values considered to be shared across cultures, religions, and social groups (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework identifies value patterns such as power distance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation, each representing underlying core value tendencies (Hofstede et al., 2010). Rokeach (1973) differentiates between terminal values (desired end-states, such as freedom, equality or self-respect) and instrumental values (modes of behavior, such as honesty, ambition, or self-control) and suggests that many of these are widely shared but ranked differently in importance by individuals and societies (Feather, 1986; Kiryakova, 2020). Inglehart (2008) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) propose cultural continua of traditionalism versus secular-rationalism and survival versus self-expression, revealing patterns that correlate with other value typologies and highlight the emergence of self-expression values such as tolerance, environmental concern, and responsible citizenship.

UNESCO brings these strands together in its formulation of eight core values within a holistic education framework: health and harmony with nature, truth and wisdom, love and compassion, creativity and appreciation of beauty, peace and justice, sustainable human development, national unity and global solidarity, and global religiosity (UNESCO, 2002). Each of these core values corresponds to a cluster of more specific values, ranging from holistic health and respect for life to critical and holistic thinking, empathy and sharing, artistic expression, human rights, social responsibility, economic justice, democratic citizenship, and religious tolerance (Chien & Liao, 2021; Miller, 2021; Morris, 2022). All converge around the central principle of respect for human dignity.

In Indonesia, the National Education Law (UU Sisdiknas No. 20/2003) and subsequent character education policy articulate core values in terms of faith in the One God, noble character, health, knowledge, skill, creativity, independence, democracy, and responsibility

(DIKBUD, 2016). These are further elaborated as religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard-working, creative, independent, democratic, inquisitive, patriotic, achievement-oriented, friendly and communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmentally and socially caring, and responsible (DIKBUD, 2016; Permendikbud No. 57, 58, 59, 60). Within Muhammadiyah's extensive educational network, core values compatible with UNESCO and national frameworks are formulated in terms of human, Islamic, and Indonesian spheres, emphasizing religiosity, intellectuality, cultural nobility, virtue, civility, perseverance, progress, enlightened education, prophetic leadership, and public civility (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2015). These formulations provide a rich basis for exploring core values in higher education, including literature teaching.

Core values as elements of culture

Core values are best understood within the broader context of culture. Dewantara defines culture as the fruit of human efforts to pursue progress and virtue, while Hofstede famously describes it as "the collective programming of the mind" that distinguishes groups from one another (Dewantara, 1977; Hofstede et al., 2010). Culture is acquired through learning, not inherited, and encompasses knowledge, experience, ideologies, beliefs, material artifacts, and shared notions of the world that are transmitted across generations. It is deeply rooted, often taken for granted, and shapes people's perceptions and behaviors in powerful but sometimes invisible ways.

Hofstede's "onion" model portrays culture as consisting of values at the core and practices at the outer layers, including symbols, heroes, and rituals (Hofstede et al., 2010). Values, lying at the deepest level, are the most enduring and the hardest to change; they can only be inferred from observable practices over time. Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry particular meanings; heroes are real or fictional figures who embody admired characteristics; and rituals are collective activities considered socially essential, such as greetings, religious practices, or formal ceremonies. Together, these practices express and reinforce the underlying value system.

In this perspective, core values are those value assumptions that are widely shared within or across cultures and that give coherence to cultural practices. They are closely related to moral orientation and provide standards for judging behavior. Scholars highlight that values: (1) can only be discerned through practices; (2) are linked to responsibility and moral judgment; (3) represent conceptions of the desirable; and (4) form interconnected systems rather than isolated items (Bertens, 2000; Deth & Scarbrough, 1995; Rokeach, 1973). Because they are internalized early and anchored in collective experience, changing core values is a difficult, long-term process.

Core values in literature and in the teaching of literature

Literature has long been viewed as a privileged domain for the exploration and transmission of values. Pieper laments the modern loss of contemplation in favor of functionality and efficiency, and suggests that the arts, including literature, offer space for "poetic thinking" – a mode of thinking oriented toward harmony, receptiveness, and celebration rather than domination (Bohlin, 2005). Bruner's notion of "narrative thinking" similarly highlights how stories engage people with characters, events, and intentions, allowing them to understand lives different from their own and to reflect on their values and choices (Bruner, 2020; Blocksidge, 2000).

