

Rationalization of the Search for God in the Story of Prophet Moses AS: An Analysis of the Qur'anic Story

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the story of the Prophet Moses (AS) in the Qur'an as an attempt to rationalize the search for God, emphasizing the story's relevance to contemporary religious understanding. The research method employed is a qualitative study with a library approach, utilising thematic analysis of verses from the Qur'an that recount the spiritual journey of Prophet Moses (AS). Data were collected from primary sources in the form of the Qur'anic text and secondary literature in the form of classical and modern interpretations, then analyzed descriptively and analytically. The results of the study indicate that the story of the Prophet Moses (AS) not only presents a historical narrative, but also contains rational, spiritual, and ethical dimensions that emphasize the role of reason and experience in finding God. These findings confirm that the Qur'anic story can serve as a model for faith education that is both argumentative and reflective, with practical applications. The implication of this study is the need to develop the study of the Qur'anic story as a contextual method of religious learning, especially to strengthen moderate religious literacy in the modern era. The originality of this study lies in the focus of its analysis, which places the story of the Prophet Moses (AS) not merely as a prophetic history, but as a rationalization of the search for God that is actual and relevant for today's readers.

Keywords: experiential theology; Islamic education; Quranic Narrative; Prophet Moses; rational faith.

INTRODUCTION

The stories of the prophets in the Quran serve not only as historical narratives but also as a means of educating on faith, morality, and rationality. In the increasingly complex conditions of modern society, the challenges of secularization, value relativism, and spiritual crisis have become real phenomena (Nisa & Bakri, 2024; Yilmaz, 2021). Younger generations often experience confusion in understanding religion, tending to understand rituals formally without deepening their values, so that religious practices easily become trapped in rigid legalism (Said, 2018). In this context, the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) holds great relevance: it depicts a prophet's struggle to confront tyranny, rationally search for God, and guide his people toward freedom and truth.

Another social phenomenon that strengthens the relevance of this research is the growing need for more contextual, reflective, and experience-based religious education methods (Arifin, 2016). In Indonesia, religious education is often criticized for overemphasizing memorization and not allowing enough room for critical understanding and internalization of values (Parker, 2014; Wijaya, 2024). However, the story of the Prophet Moses, filled with dialogue, symbolism, and dramatic events, can serve as a more engaging medium for learning about faith (Pohl, 2006). Therefore, examining the story of Moses from the perspective of rationalizing the search for God is crucial for addressing current social and religious education challenges.

Previous research on the Prophet Moses can be categorized into three main trends. First, historical and narrative studies. Several studies highlight the details of Moses' early life, from his birth and upbringing in Pharaoh's palace to his flight to Midian, which ultimately led to his spiritual experience on Mount Horeb. These studies demonstrate that Moses' narrative structure is constructed with symbols typical of ancient kingdoms, which serve to reinforce his identity as a great figure in the divine tradition (Bruni, 2019; Mathews, 2012). Other studies emphasize Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush as a monumental theophanic moment, not only in the context of the history of the Children of Israel but also as a model for universal religious experience (Dragić, 2024). These historical studies emphasize that Moses' story is not merely told as a legend, but as a narrative that shapes the collective memory of religious communities.

Second, theological and legal studies. The focus of research in this group is Moses' role as the liberator of the Israelites and recipient of divine law at Mount Sinai. Researchers such as Assmann (2018) emphasize that the moment of law-giving not only reflects the transcendental relationship between God and the people but also marks the birth of an ethical and religious system that remains influential to this day. Panczová (2014) highlights the patristic interpretation of the story of Moses, which emphasizes the exodus as a symbol of spiritual liberation. Creech (2012) and Lelli (2019) add the perspective that Moses is positioned as a great legislator who not only conveys the law but also serves as a bridge between revelation and social practices. Thus, research in this category focuses more on the normative and regulative dimensions of the story of Moses, as well as its relevance in establishing religious law and collective morality.

Third, philosophical and symbolic studies. In this realm, Moses is positioned as a figure who goes beyond mere historical figures, but also serves as a universal symbol of humanity's relationship with God. Attanasio (2023) highlights the interpretations of classical philosophers and theologians such as Philo and Gregory of Nyssa, who make Moses the archetype of the seeker of truth. Bendinelli (2018) and Kratz (2018) show that the story of Moses is used to reflect humanity's limitations in understanding the Divine as well as its capacity as a mediator of transcendence. Leuchter and Farber (2019) add that the construction of the figure of Moses in rabbinic literature demonstrates how religious identity is constructed through metaphors of leadership and freedom. Wineman (2018) even asserts that in Hasidic literature, Moses is reinterpreted as a symbol of mystical dialogue between humanity and God. This symbolic study has further developed in the modern context, where Moses is seen as a metaphor for multiculturalism and the plurality of religious identities (Johnson & Rietveld, 2010).

