



Wayang-Based Da'wah as a Culturally Responsive Medium for Islamic Value Education among Prospective Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic education faces the challenge of connecting religious values with learners' increasingly visual, mediated, and culturally diverse experiences. While prior studies have explored wayang as a medium of cultural preservation, religious communication, and moral education, little attention has been paid to how prospective teachers interpret wayang-based da'wah as a culturally grounded medium of Islamic value education. This study examines the relationship between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values, while exploring how students interpret the performance's educational meanings. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used. Quantitative data were gathered via a 5-point Likert questionnaire from 282 education students at Universitas Islam Bandung (census approach), analyzed through item validity testing, Cronbach's alpha, descriptive assessment, and simple linear regression. Qualitative data comprised 282 open-ended responses analyzed thematically via two-cycle coding. Results show a statistically significant positive relationship between perceived value transmission and students' value conceptions ($\beta = .416$, $B = .681$, $t = 7.651$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .173$). Qualitative findings show students viewed narrative, visual symbolism, humor, music, and moral messages as key in making values accessible and reflective, though language, accessibility, format, and competing entertainment preferences remain limitations. The study concludes wayang-based da'wah is a promising culturally responsive medium for Islamic value education, offering interconnected pathways of narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, reflective meaning-making, and value internalization—particularly relevant for prospective teacher education.

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ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Islam kontemporer menghadapi tantangan dalam menghubungkan nilai-nilai keagamaan dengan pengalaman belajar peserta didik yang semakin bersifat visual, termediasi, dan beragam secara budaya. Meskipun penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya telah mengkaji wayang sebagai media pelestarian budaya, komunikasi keagamaan, dan pendidikan moral, masih sedikit perhatian yang diberikan pada bagaimana calon guru memaknai dakwah berbasis wayang sebagai media pendidikan nilai-nilai Islam yang berakar pada budaya. Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara persepsi transmisi nilai melalui pertunjukan dakwah berbasis wayang dengan konsepsi mahasiswa mengenai nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya, sekaligus mengeksplorasi bagaimana mahasiswa memaknai nilai edukatif dari pertunjukan tersebut. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah mixed-methods dengan model convergent parallel. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert 5 poin dari 282 mahasiswa pendidikan di Universitas Islam Bandung (dengan pendekatan sensus), yang kemudian dianalisis melalui uji validitas item, Cronbach's alpha, penilaian deskriptif, dan regresi linear sederhana. Data kualitatif terdiri dari 282 jawaban terbuka yang dianalisis secara tematik melalui pengodean dua siklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang signifikan secara statistik antara persepsi transmisi nilai dan konsepsi nilai mahasiswa ($\beta = .416$, $B = .681$, $t = 7.651$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .173$). Temuan kualitatif menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memandang narasi, simbolisme visual, humor, musik, dan pesan moral sebagai unsur penting yang membuat nilai-nilai lebih mudah diakses dan direfleksikan, meskipun bahasa, aksesibilitas, format pertunjukan, dan preferensi hiburan kontemporer yang bersaing masih menjadi keterbatasan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dakwah berbasis wayang merupakan media yang menjanjikan dan responsif secara budaya bagi pendidikan nilai-nilai Islam, dengan menawarkan jalur-jalur yang saling terkait berupa keterlibatan naratif, interpretasi simbolik, pemaknaan reflektif, dan internalisasi nilai—yang sangat relevan bagi pendidikan calon guru.

KATA KUNCI

Wayang,
Pendidikan Dakwah,
Pendidikan Nilai Islam,
Pedagogi Responsif
Budaya,
Calon Guru

Introduction

Contemporary Islamic education operates within learning environments increasingly shaped by visual media, digital communication, cultural diversity, and changing patterns of learner engagement. Religious and moral meanings are encountered not only through formal instruction but also through cultural practices, mediated communication, and everyday social interaction. This development presents an important pedagogical challenge for Islamic education: how to communicate religious values in ways that remain faithful to Islamic principles while being meaningful within learners' cultural and contemporary experiences.

This challenge does not necessarily imply that conventional forms of religious communication have become ineffective. Rather, it highlights the need to diversify pedagogical and communicative approaches so that Islamic values can be presented through forms that allow learners to interpret, relate, and reflect upon religious meanings within recognizable social and cultural contexts. Research on Generation Z indicates that values and identity are shaped through multiple interacting environments, including family, educational institutions, religion, culture, and digital media (Tirocchi, 2024; Weber, 2024). Consequently, contemporary Islamic education requires approaches that

acknowledge this complex ecology of value formation rather than attributing changes in young people's values to a single source.

For teacher education, this issue is particularly significant. Prospective teachers are not only recipients of educational values but may later become mediators of knowledge, culture, morality, and religious understanding for younger generations. Their capacity to interpret and utilize culturally meaningful educational resources is therefore relevant to the development of contextual Islamic education.

One culturally embedded medium with a significant historical relationship to Islamic communication in Indonesia is wayang. Historical scholarship has documented the adaptation of local cultural forms within Islamic preaching in Java, particularly in narratives associated with Sunan Kalijaga and the broader Wali Songo tradition (Irawan, 2023; Riyadi & Karim, 2023). Rather than treating religious communication and local culture as necessarily separate domains, cultural da'wah may connect Islamic teachings with symbolic forms that are already recognizable within particular communities.

Wayang is particularly relevant because it combines narrative, dialogue, characterization, visual symbolism, music, humour, and dramatic conflict. These elements allow moral and religious meanings to be represented through concrete situations and characters rather than solely through abstract verbal explanation. Studies of wayang and Islamic education have identified its potential to connect Islamic values with culturally meaningful narratives and symbolic representations (Hana & Yusuf, 2021; Hidayat, 2025; Sari et al., 2024).