In this sense, literary texts can be seen as laboratories of human experience where values are dramatized, contested, and renegotiated. Stories appeal to and shape human emotion, serving as a way of thinking and as the "soul" and "consciousness" of a culture (Livo, 2003). Values are woven into plots, characters, settings, and symbols, and reveal themselves through archetypal patterns and collective memories (Burnett et al., 2018; Rowland & Marwaha, 2018). Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes that a person's philosophical standpoint develops alongside changes in their verbal and ideological points of view; literary discourse is inherently value-laden and dialogic, bringing multiple value orientations into contact (Bakhtin, 1981; Klancher, 2020).

Historical and contemporary criticism has often addressed values explicitly, including through religious approaches to literature. Studies have examined the influence of religion in early modern texts, Civil War utopias, and later literary movements, showing that ethical and theological questions persist alongside social, economic, and political concerns (Ziolkowski, 2021; Blamires, 2020; Walton, 2019; Chakraborty, 2021). More recently, scholars have noted that, in many literature classrooms, political, racial, and post-colonial issues tend to dominate discussions, while complexities related to human values and aesthetic excellence receive less focused attention (Cox, 2011).

From an educational perspective, the consensus is that teaching is never value-free and that values should be of concern in curriculum and pedagogy (Al-Hooli & Shammari, 2009; Barsky, 2019; Taylor & Richards, 2018). Straughan (2012) distinguishes four models of values education: value transmission, values neutrality, values clarification, and values across the curriculum. Value transmission assumes that values are inevitably conveyed through teaching, often via the hidden curriculum, even without explicit planning. Values neutrality presents topics for discussion while the teacher remains neutral, facilitating debate rather than promoting particular values. Values clarification focuses on helping students become consciously aware of and reflect on their values through activities such as discussion, games, and role play. Values across the curriculum combines the insights of both approaches, emphasizing that all subjects, including literature, have moral dimensions that can be addressed deliberately through content, methods, and classroom interaction.

These models parallel theoretical positions on values. Rokeach (1973) stresses that value teaching often has a dogmatic dimension values are taught as relatively absolute and stable principles which, if internalized, become deeply rooted and enduring. Hofstede and Inglehart, by contrast, emphasize how values function at a largely unconscious level as part of the taken-for-granted cultural environment (Hofstede et al., 2010; Inglehart, 2008). In practice, higher education tends to rely more on implicit approaches, especially through hidden curricula, while explicit values programs are more common in primary and secondary education (Margolis, 2001).

In the domain of literature teaching, these insights imply that it is neither realistic nor desirable to attempt value-free instruction. As Beach et al. (2011) observe, teaching literature requires attention to both theory and practice. Literature retains an established place in language education because of its cultural and human significance, yet there is often a gap between curricular rhetoric and classroom realities (Cox, 2011; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017). Studies have shown that much classroom time is devoted to literary elements and character analysis, while moral values and broader value issues occupy only a small portion of discussion (Sidhu & Fook, 2010). This suggests a need to rethink literature teaching so that core values particularly those articulated by UNESCO, national policy, and institutions like

Muhammadiyah are more consciously explored through literary analysis, classroom experience, and material selection.

The present study draws on this body of work to conceptualize core values as an embedded dimension of literary teaching rather than an external add-on. It uses UNESCO's eight core values, contextualized within Indonesian and Muhammadiyah frameworks, as an analytic lens to investigate how values are understood and emerge in literature classrooms at a Muhammadiyah University.

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter describes the research design, setting, participants, procedures, data sources, and instruments used to investigate core values in the teaching of literature at a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (MUEJ).

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine: (1) lecturers' and students' views of UNESCO core values in literature teaching, and (2) the manifestation of these values through literary analysis, classroom experiences, and teaching materials. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of social phenomena in natural settings and facilitates the collection of rich, descriptive data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted within the real-life context of literature teaching at a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (MUEJ). Following case study principles, the research investigated a bounded system and relied on multiple sources of evidence, including questionnaires, interviews, observations, field notes, and document analysis (Yin, 2003; Duff, 2008). Data were collected throughout one academic semester to develop a contextualized understanding of how core values were perceived and enacted in literary classrooms.

Research setting

The research was conducted at MUEJ, a private Islamic university whose vision emphasizes religious and moral development. The institution was selected because it provides a value-oriented educational environment where character formation is an important educational objective. To ensure confidentiality, the university is identified using a pseudonym.