Despite the richness of the scholarship, several gaps remain underexplored. First, research often focuses on historical or dogmatic dimensions, while the pedagogical aspects and contemporary relevance of the story of Moses, particularly in the context of Islamic education, are underexplored. Second, while studies of Moses as a legislator or mediator are abundant, analyses that highlight the rationalization of the search for God through the story of Moses are still rare. This rational dimension (*tajribī*) is crucial for presenting a more reflective and moderate religion in the modern era. Third, cross-traditional studies often emphasize symbolism, but few studies link it to the practical needs of religious education in Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Quran as a rationalization of the search for God. The focus is to demonstrate how this Quranic story is not only historical but also contains theological, ethical, and pedagogical lessons relevant to contemporary Islamic religious education. Thus, this study seeks to bridge the gap in previous research by presenting a new perspective that emphasizes rationality and contextuality.

This study argues that the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an is not merely a historical account, but rather a model of rational, reflective, and applicable faith education. Through a vivid narrative, the story of Moses illustrates the dialectical relationship between humans and God, the spiritual struggle against tyrannical power, and the formation of a robust religious identity. The rational dimension is clearly visible in Moses' courageous attitude of questioning, dialogue, and seeking evidence of truth, thus providing an example for humanity to find God not merely through dogmatic doctrine, but through direct

intellectual and spiritual experience. The reflective aspect is evident in Moses' contemplation of the events he faced, both when confronting Pharaoh and when receiving revelation at Sinai, which emphasises the importance of reflecting deeply on every life experience. Meanwhile, the applicable dimension is evident in how Moses internalized God's commands into concrete actions, freeing his people from shackles, while simultaneously establishing laws that serve as guidelines for communal life.

The main argument of this study is that the story of Moses, when understood as a rationalization process of the search for God, can serve as a pedagogical foundation for strengthening moderate, critical, and contextual religious literacy in the global era. By emphasizing the rational and reflective aspects of the Qur'anic story, religious education can be directed not only at memorization and procedural compliance, but also at deeper meanings relevant to contemporary social realities. This is crucial for addressing the challenges of spiritual crisis, religious polarization, and the need for an open, dialogical, and wise model of religiosity in modern society. Thus, this study seeks to demonstrate that the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) can serve as pedagogical inspiration in formulating an Islamic educational paradigm that balances faith, reason, and experience.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) as contained in the Qur'an, particularly the verses that record his life journey, encounters with God, and interactions with his people. Furthermore, this study also highlights the interpretations of these verses by classical and modern commentators. By using the Qur'anic story as the unit of analysis, this study focuses on theological and pedagogical aspects, particularly its relevance to the process of rationalizing the search for God in the context of Islamic religious education.

This research uses a qualitative design with a library research approach (Lune & Berg, 2017). This method was chosen based on the research objective, which emphasizes exploring the meaning of religious texts rather than quantitative measurements. A qualitative approach was chosen because it can reveal the symbolic, historical, and reflective dimensions of the story of Moses, which cannot be explained numerically. Therefore, this method is considered most relevant for exploring the theological messages and pedagogical implications of the Quranic text.

The primary data for this study consist of the Quranic text, which depicts the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), as well as books of interpretation, serving as the primary instruments for understanding the meaning of the verses. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from academic literature, including books, journal articles, and previous research, which discuss the story of Moses from historical, theological, and educational perspectives. The use of these two types of data aims to provide a comprehensive analysis, both from a normative-theological and an academic-critical perspective.

Data were collected through a literature review by systematically reviewing primary and secondary sources (Mustari & Rahman, 2012). This process involved identifying relevant Quranic verses, collecting interpretations from various periods (classical to contemporary), and reviewing academic literature available in scientific databases such as Scopus, DOAJ, and university repositories. This technique enables researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study without requiring fieldwork.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, verses related to the Prophet Moses were categorized based on major themes, such as birth, spiritual experiences, struggle against Pharaoh, receiving revelation, and faith formation. Second, classical and modern interpretations were compared to identify similarities and differences. Third, the analysis results were combined with academic literature to produce a contextual interpretation. With this approach, the research not only presents the meaning of the text but also highlights the relevance of the story of Moses as a model for rationalizing the search for God in the modern era.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1.1 The Birth of Moses and His Nurse

The birth of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) occurred in the socio-political context of ancient Egypt, under the rule of King Pharaoh, a despotic ruler who asserted his power through violence, oppression, and self-aggrandisement. At that time, the Children of Israel lived in fear and oppression (Udin & Dananjoyo, 2023). They were not only physically enslaved but also experienced psychological terror:

every footstep of the royal soldiers caused anxiety, even in their own homes. This situation reached its peak when Pharaoh, after receiving a prophecy from his astrologer that a boy from the Children of Israel would one day overthrow his rule, ordered the systematic slaughter of every baby boy born to the descendants of Israel.