This potential is consistent with the broader principle of culturally contextualized Islamic education. Islamic education does not occur independently of social and cultural environments; rather, educational meanings are interpreted through learners' experiences and cultural horizons (Lahmar, 2020; Salim et al., 2025). Wayang-based da'wah can therefore be understood not simply as an artistic form or a communication technique, but as a possible cultural resource for connecting Islamic values with educational experiences.

The educational relevance of wayang is particularly important when considered in relation to prospective teachers. Students preparing for careers in education will potentially become responsible for designing learning environments in which moral, religious, social, and cultural meanings are communicated to future learners.

Previous studies have examined wayang in relation to Islamic education, spiritual development, cultural identity, character education, and da'wah communication. For example, research on the character of Semar has explored its implications for Islamic education and the representation of values such as guidance, humility, and moral responsibility (Hana & Yusuf, 2021). Hidayat (2025) examined Wayang Kekayon Khalifah in Islamic Religious Education and reported its potential for supporting students' spiritual dimensions. A systematic literature review by Sari et al. (2024) further demonstrates that wayang has been discussed as a cultural frame for the internalization of Islamic educational values.

These studies establish the relevance of wayang to Islamic education. However, they also indicate that the literature has often concentrated on the cultural, historical, communicative, or normative dimensions of wayang rather than on empirical examination of how prospective teachers interpret wayang-based da'wah within their own educational experience.

Existing research on wayang and Islamic education can broadly be grouped into several strands. The first examines wayang as cultural heritage and a medium of cultural communication. The second focuses on wayang-based da'wah and its historical relationship with the contextualization of Islamic teachings. The third investigates wayang in relation to character education, spiritual development, and Islamic educational

values. More recent studies have also begun to examine the relevance of wayang for contemporary Islamic education and religious communication (Hidayat, 2025; Prastiwi et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2022).

Despite this growing literature, an empirical gap remains concerning the position of prospective teachers as interpreters and potential users of culturally grounded Islamic educational media. Existing scholarship establishes that wayang can contain religious, moral, and cultural meanings, but comparatively less attention has been directed toward the relationship between students' perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and their conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. There is also limited empirical attention to how students themselves explain the narrative, symbolic, aesthetic, and reflective features that make such performances meaningful or, conversely, less accessible.

This gap is particularly relevant to Islamic teacher education. Prospective teachers occupy a distinctive position because they are simultaneously learners of religious and educational values and future mediators of those values. Understanding how they interpret culturally embedded da'wah may therefore contribute to the development of culturally responsive approaches to Islamic education.

The present study addresses this gap by combining quantitative and qualitative evidence. The quantitative strand examines the statistical association between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. The qualitative strand examines students' explanations of what they appreciated, what limited their engagement, and how they interpreted the educational meanings of the performance. Integration of these two strands allows the study to move beyond asking whether wayang is perceived positively and instead examine how its cultural and educational meanings are constructed by prospective teachers.

The novelty of this study does not lie in claiming that wayang itself is a new medium of da'wah or value education. Rather, the contribution lies in repositioning wayang-based da'wah within the empirical context of prospective teacher education and examining it through an integrated quantitative–qualitative design.

First, the study provides empirical evidence concerning the association between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. Second, it provides qualitative evidence concerning the narrative, symbolic, aesthetic, and reflective features through which prospective teachers interpret the performance. Third, the integration of these findings provides a conceptual explanation of value meaning-making that connects narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, reflective meaning-making, and potential value internalization. Fourth, the study translates these findings into implications for Islamic Education curricula, prospective teacher preparation, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

This study addresses the following research questions: What relationship exists between students' perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah performances and their conceptions of Islamic and cultural values?; How do students interpret the educational meanings, affordances, and limitations of wayang-based da'wah as a culturally grounded medium of Islamic value education? These questions allow the study to examine both the statistical relationship identified through the quantitative data and the meanings identified through the qualitative data.

Methods

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the same research context and analyzed separately before being integrated at the interpretation stage. The quantitative

strand examined the statistical relationship between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah performances and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values, while the qualitative strand explored students' interpretations of the performance's educational meanings, attractions, limitations, and perceived relevance.

The convergent design was chosen because the research questions required both statistical evidence regarding the relationship between the two measured constructs and contextual evidence regarding how students interpreted the performance. The two forms of evidence were therefore treated as complementary rather than as separate, independent studies. Importantly, this design does not establish causal change: although students were exposed to a wayang-based da'wah performance, the study did not use a pre-test/post-test comparison, a control group, or longitudinal follow-up. Consequently, the quantitative findings are interpreted as statistical associations within the observed sample, while the qualitative findings offer contextual explanation of students' experiences.

Population and Sample

The quantitative population consisted of 282 education students who participated in the wayang-based da'wah performance at Universitas Islam Bandung, drawn from programmes within the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, including Islamic Education (PAI) and Early Childhood Teacher Education (PGPAUD). A census approach was used, meaning the entire accessible population participating in the research activity was included, so all 282 eligible participants formed the quantitative sample. This approach provided comprehensive coverage of the accessible population within the institutional setting, but should not be taken as evidence that findings are statistically generalizable to all prospective teachers or Islamic education students across Indonesia. The findings primarily describe the population observed within this specific study context.

Research Context

The study was conducted during a live 90-minute screening of a wayang-based da'wah performance containing moral and social value messages, held in a controlled setting equipped with standard audiovisual facilities. All participating students watched the same performance before completing the quantitative questionnaire and answering open-ended questions. This shared exposure constitutes the research context rather than an experimental intervention demonstrating causal change; since no pre-exposure measurement or control group was included, the study cannot determine whether students' value conceptions changed because of the performance. Instead, the analysis examines the relationship between students' perceived value transmission and their reported conceptions of Islamic and cultural values following the shared experience.

