Moral Character of Society in the Qur'an in the Story of Ashab Al-Sabti

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ABSTRACT
The research is motivated by the existence of moral degradation caused by films, stories, and news in society, covering various aspects of moral decline such as a decrease in integrity, deviation from virtuous values, and a lack of empathy and social responsibility. If films, stories, and news can shape a person's character, then the Qur'an can certainly improve someone's behavior. The story of Ashab Al-Sabti will be the subject of research because it contains three groups, namely: the group of righteous advisors, the group that remains silent in the face of wrongdoing, and the group that exceeds limits and is corrupt. This research aims to examine the moral characters within these three groups. Through a combination of exegesis and sociology approaches, the characters in the story can be analyzed. Therefore, this research uses qualitative methods with library research as the type and descriptive analytical as the data analysis technique. The results of the research show that the analysis of characters in these three groups is divided into two categories: positive characters, including social care, obedience, loyalty, and resilience; and negative characters, including despair and defiance. The story of Ashab Al-Sabti contains four contextual elements from a sociological perspective: social facts, social actions, social reality, and sociological imagination.

INTRODUCTION
The phenomenon of moral degradation is still a relevant problem to be studied. The advent of globalization, modern technology, cultural changes, and abundant information flows have had a significant impact on moral and ethical values in society. These changes often lead to shifts in outlook and behavior that can threaten the moral integrity of a community.

Because of the rapid development of technology, Muslim teenagers in this millennial era feel something is missing when they are far away and separated from their cellphones. Nothing else with this cellphone is intended for social media (Lubis, 2024). As the name implies, social media is not an activity carried out by some
individuals alone. Rather, it is an action taken by many people. Therefore, its presence also has a significant impact on public character and events.

Social media seems to be two sides of a coin. On the one hand, it has positive effects on the development of children's lives and on the other hand, it causes moral decline, and may lead to national disintegration (Supriadi et al., 2023). From the swift flow of information so that information, news, stories, films, and all aspects of social media cause massive fictional stories and films on social media and as well as print media with attractive visualization and audio that teaches violence, sexual abuse, freedom of expression, arrogance, and other moral damage that greatly affects the adab and behavior of a person is increasingly rampant in the onslaught in the current era of globalization. It is proven that some crimes are inspired by scenes in comics or movies (Annisa et al., 2016).

From the data above, according to the researcher, what causes moral degradation is caused by social media through movies, stories and news in the community which includes various aspects of moral decline, such as decreased integrity, unethical actions, misuse of virtue values, and lack of empathy and social responsibility. This phenomenon gives rise to various characters in society due to the effects of technology that is so sophisticated in exploring various information, both positive and negative.

Based on this phenomenon, if films, stories, and news presented in various social media, and print media, are able to shape a person's character, then the Qur'an can certainly improve a person's behavior as well through the learning curriculum that the Qur'an has explained in it contains various verses containing life guidelines to be applied in life (Huda, 2023).

The Qur'an as a guide to life has a tremendous historical resource consisting of stories of how people lived in the past. It is full of moral messages, which cover the good and bad of actions in terms of morals, manners, and morals (Arifin, 2016). The stories in the Qur'an must be true and good stories that are beneficial to mankind. This is emphasized by the Qur'an, among other things, so that people take warnings and valuable lessons ('ibrah) from it in addition to encouraging them to think. Allah's words in QS. Yusuf:111

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي غَيْبَاتِهِمۡ عِبْرَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ أُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِیلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَآبَةٍ وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Indeed, in their story there is indeed a lesson for those who are of sound mind. (The Qur'an) is not a fabricated story, but a confirmation of the previous ones, detailing everything, as guidance, and mercy for those who believe."

The explanation of the verse above proves that, the story that serves as guidance or guidance for all humans. Of the many stories in the Qur'an, the story of Ashab Al-Sabti that the author will present and highlight some verses related to the story of
Ashab Al-Sabti, the author will highlight the terms of moral character contained in surah Al-A'raf verses-163-166 (Putra, 2018).

In the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, there are three groups that have different roles related to violating the prohibition of working on Saturday and its relation to the description of moral character in today's society such as; There are groups that still continue to advise for two purposes, namely carrying out the obligation to advise no matter whether it is accepted or rejected, Then there are groups that remain silent because they feel that advising them is useless and instead reproach the person who gives advice, so they are silent from the rule. And there are also those who blatantly deny God's command and violate the prohibition of working on Saturday.