The study focused on the English Department, which offers compulsory literature courses such as Introduction to Literature, Prose Appreciation, Drama Appreciation, and Poetry Appreciation, as well as several literature-related electives. These courses provided relevant settings for investigating the integration of UNESCO core values in literary teaching. Data collection took place during the second semester of the 2019/2020 academic year. Extended engagement enabled the researcher to observe classroom practices and identify patterns related to value integration over time.

Researcher's role

The researcher served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. As a literature lecturer at the institution, she possessed familiarity with the university culture and maintained professional relationships with participating lecturers. This insider position facilitated access and prolonged engagement in the field.

To reduce potential bias, the researcher employed reflexive practices, maintained field notes, and triangulated findings across interviews, observations, and documents. Participating lecturers retained full autonomy in selecting literary texts and instructional approaches, while the researcher focused on documenting and interpreting value-related practices.

Research procedures

The research procedures were organized around the two research questions. Lecturers' and students' views of UNESCO core values were explored through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires examined participants' understanding of core values and their attitudes toward integrating these values into literature teaching and learning.

The manifestation of core values was investigated through literary analysis activities, classroom observations, interviews, field notes, and document analysis. Students analyzed literary texts using a structured literary analysis table designed to identify UNESCO core values reflected in themes, characters, conflicts, and settings. Their findings were presented and discussed in class before being analyzed by the researcher.

Classroom experiences related to values were documented through lecturer narratives, observation records, and interviews. Additional interviews explored lecturers' considerations in selecting literary materials and the extent to which value-related concerns influenced their choices.

Data sources and instruments

Multiple sources of data were utilized, including lecturers, students, institutional documents, students' written work, classroom observations, and field notes. Three literature lecturers were selected through criterion sampling based on their academic qualifications, literature background, and teaching experience. Thirty-one students participated in questionnaires and literary analysis activities, while selected students were interviewed to provide diverse perspectives.

Documentary sources included curricula, syllabi, course outlines, student assignments, literary analysis reports, and institutional documents. These materials provided contextual information regarding educational goals and value integration within the department.

Four primary instruments were employed: questionnaires, interview guides, observation guides, and a literary analysis table. Questionnaires examined participants' understanding and prioritization of UNESCO core values. Interview guides explored perceptions of value integration and religiosity in literature teaching. Observation guides focused on classroom interactions and value-related practices, while the literary analysis table enabled systematic identification of core values within literary texts.

The use of multiple data sources and instruments strengthened the credibility of the findings and provided a comprehensive understanding of how UNESCO core values were conceptualized and implemented in literature teaching at MUEJ.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Lecturers' views of values and core values in literary teaching

This section examines how literature lecturers at MUEJ understand values and core values and how they see these reflected in their teaching, based on questionnaires and individual

interviews. All three lecturers agreed that values are inherently contained in literary works and that their own values inevitably manifest in their teaching.

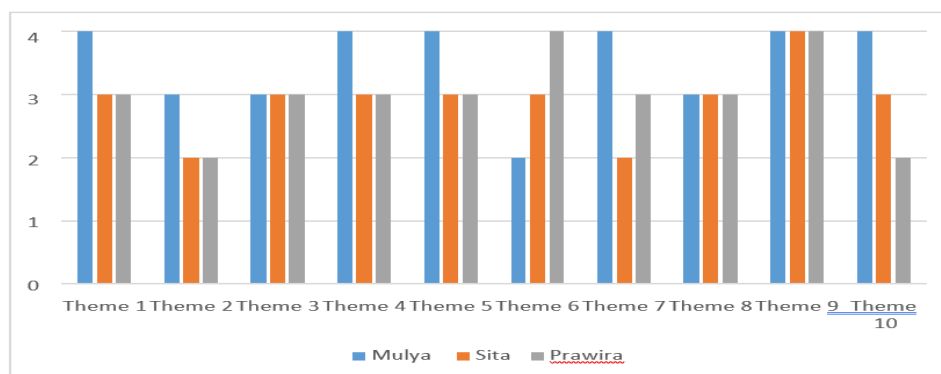


Figure 1. Lecturers' views of values and core values in literary teaching (Themes 1–10)

Figure 1 summarizes lecturers' responses to ten themes: (1) the extent to which personal values manifest in teaching; (2) whether value content is more important than the subject matter; (3) the degree of conscious planning for values; (4) emphasis on moral values in teaching; (5) belief in universal core values; (6) the idea that moral values are only personal opinion; (7) the duty to teach socially dominant values; (8) shared values with colleagues; (9) the favorability of the teaching environment for values education; and (10) the need to strengthen both lecturers' and students' values through literature teaching.