Quantitative Instrument

The instrument was a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two constructs. The first, Perceived Value Transmission through Wayang-Based Da'wah Performances (X), refers to students' perceptions of how far the performance communicated religious, moral, and cultural meanings through its narrative, characters, symbols, artistic elements, and presentation. The second, Students' Conceptions of Islamic and Cultural Values (Y), refers to students' reported understanding of the Islamic and cultural values represented in the performance. The term "changes in students' cultural value conceptions" from the original manuscript was removed, since the design lacked a pre-exposure measurement; the dependent construct is consistently referred to as students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values.

The questionnaire contained 20 quantitative items per construct. Open-ended questions were treated as qualitative data and excluded from the reliability analysis. Instrument development involved expert content review, pilot testing, and item-level

assessment using Pearson correlation. Participants gave written informed consent, and data confidentiality was maintained. An item was retained if its correlation exceeded the critical value of $r = .1168$ with $p < .05$.

For the Perceived Value Transmission scale, all 20 items exceeded the critical value, with item-total correlations ranging from .308 to .567 ($p < .001$), yielding a Cronbach's alpha of .793 — satisfactory internal consistency. For Students' Conceptions of Islamic and Cultural Values, all 20 items also exceeded the critical value, with correlations ranging from .348 to .835 ($p < .001$), yielding a Cronbach's alpha of .931 — high internal consistency. These results indicate item-level association and internal consistency but do not constitute comprehensive evidence of construct validity, which would require further procedures such as factor analysis and replication.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed through item-level validity testing, Cronbach's alpha, descriptive assessment, and simple linear regression, examining the association between X and Y via regression coefficients, standardized beta, t-test, F-test, and R^2 , with significance evaluated at $\alpha = .05$. Because the design was post-exposure and nonexperimental, coefficients are interpreted as statistical associations rather than causal effects.

The qualitative component comprised 282 responses to open-ended questions about students' reasons for disliking or feeling less interested in the performance, and the aspects they most appreciated. Data were analyzed thematically using two-cycle coding: descriptive, open, and in vivo coding in the first cycle to capture explicit statements and experiences, and pattern coding in the second cycle to organize codes into broader themes. Themes identified included limited access and exposure, language and communication barriers, performance duration and format, perceptions of traditionality, preference for contemporary entertainment, technical delivery aspects, visual creativity, narrative strength, integration of art and da'wah, clarity of moral messages, educational value, and appreciation of the puppeteer's performance. NVivo software supported organization and coding, with inter-researcher triangulation, audit trail documentation, peer discussion, and researcher reflexivity ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Data Integration

The datasets were analyzed independently and integrated during interpretation, comparing the statistical relationship from the quantitative analysis with themes from students' open-ended responses. Qualitative findings mainly complemented and contextualized the quantitative results, explaining which features of wayang-based da'wah students found meaningful, accessible, engaging, or limiting, without serving as proof of causal mechanisms. Convergence appeared where responses supported value transmission through narrative, symbolism, humour, music, and moral messages; complementarity appeared where responses explained conditions affecting engagement, such as language accessibility, prior exposure, format, and entertainment preferences. This integration allowed the study to move beyond a purely statistical account while avoiding unsupported claims of causal transformation.

Results and Discussion

Results

3.1 Instrument Quality

Item-level analysis indicated satisfactory performance for both quantitative scales. The analysis assessed item-total correlations and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1. Item-Level Validity and Reliability of the Quantitative Measures

Construct	Quantitative items	Item-total correlation range	Critical r	Cronbach's α
Perceived Value Transmission through Wayang-Based Da'wah Performances	20	.308–.567	.1168	.793
Students' Conceptions of Islamic and Cultural Values	20	.348–.835	.1168	.931

The Perceived Value Transmission through Wayang-Based Da'wah Performances scale consisted of 20 items with item-total correlations ranging from .308 to .567, all exceeding the critical value of .1168, with reported $p < .001$. Its Cronbach's alpha was .793, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The Students' Conceptions of Islamic and Cultural Values scale also comprised 20 items, with correlations ranging from .348 to .835, exceeding .1168, with all reported $p < .001$. Its Cronbach's alpha was .931, indicating high internal consistency.

Thus, all 40 retained items met the reported item-level criterion and demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. These results support the use of both scales in subsequent analyses. However, they represent evidence of item-level performance and internal consistency rather than comprehensive construct validity, because factor-analytic or other broader construct-validation procedures were not conducted.

3.2 Quantitative Findings

A simple linear regression was conducted with 282 education students to examine the statistical relationship between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah performances and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. Perceived value transmission was specified as the predictor and students' conceptions as the outcome.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Predicting Students' Conceptions of Islamic and Cultural Values

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	30.985	5.438	—	5.697	< .001
Perceived Value Transmission through Wayang-Based Da'wah Performances	.681	.089	.416	7.651	< .001

Model statistics: $R = .416$; $R^2 = .173$; Adjusted $R^2 = .170$; $F(1, 280) = 58.533$, $p < .001$.

Perceived value transmission showed a positive and statistically significant association with students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values ($B = .681$, $SE = .089$, $\beta = .416$, $t = 7.651$, $p < .001$). The positive coefficient indicates that higher perceived value transmission scores were associated with higher scores on students' conceptions within the fitted model. The overall regression model was also statistically significant, $F(1, 280) = 58.533$, $p < .001$.

The model yielded $R^2 = .173$ and adjusted $R^2 = .170$, indicating that perceived value transmission statistically accounted for 17.3% of the variance in students' conceptions, while 82.7% remained unexplained by this predictor. The small difference between R^2 and adjusted R^2 indicates a limited adjustment effect in the single-predictor model.