By involving the three groups in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti in the study of the moral character of society, through multidisciplinary science, the phenomenon of moral degradation with the story of Ashab Al-Sabti can be studied through a scalpel, namely with the approach of Tafsir and Sociology. Then later we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of the story of Ashab Al-Sabti in shaping social and cultural dynamics. This can be an important foothold in efforts to build public awareness to take lessons from this research that are more moral, responsible, and harmonious.

Theoretically, it is expected that this research will add new knowledge and enrich the expertise on the moral character of society in the Quran through the story of Ashab Al-Sabti. Practically, this research can answer questions about problems that occur in society, produce significant research findings, and add to the literature on the contribution of thoughts about the value of religiosity and morals.

This paper is not the only research that discusses and analyzes the story of Ashab Al-Sabti. Previously, there have been various works and studies that discuss this theme. Rica Ravita Putri, for example, wrote an article entitled "Moral Values in the Story of Ashab Al-Sabti in the Qur'an (Thematic Interpretation Study)". Rica Ravita Putri wrote the moral values contained in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti. Noval Aldiana Putra "The Story of Ashhab al-Sabt in the Qur'an: Roland Barthes Semiotics Analysis". This article focuses its research on analyzing the story of Ashab Al-Sabti in the Qur'an by applying Roland Barthes Semiotics. Aidah Mega Kumalasari who studied an article entitled "The Meaning of Qiradah in the Story of the Children of Israel (Application of Roland Barthes Semiotics to QS Al-Baqarah [2]: 65)". In this study, Aidah focuses her research on exploring the meaning of Qirodah contained in the verse related to the story of Ashab Al-Sabti (Putri, 2020).

From several previous studies, here the author finds a difference in the discussion to be studied, namely the author focuses more on problems related to the phenomenon of moral degradation in society and then relates it to the interpretation of the Ashab Al-
Sabti story in the process of exploring the description of the moral character of the community in the story.

Based on the problems and research gaps that exist in previous studies, the author formulates the focus of this study in several parts, namely: What is the moral character of society depicted in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, as presented in the Qur'an and its interpretation and how is the effort to contextualize moral character?

This article intends to complement previous studies on the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, departing from existing phenomena to be relevant to the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, by presenting the basis of arguments from the Qur'an and sunnah comprehensively and holistically by involving multidisciplinary science in the field of tafsir and sociology.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research includes qualitative studies, while the type is library research. Library research is research that uses data collection methods, reading and recording to process a research material that utilizes library sources (Lubis & Ritonga, 2023). Through this research when viewed from its nature, this research is descriptive research, namely research that describes, describes, and reports a situation without assessing whether or not a concept or teaching is correct (Ritonga et al., 2022).

This means that this research only reveals and describes things related to the description of the moral character of the community regarding the story of Ashab Al-Sabti within the scope of sociological studies and the interpretation of classical and contemporary mufassirs to relate to the portrait of moral character today. The library material used can be in the form of literature, classical and contemporary tafsir books, books, journals, which contain the proposed problem. The author chooses to use maudhu'i (thematic) interpretation as a method in discussing the verses in question. Maudhu'i interpretation is a way of interpreting the Qur'an based on the theme of the verse. In this case, the verses related to the theme of morals are collected by the author, then the author refers to the comments of tafsir scholars in the book of tafsir (Yunus et al., 2021). And to achieve maximum results, researchers use the content analysis method.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In the Qur'an, the story of Ashab Al-Sabti is narrated in Surah Al-A'raf: 163, which describes a group of people who violated Allah's commandment on the Sabbath. This verse states that they lived by the sea and were forbidden to catch fish on the Sabbath. However, on the Sabbath, fish would come to the surface in abundance, whereas on other days, they would not. Allah tested them with this situation because they often acted corruptly.
Scholars have different opinions regarding the location of this village. Some say it was Ailah in Palestine, Madyan, or Maqna, all of which are coastal towns. However, detailed explanations are difficult to find, and there are differing opinions among scholars, including Ibn Abbas, Ikrimah, As-Suddi, Az-Zuhri, Qatadah, and Zaid bin Aslam.