Mulya strongly agreed with themes (1), (4), (5), (7), (9), and (10), agreed with themes (2), (3), and (8), and disagreed with theme (6). Asked about the place of values in teaching literature, he stated clearly:

"I think we should discuss many values in the literature context, and my teaching is very much determined by values, I mean, like in literary analysis, classroom interaction, syllabus, and teaching strategies. As lecturers, we have a duty to lead our students to realize their morality. So, to me, values are not a private or personal matter." (Interview, February 13, 2019)

Sita agreed with most value-related statements but was more cautious about explicit value talk. She strongly agreed only with theme (9), agreed with themes (1), (3), (4), (5), (8), and (10), and disagreed with themes (2) and (7). When asked whether she should announce in advance what values she plans to address, she responded:

"Do I need to announce to the class that I'm going to discuss such and such values? I don't talk about the topic of values very much in my class, but if a literary lecturer wants to bring up the issues of values in some ways, it must not preoccupy all literary class hours." (Interview, February 13, 2019)

Prawira, by contrast, agreed that values have a place in literary teaching but insisted that the curriculum should determine what is taught. He strongly agreed with themes (6) and (9), agreed with themes (1), (3), (4), (5), (7), and (8), and disagreed with themes (2) and (10). He explained:

"Is there a place for values and core values in literary teaching? I would say yes, there is. Should they determine what should be taught in literary class? I don't think it should

determine it. What should determine what is taught is what is stated in the curriculum. That's what should define the topics we teach. Lecturers and students can analyze literary works and derive values from them. Okay. So, it's not that we forbid the teaching of values or morals, but we teach topics that prepare good literature readers." (Interview, April 3, 2019)

These responses illustrate both shared conviction that values matter and divergent views on how central or explicit value teaching should be in literature classes.

Lecturers' core value preferences

In addition to general views, lecturers were asked which UNESCO core values they would prioritize in their teaching: (1) health and harmony with nature; (2) truth and wisdom; (3) love and compassion; (4) creativity and appreciation of beauty; (5) peace and justice; (6) sustainable human development; (7) national unity and global solidarity; and (8) global religiosity.

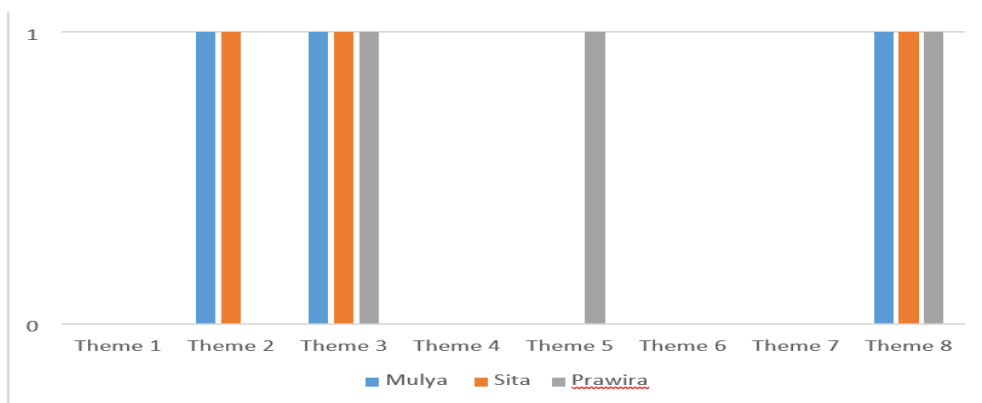


Figure 2. Lecturers' UNESCO core value preferences

As shown in Chart 4.2, Mulya prioritized truth and wisdom, love and compassion, creativity and appreciation of beauty, and global religiosity. Sita highlighted truth and wisdom, love and compassion, and global religiosity, while Prawira prioritized love and compassion, peace and justice, and global religiosity. All three lecturers thus placed particular emphasis on love and compassion and global religiosity, with truth and wisdom also prominent for two of them.

When discussing religious values, Mulya equated values strongly with religious devotion, remarking that "what really makes us different is religion and other values," and criticizing colleagues who delayed prayer or failed to greet students with salaam in an Islamic university context (Interview, February 27, 2019).