The regression equation was:

$$Y = 30.985 + .681X$$

where Y represents students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values and X represents perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah performances. The coefficient .681 represents the estimated statistical change in the outcome associated with a one-unit difference in the predictor. The intercept 30.985 is a mathematical constant and is not interpreted as an initial or pre-exposure level because no pre-test or baseline measurement was employed.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a positive and statistically significant association between the two measured constructs. However, the 17.3% explained variance indicates that substantial variation in students' conceptions was attributable to factors outside the model. Moreover, because the study was cross-sectional and did not employ a baseline measurement, the result should be interpreted as statistical association rather than evidence of causal change produced by the wayang-based da'wah performance.

3.3 Qualitative Findings

Analysis of 282 open-ended responses revealed both enabling and constraining features of wayang-based da'wah. Six interrelated themes emerged: (1) cultural accessibility and prior exposure, (2) language and communication barriers, (3) contemporary entertainment preferences, (4) narrative and visual engagement, (5) moral and educational messages, and (6) innovation and contemporary adaptation.

Table 3. Themes Emerging from Students' Interpretations of Wayang-Based Da'wah

Theme	Interpretive focus	Illustrative evidence
Narrative engagement	Students' engagement with stories and characters	Selected participant response
Symbolic interpretation	Interpretation of visual and cultural symbols	Selected participant response
Reflective meaning-making	Reflection on Islamic and cultural meanings	Selected participant response
Humour and accessibility	Humour as an engagement mechanism	Selected participant response
Music and performance	Artistic elements supporting engagement	Selected participant response
Moral messages	Recognition of explicit moral teachings	Selected participant response
Contextual limitations	Language, accessibility, format, contemporary entertainment preferences	Selected participant response

3.3.1 Cultural Accessibility and Prior Exposure

Some students reported limited access to wayang performances and limited previous exposure as barriers to engagement. Familiarity with wayang therefore could not be assumed among contemporary university students. Limited exposure may make its narrative conventions, characters, performance structure, and cultural references less

immediately accessible. The findings indicate that cultural embeddedness does not necessarily ensure cultural accessibility. Students with limited familiarity may require contextual explanation or introductory framing to interpret cultural and symbolic dimensions.

3.3.2 Language and Communication Barriers

Students also reported difficulties related to local language and message presentation. Local linguistic expressions could strengthen authenticity and cultural identity but could also impede comprehension among students unfamiliar with the language or communicative conventions. The findings therefore highlight the importance of language choice, message clarity, and audience comprehension when culturally grounded forms are used for Islamic and educational communication.

3.3.3 Contemporary Entertainment Preferences

Several students referred to preferences for contemporary entertainment and perceptions of wayang as an older cultural form. Performance duration and format were also identified as potential limitations. These responses suggest that traditional performances compete for attention within a media environment dominated by diverse visual and digital formats. Engagement may consequently be influenced by duration, pacing, presentation style, and format, without necessarily implying rejection of traditional culture itself.

3.3.4 Narrative and Visual Engagement

Positive responses emphasized engaging storylines, visual creativity, characters, music, humour, and the combination of artistic performance and da'wah. Students could encounter Islamic and moral meanings through stories, characters, conflicts, and consequences rather than direct exposition alone. Visual and performative elements provided concrete representations of characters, situations, symbols, and moral choices, while music and humour created additional points of engagement. The findings therefore highlight the role of storytelling and artistic performance in making culturally embedded messages accessible and engaging.

3.3.5 Moral and Educational Messages

Students appreciated the clarity of moral messages and the possibility of learning values through entertainment. The performance was perceived not merely as entertainment but also as an opportunity for reflection on religious, moral, and social meanings. Artistic elements created an engaging context for moral interpretation. However, the qualitative findings do not establish long-term behavioral change or value internalization; they demonstrate students' recognition of opportunities for learning, reflection, and engagement with moral and religious meanings.

3.3.6 Innovation and Contemporary Adaptation

Students identified innovation in presentation, technology, narrative format, and media as a potential means of connecting traditional wayang with contemporary learners. Such adaptation could address limitations associated with limited exposure, language, and contemporary entertainment preferences while retaining narrative, visual, musical, humorous, and moral strengths. Nevertheless, the findings do not indicate that technological or stylistic innovation automatically improves educational effectiveness. Rather, adaptation represents a potential means of balancing cultural continuity, communicative accessibility, and contemporary relevance.

3.4 Mixed-Methods Integration

The two strands provide complementary evidence concerning both the statistical relationship and the conditions under which that relationship may be experienced. The quantitative findings established a positive association between perceived value transmission and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values ($\beta = .416, p < .001$), with the model explaining 17.3% of variance. The qualitative findings add interpretive

depth by showing that students encountered value transmission through multiple dimensions of the performance, including story, character, visual symbolism, music, humour, artistic performance, and moral reflection.

This convergence suggests that value transmission was experienced not simply as the delivery of religious information but as a meaning-making process mediated by cultural and performative forms. Narrative and visual elements could facilitate engagement, while moral messages provided content for reflection. In this sense, the qualitative findings help contextualize the positive statistical association without treating them as a causal explanation of that association.

At the same time, the qualitative evidence reveals conditions that are not captured by the single-predictor regression model. Limited cultural exposure, language barriers, accessibility issues, performance duration and format, and contemporary entertainment preferences may constrain engagement, whereas narrative appeal, visual creativity, music, humour, and clear moral messaging may facilitate it. These findings are consistent with the modest explanatory power of the quantitative model: although perceived value transmission accounted for 17.3% of variance, substantial variation remained unexplained.

The integrated findings therefore indicate that the educational potential of wayang-based da'wah is conditional rather than deterministic. Its contribution to Islamic and cultural value education appears to depend on an interaction among the cultural form, communicative strategies, students' prior familiarity, artistic presentation, and contemporary modes of engagement. The findings support wayang-based da'wah as a potentially culturally responsive medium, while also demonstrating that cultural authenticity alone does not guarantee accessibility or educational engagement.