According to Abu Ja'far Ath-Tabari, the town could have been Ailah, Madyan, or Maqna, as all these towns are situated on the coast. Ashab Al-Sabti refers to the people of Bani Israil who violated the Sabbath rule during the time of Prophet David. This story actually began during the time of Prophet Moses and continued into the time of Prophet David.

The people of Bani Israil were initially instructed to worship specifically on Friday, but they chose Saturday instead. On Saturday, they were prohibited from catching fish. However, they devised cunning ways to catch fish by creating channels to trap the fish and then catching them the next day. They tried to deceive Allah, but Allah transformed them into monkeys as punishment.

Allah's statement in the Qur'an reminds us:

"فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنَْ مَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمَْ كُوْنُوْا قِرَدَةًَ خٰسِـِٕيْنََ"

"Then, when they persisted in what they had been forbidden, We said to them, 'Be apes, despised.'"

Character is a systematic set of traits shaped by both genetic factors and the environment. Genetic factors form the basic nature of humans, while the environment shapes character through life experiences and social interactions. Moral character in society encompasses spirituality and moral values, which are inseparable from the character of that society. Both play a crucial role in building welfare in any social organization.

Based on the data presented by researchers regarding the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, as explained in QS: Al-A'raf: 163-166 through various interpretations by classical and contemporary scholars, the story reveals both positive and negative moral traits. The primary virtue of character education in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti is social concern, which involves actions and behaviors aimed at helping, advising, and preventing individuals and society from committing wrongdoings to avoid Allah's punishment and guide them back to piety. This is demonstrated by the phrase "so that they may become righteous" (QS: Al-A'raf: 164). This narrative indicates that the first group, who attempted to advise and prevent the wrongdoings, did so to avoid invoking Allah's wrath. Their moral foundation was driven by the command to enjoin good and forbid evil, as inspired by Allah's words in QS: Al-Ghashiyah: 21-24: "So remind, (O Muhammad); you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller. However, he who turns away and disbelieves - then Allah will punish him with the greatest punishment." This shows their deep concern for their community, thinking ahead about
the consequences of violating the Sabbath. A Muslim’s concern for their fellows is a significant responsibility, as shown by these preachers who selflessly prioritized community welfare (Rosana, 2015).

Although not explicitly stated, the pious group demonstrated obedience and loyalty by not participating in the violation of the Sabbath and by advising the disobedient group to stop, to avoid Allah’s punishment. This group’s actions were meant to produce beneficial outcomes for the society. This analysis is based on QS: Al-A'raf: 164, which describes a dialogue between the silent group and the preachers: "Why do you advise a people whom Allah is about to destroy or to punish with a severe punishment?" They replied, "To be absolved before your Lord and perhaps they may fear Him." This indicates solidarity and adherence to the rules set by their Prophet, proving their high integrity, aligning their lives with their values (Az-Zuhaili, 2018). Consequently, they were saved from Allah’s punishment and promised to be gathered with the Prophets and righteous people as stated in QS: An-Nisa: 69: "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions."

The silent group's question to the preachers, “Why do you remind a people whom Allah will destroy or punish with a severe punishment?” was met with the response, "To be absolved before your Lord and perhaps they may fear Him." This illustrates the preachers' perseverance in preventing wrongdoing, showing optimism, a positive mindset, resilience, and the ability to face failure and uncertainty. Perseverance in community life is a benchmark for personal goodness and a foundation for creating harmony in family, society, and state. This is supported by QS: Ali Imran: 139: "So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers."

In contrast, the silent group’s despair is evident in their narrative, “Why do you remind a people whom Allah will destroy or punish with a severe punishment?” This shows their pessimism and unwillingness to strive to prevent wrongdoing, believing that the wrongdoers’ fate was sealed. They represent a defeatist attitude, contrasting sharply with the preachers' optimism. As the Prophet Muhammad said, "The silent about truth is a mute devil while the speaker of falsehood is a speaking devil." Additionally, the defiant nature of the third group is illustrated in the verse, "When they were insolent about that which they had been forbidden, We said to them, 'Be apes, despised.'" This shows their defiant character, which degrades human dignity to a level even lower than animals. Such defiance is common in society, manifesting in excessive behavior, injustice, and corruption, representing the lowest moral state in humans (Ridwan, 1999).