Sita, when asked how she addresses spiritual values, described herself as a facilitator of value talk:

"So, if you ask me how I address spiritual values in my classroom, I feel like I'm a central point who has the power to trigger students to talk about religious and find common ground in spiritual values." (Interview, March 6, 2019)

At the same time, she expressed reluctance to "preach," given that students already receive religious education in their families and previous schooling:

"All of our students are Moslems with different levels of religiosity. Some are deeply Muslim, but many are not. But I believe all of them get enough religious teaching or, as you say, 'religious values' from their family since they were little. So, I think I don't have to preach more about religion or Islamic teaching. But I think I can still remind them of general values like honesty, integrity, love, forgiveness, and things like that." (Interview, March 6, 2019)

Interestingly, while Prawira personally identified as a committed Muhammadiyah activist, he described his values as private and was hesitant to address religious issues directly in class:

"For me, value is my personal, private matter. So, I will not include it in my teaching." (Interview, March 5, 2019)

He further explained:

"On the other hand, I'm also scared about bringing my religious perspective to the classroom because, you know, fear of being too directive to students who might be, you know, not too religious who will feel uncomfortable with me addressing religious issues explicitly." (Interview, March 6, 2019)

These quotations show that while lecturers conceptually support integrating core values especially religious values their comfort levels and strategies vary considerably.

Students' views of core values in literature learning

Students' questionnaire responses and interviews reveal that they see literature teaching as naturally connected to values and expect lecturers to address value issues, especially in a Muhammadiyah university. They agreed that literary texts should be used to discuss core values and felt that lecturers already introduce values to some extent.

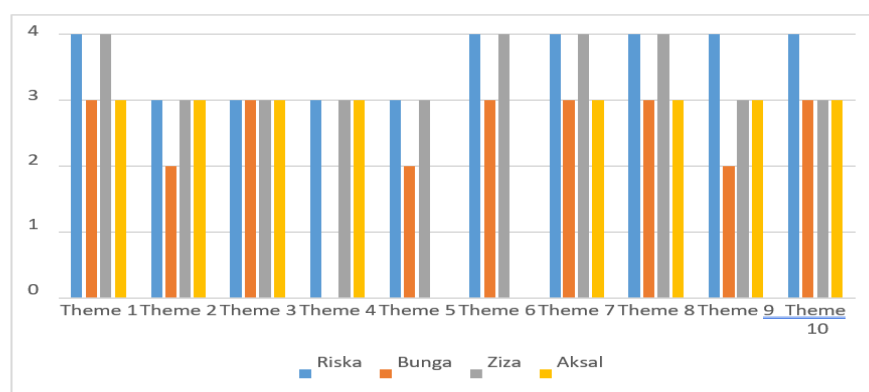


Figure 3. Students' views of core values and their inclusion in literature learning

Students reported that lecturers occasionally linked literary theory and texts to real-life moral issues. One student, Rizka, noted:

"Once and often, lecturers also give moral values in literature. For example, in one literary theory, which is connected to the surrounding environment, the lecturers talked about the way we behave in the community and the way we communicate with others.

They discussed that values shape the character of honesty and goodness and that values must be instilled in ourselves. We are, for example, connected to a poem or story."

Asked whether they had ever engaged in class discussions explicitly related to core values, the students answered positively. Rizka stated:

"Yes, I have. We talk about anything in core value."

Aksal elaborated:

"Yes, I have. We talk about anything in core value. As far as I remember, there was one moment, meaning one moment for one lecturer, and there was a special discussion about the values behind grading. Even just now, in semester 7, in the field of poetry, he talked about moral values."

Bunga and Ziza simply confirmed, "Yes."

When asked what they thought about lecturers who do not consider values as part of their teaching, students expressed disappointment. Rizka responded:

"It is very unfortunate if the core values are not brought into the teaching of literature, because both are related to life."

Aksal added:

"What to give or not to give is the right of the lecturers. But from the point of view of a student, it is very unfortunate. Again, even though it's their right to consider or not consider values in their teaching practice, it's a pity. It should be a must. It's not like being advised, 'I'll give you this later' or whatever, but it's actually a must, so my opinion is that it would be a shame if there was such a lecturer."

Ziza emphasized the formative role of literature:

"In my opinion, it is very unfortunate that lecturers should provide literary material because literature does not only teach a theory, but in literature, it can also describe the values of life where humans can shape their character in social values and help each other. So, in a story that includes a literary work, a character teaching can be embedded because the character is not only formed in the home environment, but also in the community and at schools or colleges as well."