Although the cruel order was carried out with strict supervision, Divine destiny was beyond human control. At that moment, Musa bin Imran was born from the womb of Yukabad, a pious woman from Ya'qub's lineage (Bahjat, 2007). The birth brings fear and great hope. Yukabad, with an anxious maternal instinct, hid her baby for three months. However, because he feared that his son's safety was threatened, he received inspiration from God to place the baby in a tight chest, which was then washed away in the Nile River, while believing in God's promise that the baby would be returned to him and he would later be appointed as one of the apostles.

By divine arrangement, the chest containing the baby Moses was found by Pharaoh's wife on the banks of the Nile River (Bucaille, 2007). Lovingly, she refused her husband's order to kill the baby and instead persuaded Moses to be raised in the palace as an adopted son. This is where the irony of history arises: a baby of the Children of Israel who should have been a victim of Pharaoh's cruelty actually grew up in the tyrant's palace, protected by Pharaoh's own wife. This incident is clear evidence that God's power surpasses all human plans, and also indicates that Moses will one day emerge as the liberator of the oppressed people.

This story also reveals the greatness of God's promise to Yukabad. When Musa refused to be breastfed by the hosts who were brought to the palace, Musa's sister cleverly offered a woman from Bani Isra'il who could breastfeed the baby. Finally, Yukabad herself was called and accepted as Moses' foster mother. Thus, she was not only able to hug her son again, but also received wages as an official nanny under the protection of the palace. This event shows how God's promise was fulfilled in a wise way: Moses was returned to his mother, nurtured with love, and at the same time received protection from Pharaoh's circle of power (Hamid, 2003).

After the breastfeeding period ended, Musa was raised again in Pharaoh's palace. He was nurtured, educated, and raised like the children of Egyptian nobles, wearing royal clothes, riding in palace vehicles, and known as Musa bin Fir'aun. However, behind his social identity as a "child of the palace", Divine destiny has prepared a great role for him as a prophet and messenger who will later shake the power of tyrants and liberate Bani Isra'il from slavery.

1.1.1. Rationalization of the Search for God in the Story of Moses

The birth of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is recounted in Surah Al-Qasas, verses 7–13, which emphasizes how Moses' mother was inspired to place her baby in a coffin and cast him adrift in the Nile. This Qur'anic account is supported by exegetical accounts, which explain that this step was not merely a biological rescue, but a symbol of total submission to God's will. God's will affirmed that Moses would return to his mother's embrace and grow up in Pharaoh's palace (Hanafi, 1983). This incident demonstrates that the rationalization of faith begins with belief in God's promise, even though it appears empirically impossible.

The story of baby Moses' survival amidst Pharaoh's genocidal policies is a clear example of how divine intervention proceeds through a paradoxical path: a child who should have been killed is instead raised in the house of his enemy. Ibn Kathir's commentary emphasizes that this is clear evidence of God's omnipotence that works beyond human calculation (Hidayatullah, 2005). This Qur'anic verse paints a vivid picture of life that readers can almost visualize—the anxious atmosphere, the floating coffin, and the affection of Pharaoh's wife. Thus, this story contains a lesson about the logic of faith: that God's truth is stronger than the logic of human power.

In other words, the early stages of Moses' life demonstrate that the search for God did not arise out of thin air, but rather through a risky, existential experience. The conviction of Yukabad, Moses' mother, demonstrates how faith moves from normative conviction to *tajrib* experience—a direct experience that tests trust in the divine promise.

When Moses grew up, verses 15–16 of the Quran record the incident of Moses accidentally killing an Egyptian man while helping an oppressed Israelite. Moses then realized his mistake, asked for forgiveness, and promised to no longer support the actions of oppressors. This data is important because it shows Moses' transition from palace life to an awareness of his identity as part of the oppressed. The rationalization of faith here emerges through confession of guilt, remorse, and sincere prayer.

This event is visualized in the interpretation as a moment of moral reflection: Moses, physically strong, is shaken by the consequences of his actions. This narrative illustrates that the search for God is not free from human weakness, but rather forged through mistakes, introspection, and spiritual strengthening. From a pedagogical perspective, this story provides a model for how mistakes can be a gateway to maturing faith (Meier, 1999).