Analyzing these characters can serve as a foundational tool for reconstructing moral values in today's society, aiming to develop individuals who are intellectually
and morally sound. It is not only cultural traditions that determine, but also social circumstances and conditions in a story that has been described (Lutfi, 2016). Understanding sociology contextually means placing or examining basic sociological concepts in different contexts. This can occur in real life or from a fantasy perspective to describe community behavior or social planning.

Based on the story above, it can be analyzed that the story of Ashab Al-Sabti contains four contextual points from a sociological point of view, namely: Social facts, social action, social reality, and sociological imagination (Putri, 2018). As for the simple review that can be identified in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti above, it appears in the story where there is a country near the sea plain with abundant crops when Saturday arrives, the Ikan flashed a sign that he was approaching is a test for people who are weak in faith. Because the water of their appetite is disgusting to see so many fish, they can not hold their hearts and they break the rules, Then it resulted in many people who ignore the covenant with Allah on Saturday. they forget the sanctity of Saturday, so they net or they trawl the fish, even though it is Saturday. They broke the rules of their own religion, because they indulged their lusts, and some groups remained silent about this evil.

This can be viewed as social reality because it reflects the current situation where integrity has declined as honesty is often overridden by desires, leading to widespread corruption, collusion, and nepotism in this country. The story also illustrates the practice of the group carrying out Amar ma'ruf nahy munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil), which is considered a social fact because it is seen as a truth believed by society to reconstruct the damaged moral character in the community, especially as KKN (Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism) becomes increasingly prevalent, becoming a system beyond individual control. This is also evident in the moments when the preachers advise those who have broken their promises to Allah, demonstrating their approach to preaching with knowledge, gentleness, and perseverance.

All these events represent social actions aimed at organizing or controlling behavior in society, where such actions influence others. According to Max Weber, this is an example of value-rational action, which is based on values and carried out with goals related to those personally held values, regardless of the outcome. The differences in the characters of the people in the story, both positive and negative, are due to conflict. According to Conflict Theory in sociology, social change does not occur through a process of adjusting values that bring change, but rather through conflicts that result in compromises different from the original conditions. In this story, society consists of groups based on differing interests. One group with high integrity is steadfast in preaching to uphold the truth, while the other, driven by desires, aims to achieve goals that may lead to social change. Therefore, the conflict in the story of
Ashab Al-Sabti, according to Dahrendorf, is a source of social change, resulting in both positive and negative characters due to social conflict.

Furthermore, this story also represents social imagination, depicted by the divine punishment resulting from neglecting the laws they created, which serves as a foundation for the community to maintain personal integrity and learn a valuable lesson for societal living. Based on the brief review of the story of Ashab Al-Sabti, various main aspects of sociology can be identified, including social reality, social facts, social actions, and social imagination. The existence of groups and other forms such as socialization, social interaction, social groups, social order, social control, and social institutions support the sociological perspective. The story of Ashab Al-Sabti offers a sociological view of how social norms, values, and local beliefs play a crucial role in shaping individual identity and influencing social interactions within society.

The takeaway from the various moral characters in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti is the importance of considering the future impact of any action to avoid undesirable outcomes such as conflict, social friction, and most importantly, the divine punishment promised by Allah, even if not immediate. This is highly recommended because every action will have an impact on society. The firm stance against corruption, adherence to principles, and maintaining moral values in interactions with oneself and others are crucial. Understanding this can enhance comprehension and awareness of the social aspects present in society and simultaneously serve as a means to reconstruct character and moral values within the community.

CONCLUSION

There are several important points that we can conclude: that the three groups contained in the story of Ashab Al-Sabti are related to the moral character that exists in society today as stated in several verses of the Qur'an, namely: QS.Al-A'raf: 163-166. These verses and their interpretations become standardization in the formation of moral character, by getting used to doing things and things that are commanded or recommended and leaving everything that is prohibited by the Qur'an.

With this standardization, positive and negative moral character values emerge as an effort to reconstruct morals, because in sociology it occurs due to conflicts between various parties so as to give birth to differences in character caused by social change due to conflict, and those characters as a counterweight in reconstructing morals in society. Positive characters include: Social Care, Obedience, Loyalty, and Unyielding, while negative characters are: Desperation, and Dissent.

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