Students' decisions to study at MUEJ are also strongly tied to religious and moral considerations. Rizka explained:

"Because the distance isn't too far from my house. And besides, it is an Islamic university. My parents hope it can make me have higher morality."

Aksal described his path:

"Actually, in the beginning, I didn't choose English, and it even became my third choice. But because fate told me otherwise, I went here to study at the Muhammadiyah university. In my opinion, the department of education is the easiest to learn, so I

studied in English Department. Why in Muhammadiyah? First of all, because there are many what's the name what you call groups or organizations related to Islam."

Bunga highlighted a vocational motivation:

"For me, teaching is one of the things that I love the most. Meeting a lot of future generations and sharing my knowledge and my experiences. Not only those, but I also learn from their knowledge and their experiences. That's why I choose English Department in the teacher training education program of the university."

Ziza explicitly linked her choice to religious values:

"I was advised by my parents to study at Muhammadiyah University because this campus is based on religion and Islam, and then at this campus, maybe religious values can be taught. The second is English education because I am interested and have an interest in the language department, so I want to learn more about the field of English."

Overall, students' testimonies confirm that they see literature classes as an appropriate and necessary space for exploring core values especially religiously grounded values and that they hope lecturers will make such discussions more deliberate.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that both lecturers and students support the integration of UNESCO core values into literary teaching. Nevertheless, participants consistently emphasized that value integration should not undermine literary appreciation, critical analysis, or aesthetic engagement with texts. Literature is viewed not only as a medium for artistic expression but also as a vehicle for moral and character development. This perspective is consistent with holistic education, which argues that cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions of learning should be developed simultaneously (Wong, 2009; Chien & Liao, 2021; Morris, 2022).

A dominant theme emerging from the data is the prioritization of religious values. Both lecturers and students identified religiosity as the most important value to be promoted within literary education. This finding reflects the institutional context of Muhammadiyah University, whose educational philosophy is strongly rooted in Islamic teachings and moral formation (UMSurabaya, 2015; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015). Consequently, literary teaching is expected to contribute not only to students' literary competence but also to their ethical and spiritual development.

The participants' emphasis on religiosity is evident in classroom practices such as praying before class, exchanging greetings, demonstrating respect, and encouraging responsible behavior. These practices illustrate how Islamic values are embedded within daily academic activities and support previous studies highlighting the importance of religious values in educational settings (Almu'tasim, 2019; Hairit, 2020; Niam, 2019; Zarro, 2020). The findings suggest that religiosity is not merely a theoretical concept but a lived experience reflected in classroom culture.

Although participants agreed on the importance of religious values, lecturers differed in their approaches to implementation. Some favored explicit discussion of religious and moral issues through direct references to the Qur'an and Hadith, while others preferred a more implicit approach. For these lecturers, values could be communicated through classroom

interaction, reflective discussion, and professional conduct without overt religious instruction. Such differences indicate that value integration is influenced by individual pedagogical beliefs and teaching philosophies.

The findings further reveal that lecturers perceive themselves as role models whose behaviors significantly influence students' character development. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and compassion are often communicated through everyday interactions rather than formal moral lessons. This finding supports the concept of value transmission, whereby learners internalize values through observation and participation in meaningful social practices (Straughan, 1988; Straughan, 2012). Therefore, values are embedded within both the content and process of teaching.

Another significant finding concerns the creation of a supportive classroom environment. Lecturers emphasized the importance of trust, familiarity, and mutual respect in facilitating effective learning. Many attempted to establish relationships resembling a close-knit community in which students felt comfortable sharing opinions and experiences. Such an environment encourages empathy, tolerance, and understanding, values that are also reflected in UNESCO's educational framework (UNESCO, 2002). The findings indicate that positive interpersonal relationships are essential for successful value integration.

The participants also viewed literary teaching as an important avenue for character education. Rather than relying on punitive measures, lecturers preferred dialogue, guidance, and reflection when addressing students' mistakes. This approach reflects a broader educational philosophy that prioritizes personal growth and self-awareness over punishment. Such practices align with holistic educational perspectives that emphasize the development of students as whole persons rather than merely recipients of knowledge (Wong, 2009; Chien & Liao, 2021).