Importantly, the qualitative evidence does not demonstrate that narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, or reflection necessarily produce subsequent value internalization or behavioral change. Likewise, the quantitative association does not establish causality. The two strands should therefore be understood as complementary rather than causal evidence: quantitative results demonstrate a statistically significant relationship, while qualitative results illuminate how students experienced the performance and what contextual factors facilitated or constrained that experience.

Taken together, the findings suggest that culturally embedded Islamic value education is most meaningful when cultural continuity is combined with communicative accessibility, engaging narrative and artistic forms, clear moral messaging, and sensitivity to contemporary learners' experiences. Wayang-based da'wah may thus create meaningful opportunities for students to encounter and reflect upon Islamic and cultural values, but the educational significance of those opportunities depends on how the performance is accessed, understood, and experienced.

Discussion

4.1 Wayang-Based Da'wah and Students' Value Conceptions

The quantitative findings indicate a statistically significant positive association between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .416$) indicates a positive relationship between the two constructs. Students who reported stronger perceptions that Islamic and cultural values were transmitted through the wayang-based da'wah performance also tended to report stronger conceptions of those values. This finding provides empirical support for the proposition that culturally mediated religious communication is meaningfully related to students' understanding of Islamic and cultural values.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .173$) indicates that perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah statistically accounted for approximately 17.3% of the variance in students' value conceptions. This proportion suggests that the performance was not experienced merely as entertainment but was associated with a measurable dimension of students' value conceptions. At the same time, the finding should not be interpreted as suggesting that wayang-based da'wah explains most of the formation of students' values. Approximately 82.7% of the variance remained unexplained by the predictor included in the model.

This magnitude is consistent with the broader complexity of value education. Students' Islamic and cultural orientations are unlikely to result from a single educational experience. They develop through prolonged interactions involving family, formal education, religious learning, peers, community life, cultural experiences, personal reflection, and digital media. Religious values may also be reinforced or challenged through everyday encounters with social problems, popular culture, social media, and contemporary forms of religious communication. The 17.3% explained variance should therefore be understood as evidence of a meaningful contribution rather than exclusive explanatory power.

Wayang-based da'wah can consequently be positioned as one component within a broader ecology of Islamic and cultural value education. Its potential lies not in replacing other forms of religious or character education, but in complementing them by providing a culturally embedded medium through which values can be encountered, interpreted, discussed, and connected with lived experience.

The positive association may also indicate the importance of students' perceptions of value transmission. When students perceive that a performance communicates meaningful Islamic and ethical messages, they may be more likely to recognize connections between cultural narratives and religious values. Nevertheless, the direction and mechanism of this relationship require qualification. The association does not establish whether stronger exposure to value messages produced stronger value conceptions, whether students with stronger pre-existing value conceptions were more likely to perceive the performance as meaningful, or whether both were influenced by other factors.

The statistical result therefore does not establish causality. The study did not employ a pre-test, control group, or longitudinal follow-up; consequently, the regression demonstrates an association between two measured constructs rather than experimentally demonstrated transformation. This distinction is particularly important for value education because value formation is complex and gradual. A single performance cannot reasonably be expected to demonstrate behavioural transformation within a short period. The present study is better positioned to show that students perceive and associate value transmission through wayang with their conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. Whether these conceptions subsequently influence attitudes, moral reasoning, habitual practices, or observable behaviour requires longitudinal, experimental, or other designs capable of examining change over time.

The quantitative finding therefore provides an empirical foundation for interpreting the qualitative evidence. The regression establishes that a relationship exists between perceived value transmission and students' value conceptions, while the qualitative findings illuminate which aspects of the wayang-based da'wah experience students perceived as meaningful.

4.2 Wayang-Based Da'wah as Culturally Responsive Islamic Value Education

The qualitative findings provide contextual insight into the quantitative association. Students identified narrative, visual symbolism, humour, music, and moral messages as elements that made the performance engaging and meaningful. The educational significance of wayang-based da'wah therefore appears to lie not only in explicit religious messages but also in how those messages are embedded within an integrated cultural and artistic experience.

Wayang combines multiple communicative dimensions. Moral messages may be delivered through dialogue but are also reinforced through characterisation, conflict, humour, music, visual representation, gesture, and narrative resolution. Students consequently encounter Islamic values through a multimodal cultural form in which religious meaning is intertwined with artistic expression.

This characteristic is important from a culturally responsive perspective because educational meaning is not produced only through information transmission. Learners interpret information through cultural experiences, language, identity, prior knowledge, social relationships, and existing conceptual frameworks. Educational communication can therefore become more meaningful when it takes account of the cultural resources through which learners understand their social and moral worlds.

Wayang-based da'wah provides such a cultural vocabulary. Islamic values can be represented through familiar narrative structures, characters, conflicts, and symbolic forms originating within Indonesian cultural experience. Rather than presenting religious values as concepts detached from local culture, the performance places them within a recognizable cultural framework, creating opportunities to connect religious meaning with cultural identity and collective memory.

This interpretation is particularly relevant to Islamic education in Indonesia, where religious communication has historically interacted with local cultural forms through processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and contextualisation. Wayang-based da'wah can therefore be understood as an example of communicating religious meaning through culturally recognizable media while maintaining attention to Islamic ethical and spiritual principles. This finding is consistent with scholarship emphasizing cultural contextualization in Islamic education (Lahmar, 2020; Salim et al., 2025). It also extends previous research by placing prospective teachers themselves at the centre of interpretation. As future educators, they may influence how cultural resources are selected, interpreted, adapted, and introduced into educational environments.

Cultural responsiveness, however, should not be equated with automatic accessibility. Some students reported limited previous exposure to wayang, while others encountered language or format barriers. A cultural form may be historically significant while becoming less familiar to younger generations whose experiences have increasingly been shaped by digital media, global popular culture, and changing patterns of leisure and communication.

Accordingly, culturally grounded pedagogy must attend to differences in cultural familiarity. Teachers cannot simply assume that students possess the knowledge required to interpret wayang's characters, language, humour, symbolism, and conventions. Cultural responsiveness involves not only selecting local cultural materials but also providing appropriate pedagogical mediation.

For contemporary learners, this may involve explaining cultural symbols, translating or contextualizing traditional language, providing introductory material, connecting traditional narratives with contemporary issues, or presenting selected elements through digital media. Such adaptation need not diminish authenticity; rather, it can enable learners with different levels of prior exposure to participate more meaningfully.

The educational value of wayang therefore does not derive simply from its status as a traditional Indonesian art form. Its potential emerges when cultural form, religious meaning, learner experience, and pedagogical mediation interact meaningfully.

4.3 Narrative Engagement and Symbolic Interpretation

The qualitative findings indicate that narrative and symbolism were central to students' interpretations. Wayang characters and dramatic conflicts provide concrete representations through which students can encounter issues concerning responsibility, justice, humility, compassion, leadership, loyalty, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibility. These values become visible through situations in which characters make decisions, respond to conflict, experience consequences, and negotiate relationships.

Narrative is pedagogically significant because ethical questions are generally encountered through situations rather than as isolated propositions. Individuals must decide whether to act honestly, help others, respond to injustice, exercise authority, or manage personal interests in relation to collective responsibilities. Narrative performance recreates such situations symbolically and allows learners to examine them through the experiences of characters.

This interpretation can be related to symbolic interactionism, which views meaning as emerging through interaction with socially constructed symbols (Aksan et al., 2009). In wayang-based da'wah, characters and narratives may function as symbolic resources through which students interpret Islamic and social values. A character may represent a moral orientation, social role, virtue, weakness, or conflict; a dramatic confrontation may represent competing ethical principles.

Symbolic interpretation is therefore central to meaning-making. Students may interpret character behaviour, visual forms, speech, music, humour, and narrative outcomes in relation to values they already understand. At the same time, these symbols may invite students to reconsider or deepen their understanding by presenting familiar values within new contexts.

Narrative contextualisation can bridge conceptual knowledge and situational understanding. Justice, for example, can be considered through the consequences of fair or unfair decisions; leadership through characters exercising authority; compassion through relationships involving vulnerability and assistance; humility through contrasts with arrogance; and responsibility through decisions affecting others. Such representation can connect abstract concepts with social and ethical realities.

The process may also encourage discussion and critical reflection. Students can examine why a character acted in a particular way, whether a decision was morally justified, what alternatives existed, and how the situation relates to Islamic teachings and contemporary social life. The performance can thus become an opportunity for interpretive and ethical inquiry rather than passive viewing.

Nevertheless, narrative engagement should not automatically be equated with value internalization. Students may enjoy a story, understand its moral message, and discuss its symbolism without changing their behaviour. The present findings therefore support claims concerning meaning, perception, and value conception more strongly than claims concerning behavioural transformation. The qualitative evidence illuminates possible meaning-making processes associated with the quantitative relationship but does not establish a causal pathway between narrative engagement and behavioural change.

4.4 Cognitive, Affective, and Aesthetic Engagement

The findings support a multidimensional interpretation of artistic learning. Wayang integrates verbal messages, narrative structure, visual representation, music,

humour, character development, gesture, and dramatic tension. These elements operate simultaneously, creating an environment in which cognitive, affective, social, and aesthetic experiences may interact.

The cognitive dimension involves interpreting narratives, dialogue, symbols, moral situations, character motivations, and consequences. Students follow relationships, recognize conflicts, and interpret meanings embedded in dialogue and action. Wayang can consequently provide opportunities for interpretation and moral reasoning.

The affective dimension concerns emotional responses generated by performance. Humour may create enjoyment, dramatic conflict may generate tension, character development may evoke empathy or sympathy, and music may influence the emotional atmosphere. These responses may make experiences more memorable and affect how students attend to particular messages.

The aesthetic dimension involves responses to visual representation, movement, music, voice, storytelling, humour, and dramatic composition. Cultural performances communicate meaning not simply through propositions but through forms of expression that are experienced, interpreted, and emotionally evaluated.

Previous work on expressive arts and cognition provides theoretical support for understanding artistic experience as involving interconnected cognitive and affective processes (Aumann, 2022; Maiese, 2016; Rokotnitz, 2018). From this perspective, artistic learning involves interactions among thinking, feeling, perception, imagination, and interpretation.

This multidimensional character may explain why students regarded humour, music, visual symbolism, and narrative as contributing to meaningfulness. A moral message may become more memorable when associated with a particular character, humorous scene, emotional conflict, musical moment, or narrative resolution.

Such integration is potentially significant for Islamic value education. Religious and ethical learning involves not only knowledge of norms but also sensitivity to moral situations, appreciation of virtues, reflection on consequences, and connections between religious principles and human experience. Artistic forms can provide an avenue through which these dimensions interact.

However, these processes should be interpreted as a conceptual explanation of meaning-making, not as statistically tested mechanisms. The study did not measure cognitive or affective engagement as separate variables and did not test mediation. It would therefore be inappropriate to claim that such engagement statistically explains the relationship between wayang-based da'wah and students' value conceptions. The appropriate conclusion is that students experienced the performance through multiple cognitive, affective, and aesthetic dimensions that provide a plausible interpretive framework for understanding why particular elements were perceived as meaningful.

4.5 Cultural Contextualization and Da'wah bil-Hikmah

The findings are also relevant to the principle of *da'wah bil-hikmah*, particularly the idea that religious communication should be sensitive to context, audience, communication form, and conditions of message reception. Effective religious communication is therefore not necessarily determined by the quantity of information delivered but also by the appropriateness of the means through which meaning is communicated.

Wayang-based da'wah demonstrates how Islamic messages can be communicated through culturally embedded artistic forms rather than separated from local cultural experience. Islamic values can be articulated through narrative, symbolism, humour, music, and dramatic representation connected to Indonesian traditions. Culture

consequently becomes part of the communicative strategy rather than merely decorative packaging.