Students strongly endorsed the integration of values into literary education. Many reported choosing Muhammadiyah University because of its reputation for promoting religious and moral values. They viewed literature as a medium through which individuals can learn about morality, social responsibility, compassion, and human relationships. For students, literary texts offer opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life experiences and ethical challenges. This finding supports the argument that literature contributes significantly to character formation and social awareness.

Students further expressed disappointment when lecturers failed to address value-related issues in literary classes. They argued that literature and religion are closely connected because both seek to provide insights into human life and behavior. Consequently, students expected lecturers to incorporate discussions of morality, religiosity, and social responsibility into classroom activities. These expectations reflect broader educational goals within Indonesia that emphasize the integration of character education and academic achievement (Dewantara, 1977; DIKNAS, 2003).

The findings reveal three broad approaches to value integration. The first is value clarification, which involves explicit discussion and evaluation of moral issues. The second is value transmission, where values are communicated indirectly through modeling and classroom culture. The third emphasizes integrating values through normal curriculum implementation without extensive moral instruction. These approaches correspond with established theories of value education and demonstrate that educators may adopt different strategies while pursuing similar educational objectives (Straughan, 1988; Goodwyn, 2012; Johnson et al., 2020; Murti & Maya, 2021).

Overall, religiosity appears to function as the foundation for broader universal values, including respect, tolerance, responsibility, empathy, and compassion. Participants regarded literature classes as appropriate spaces for nurturing these values while simultaneously developing literary competence. This finding is consistent with UNESCO's vision of education as a means of fostering ethical citizenship and human development (UNESCO, 2002). Moreover, it reflects the philosophical foundations of Muhammadiyah education, which emphasize the inseparability of intellectual achievement and moral formation (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015).

The present findings also demonstrate that integrating UNESCO core values into literature teaching contributes directly to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, which emphasizes equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to promote sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, cultural diversity, and a culture of peace. The values identified in this study including religiosity, empathy, compassion, responsibility, tolerance, honesty, and social awareness reflect essential competencies expected of responsible global citizens. Through literary interpretation, reflective discussion, and meaningful classroom interaction, literature teaching extends beyond developing literary competence to nurturing ethical reasoning and socially responsible behavior. These findings suggest that values-based literature education can serve as an effective pedagogical approach for supporting holistic learning while contributing to the broader objectives of sustainable development in higher education.

In conclusion, both lecturers and students believe that religious and moral values should be integrated into literary teaching. Although they differ in their preferred methods of implementation, all participants recognize literature as a powerful medium for character education. The findings suggest that effective literary teaching requires a balance between literary appreciation and value formation. By integrating ethical, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions into literary learning, educators can help students become competent readers, critical thinkers, and socially responsible individuals.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study found that lecturers and students strongly support the integration of UNESCO core values into literature teaching at a Muhammadiyah University in East Java. The integration of values does not replace literary appreciation, critical analysis, or aesthetic engagement, but strengthens them. Religiosity emerged as the most prominent value, while literature also promoted empathy, tolerance, honesty, responsibility, compassion, and social awareness. **Implication:** The findings imply that literature classrooms can serve as meaningful spaces for values-based education in higher education by intentionally integrating UNESCO core values through literary analysis, classroom dialogue, teaching materials, reflective activities, and lecturers' role modeling. In faith-based institutions, such an approach supports students' academic, moral, spiritual, and character development while contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, which promotes education for sustainable development, global citizenship, cultural diversity, peace, and responsible citizenship. Therefore, literature teaching has the potential to strengthen holistic learning and prepare students to become ethically responsible and socially engaged members of society. **Limitation:** This study was limited to one Muhammadiyah University in East Java and involved a relatively small number of lecturers and students. Therefore, the findings may not

fully represent values education practices in other universities, regions, or institutional contexts. **Future Research:** Future studies are recommended to examine the integration of UNESCO core values in literature teaching across different universities and educational settings. Further research may also explore students' long-term character development and compare value integration practices in faith-based and non-faith-based higher education institutions.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Masulah contributed to the conceptualization of the study, and research design. **Fabiola Dharmawanti Kurnia** contributed to the methodology development, and data collection. **Ali Mustofa** contributed to the data analysis, literature review, and drafting of the manuscript. The author has reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of this article for submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state that no financial or personal conflicts of interest exist that may have affected the content or findings of this research.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or other digital writing assistants were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All stages of the research process, including data analysis, interpretation, and manuscript writing, were conducted solely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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