This distinction is important because treating culture simply as an external instrument may overlook its deeper educational potential. In wayang-based da'wah, cultural form itself becomes a medium of interpretation. Students encounter Islamic values through a cultural language carrying historical, social, and symbolic meanings.

Scholarship concerning Sunan Kalijaga and cultural da'wah similarly illustrates the historical relevance of contextualizing Islamic communication through local cultural forms (Irawan, 2023; Riyadi & Karim, 2023). Contemporary educational use of wayang extends this discussion from religious communication to pedagogical practice. The question is not simply how Islamic messages reach audiences, but how prospective educators learn to recognize and critically use culturally meaningful forms in education. The principle of *hikmah* also requires attentiveness to audiences. The finding that some students experienced limited exposure to wayang or encountered language and format barriers reinforces the need for communication that responds to actual cultural knowledge, linguistic competence, interests, and experiences.

Thus, *da'wah bil-hikmah* in educational settings may involve both cultural preservation and pedagogical adaptation. Traditional forms can be maintained while presentation is adjusted through contextual explanations, contemporary or bilingual language, selective narrative adaptation, multimedia integration, and comparison between traditional and contemporary interpretations.

The contribution of the present study is not to establish wayang as universally effective or to suggest that every Islamic message should use traditional cultural performance. Rather, it demonstrates that prospective teachers perceive culturally embedded performance as a potentially meaningful resource for Islamic value education. Its educational value depends on the interaction between content, cultural form, audience characteristics, and pedagogical mediation.

4.6 Implications for Prospective Teacher Education

The focus on PAI and PGPAUD students gives the findings particular relevance to teacher preparation. These students are not simply recipients of religious and cultural messages; they are future educators who will influence how values are taught to subsequent generations.

Prospective teachers will operate in classrooms characterized by diverse cultural backgrounds, different levels of religious literacy, varied linguistic experiences, and increasingly mediated learning environments. Their ability to identify educational values within local cultural resources can therefore contribute to contextual teaching practices. Wayang-based da'wah can be used within teacher education as an object of critical pedagogical analysis. Rather than merely appreciating wayang as traditional art, students can examine how meaning is constructed and how cultural materials can be transformed into educational resources. They can identify Islamic and ethical values in narratives, analyse cultural symbols, evaluate language and presentation accessibility, identify cultural limitations or biases, redesign narratives for contemporary learners, and develop digital adaptations.

Such activities can develop several dimensions of teacher competence. Students develop interpretive competence by identifying values embedded in cultural narratives; cultural competence by examining how symbols and traditions communicate meaning; pedagogical competence by translating cultural materials into learning activities; critical competence by identifying assumptions, exclusions, limitations, and possible biases; and digital competence by adapting traditional cultural resources to contemporary learning environments.

For PAI students, this approach may strengthen their ability to connect Islamic teachings with culturally relevant forms of communication. For PGPAUD students, it may support age-appropriate storytelling, character-based learning, symbolic play, music, movement, and culturally grounded activities, provided that the pedagogical form is adjusted to developmental characteristics and learning objectives.

Wayang can also support interdisciplinary learning. A performance can be analysed from theological, cultural, linguistic, artistic, pedagogical, and communication perspectives, consistent with the interdisciplinary character of contemporary teacher education.

Digital adaptation represents another implication. Contemporary learners increasingly encounter information through short videos, social media, animation, interactive platforms, and other digital environments. Selected wayang narratives, characters, symbols, and moral dilemmas can therefore be transformed into digital storytelling, animation, educational videos, interactive materials, or other digital learning content.

However, digitalisation should not simply remove cultural complexity in favour of simplified entertainment. Teacher education should encourage students to determine which elements of the original cultural form should be preserved, which require explanation, and which may appropriately be adapted. In this way, wayang becomes a pedagogical resource requiring interpretation, adaptation, and critical evaluation. The teacher functions not merely as a transmitter of cultural content but as a mediator between cultural representation, religious values, and contemporary educational needs.

4.7 A Conceptual Explanation of Value Meaning-Making

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings allows the study to propose a conceptual explanation rather than a causal model. The purpose is to provide a theoretically informed interpretation of the observed association in relation to students' reported experiences, not to claim that a sequence of causal mechanisms has been demonstrated.

The quantitative finding establishes a positive association between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. The qualitative findings identify features experienced as meaningful. Taken together, four interconnected processes can be proposed: narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, value association and reflection, and contextual meaning-making. These should not be understood as a rigid linear sequence; they may overlap, interact, and operate recursively.

First, narrative engagement. Students encounter moral situations through stories, characters, dialogue, conflict, and resolution. Narrative provides an accessible entry point into ethical and religious questions by connecting values with motivations, choices, relationships, tensions, and consequences. Students can observe how values are enacted, challenged, neglected, or restored. Narrative may therefore connect conceptual knowledge with situational understanding and support perspective-taking. However, engagement does not itself demonstrate acceptance or behavioural enactment.

Second, symbolic interpretation. Students interpret cultural characters, visual representations, language, music, and dramatic symbols in relation to Islamic and social meanings. Wayang's communicative system extends beyond spoken dialogue; gestures, visual forms, humour, music, and dramatic structures all contribute to meaning. Students interpret these signs in relation to existing knowledge and experience. This process corresponds with the symbolic interactionist perspective, in which meaning emerges through interaction with socially constructed symbols (Aksan et al., 2009). Cultural familiarity influences this process, explaining the importance of pedagogical mediation.

Third, value association and reflection. Students may associate values represented in the performance with their existing conceptions of Islamic and cultural values. This involves considering why particular actions represent justice, humility, responsibility, compassion, or other values. Such association provides a possible bridge between cultural representation and conceptual understanding and may help contextualize the quantitative association. Nevertheless, it remains an interpretive explanation rather than a tested mediation model. Reflection should also not be equated with internalization: students may understand and discuss values without consistently applying them.

Fourth, contextual meaning-making. Students interpret the performance within broader cultural, religious, educational, and social contexts. They bring prior experiences, religious knowledge, cultural familiarity, family influences, educational experiences, peer relationships, and digital media exposure. Wayang-based da'wah therefore enters an existing ecology of meaning. Differences in cultural exposure, language competence, religious literacy, personal interest, and prior experience can shape what students notice and how they interpret it. Conceptually, these processes may be represented as:

Narrative Engagement → Symbolic Interpretation → Value Association and Reflection →
Contextual Meaning-Making

The arrows represent conceptual relationships rather than demonstrated causal pathways. The processes may occur simultaneously, overlap, or influence one another recursively.

The integrated findings consequently support a conceptualization of wayang-based da'wah as a culturally mediated environment for Islamic and cultural value meaning-making. The performance provides narrative and symbolic resources; students engage with these resources cognitively, affectively, and aesthetically; they associate represented meanings with existing value conceptions; and they situate these interpretations within broader personal, educational, religious, and cultural contexts.

This conceptualization connects the quantitative and qualitative findings without overstating either. The quantitative analysis establishes the existence and magnitude of a statistically significant association, while the qualitative analysis provides contextual evidence concerning the performance features students experienced as meaningful.

The resulting explanation is deliberately more modest than a causal model. It does not claim that wayang-based da'wah produces value transformation. Rather, it proposes that culturally embedded performance may create conditions through which students encounter, interpret, associate, and contextualize Islamic and cultural values.

This interpretation also provides directions for future research. Subsequent studies could examine whether narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and value reflection function as measurable mediators between cultural performance and value-related outcomes. Pre-test/post-test designs could examine change over time, control-group designs could provide stronger evidence concerning intervention effects, and longitudinal studies could investigate whether value conceptions developed through culturally grounded learning are sustained or translated into behavioural practices.

For the present study, the most defensible conclusion is that wayang-based da'wah represents a potentially meaningful cultural and pedagogical resource whose contribution to Islamic value education is best understood within a broader ecology of meaning-making. Its significance lies not in the assumption that traditional culture automatically produces moral learning, but in the possibility that culturally embedded narratives and symbols create meaningful spaces in which prospective teachers can encounter, interpret, discuss, and critically reconstruct Islamic and cultural values.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah performances and students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values, complemented by qualitative evidence concerning how students interpreted the educational meanings, affordances, and limitations of the performance as a culturally grounded medium of Islamic value education.

The quantitative findings indicate a statistically significant positive association between perceived value transmission and students' value conceptions ($\beta = .416$, $B = .681$, $t = 7.651$, $p < .001$). The model explained 17.3% of the variance in the dependent construct ($R^2 = .173$). This finding indicates that perceived value transmission through wayang-based da'wah is meaningfully associated with students' conceptions of Islamic and cultural values, while also demonstrating that value conceptions cannot be explained by a single cultural performance. Wayang-based value transmission should therefore be understood as one meaningful component within a broader ecology of value formation involving family, education, religious engagement, social relationships, cultural experience, and digital environments.

The qualitative findings provide further insight into how students interpreted the educational meanings and affordances of wayang-based da'wah. Students perceived narrative, visual symbolism, humour, music, and moral messages as important features that could make Islamic and cultural values more accessible, concrete, engaging, and reflective. These findings suggest that the educational potential of wayang lies not simply in the transmission of moral messages but in the opportunity it provides for students to encounter values through culturally embedded narratives and symbolic forms.

At the same time, the qualitative findings identified important limitations. Language, limited prior exposure to wayang, performance format, and contemporary entertainment preferences could constrain students' engagement and interpretation. Cultural grounding, therefore, should not be understood as automatically producing accessibility. Rather, culturally responsive Islamic education requires pedagogical mediation that takes differences in learners' cultural familiarity, language, prior knowledge, and contemporary media experiences into account.

Taken together, the findings suggest that wayang-based da'wah has potential as a culturally responsive medium for Islamic value education, particularly within prospective teacher education. Its educational contribution should not be understood as an empirically demonstrated transformation of students' behaviour or values. Rather, its potential lies in providing culturally embedded opportunities for narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, and reflective meaning-making through which students can connect Islamic and cultural values with social and educational experience.

Conceptually, the integrated findings support a framework connecting narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, reflective meaning-making, and students' value conceptions. This framework should be understood as a conceptual explanation rather than a tested causal model. The study therefore does not establish that these processes constitute causal mechanisms or that participation in wayang-based da'wah necessarily produces value internalization or behavioural change.

For Islamic teacher education, the findings support the use of culturally grounded resources as objects of critical pedagogical analysis and curriculum enrichment. Prospective teachers can be encouraged to identify values embedded in cultural narratives, examine the symbols and communicative strategies through which those values are represented, assess their accessibility and limitations, and consider how traditional cultural resources can be responsibly adapted for contemporary and digital learning environments.

Future research should employ longitudinal, quasi-experimental, comparative, or multi-site designs to determine whether and under what conditions culturally embedded forms of da'wah contribute to sustained changes in value orientations, behavioural practices, and educational practice. Such research could also examine whether narrative engagement, symbolic interpretation, cognitive-affective engagement, and reflective meaning-making function as mediating processes between culturally grounded religious communication and value-related outcomes.

AI Disclosure

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) as an AI-assisted writing and language-support tool during the preparation of this manuscript. Its use included assistance with language editing, grammar improvement, readability, academic phrasing, and the organization and refinement of textual presentation. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed, verified against the study data and relevant literature, substantially revised where necessary, and approved by the authors. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, scholarly arguments, and integrity of the manuscript.

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