Thus, this stage teaches that the rationalization of faith does not stop at passive belief but must be forged by concrete life experiences. Moses, originally a "palace boy," must now learn to understand the suffering of the people and face the consequences of his actions. The rationality of faith arises from moral awareness and social responsibility.

Surah Al-Qasas, verse 20, describes a man rushing to warn Moses that the Egyptian leaders were plotting his assassination and that he must leave the country immediately. This event marks Moses' transition from the realm of power to a realm of exile, where his spiritual quest matured. Moses left not only to save himself but also to discover his prophetic identity.

The context of Musa's exile in Madyan is visualized as a transitional space, where he lived simply, worked, and married the daughter of the Prophet Shu'aib. In interpretation, this phase is considered a "madrasah of life" that prepares Moses for his apostolic message. Simplicity, struggle, and encounters with religious figures strengthen the dimension of direct experience that is the core of *tajribī*.

The peak of the rationalization of faith in the story of Moses is the burning bush event as recorded in QS. Taha verses 9-14. Musa, who was lost, saw the flame, then came closer in the hope of getting directions or just embers to warm the body. This is where he was called by God: "Indeed I am God, there is no God but Me, so worship Me and establish prayer to remember Me." This event is a turning point, where Moses' rational search finds a definitive answer through revelation.

Classical interpretations emphasize that the fire symbol in Thur Sina represents the light of guidance that burns away human confusion (B. Wheeler, 2017). Moses, who initially sought physical fire, instead found spiritual light. The miracle of the staff transforming into a snake and the luminous hand add an empirical dimension—that the experience of faith is not merely rational but also involves tangible, tangible evidence. This makes Moses' faith not merely dogma, but a comprehensive, convincing experience.

In other words, the revelation of Thur Sina demonstrates that the search for God does not stop at intellectual reflection but must be confirmed through direct spiritual experience. Moses learned that true faith is a balance between reason, sensory experience, and obedience to God's commands (O'Kane, 1996).

God's order for Moses to return to Egypt to face Pharaoh is recorded in QS. Taha verse 24: "Go to Pharaoh, indeed he has transgressed the limit." This data is important because it shifts faith from the private space to the public space. Moses not only sought God for himself, but was also ordered to convey the truth to the oppressor.

Moses' request for Aaron to be his companion (Quran 29–32) demonstrates the rational dimension of the message: Moses recognized his limitations in communication, so he requested a more eloquent partner. Commentaries describe this as a heightened sense of self-awareness—that preaching requires strategy, not just courage. This demonstrates that rationalizing faith does not negate the human need for cooperation and social support.

Table 1. Visualization of the Rationalization of the Search for God in the Story of Moses

Stages of the Story of Moses	Al-Quran References	Primary Data	Dimensions of Rationalization of Faith
The birth of Moses	QS. Al-Qasas 7–13	Moses was washed away in the Nile, found by Pharaoh's wife, returned to his mother.	Faith arises from total surrender to God's promises, even though they may seem logically impossible.
Murder Incident	QS. Al-Qasas 15–16	Moses killed an Egyptian by accident, then repented.	Faith is forged through mistakes, moral introspection, and prayer.
Moses came out of Egypt	QS. Al-Qasas 20	A man warned Moses, he ran away from Egypt.	The search for faith enters a phase of exile to discover the prophetic identity.
Exile in Madyan	Tafsir QS. Al-Qasas 23–28	Musa worked and married the daughter of the Prophet Shu'aib.	Simple living becomes a school of life; faith is deepened through social experience.
The Revelation	QS. Taha 9–14	Moses saw the fire, was called	The rationalization of faith reaches its

Event (Burning Bush)		by God, ordered to pray.	peak: sensory experience combines with revelation.
Miracle of the Wand & White Hand	QS. Taha 17–23	Stick becomes snake, hands glow.	Faith is confirmed by empirical evidence, not mere doctrine.
Order of preaching	QS. Taha 24	Musa was ordered to face Pharaoh.	Faith is extended to the public sphere: the truth must be brought to bear on oppressive rulers.
Companion Request (Harun)	QS. Taha 29–32	Musa asked Harun as a preaching companion.	Rationalizing faith requires self-awareness and strategy; faith synergizes with social cooperation.

Table 1 above visualizes the main stages in the story of Prophet Moses AS related to the rationalization process of seeking God. At the stage of Moses' birth (**QS. Al-Qasas 7–13**), faith was born from total surrender: Moses' mother received divine inspiration to carry her baby away, an action that, at first glance, seemed dangerous but ultimately saved her. This shows how faith in God's promises can surpass human logical calculations.

The incident of accidentally killing an Egyptian (QS. Al-Qasas 15-16) became a point of moral reflection for Moses. He learned that mistakes can be the door to the maturity of faith through introspection and prayer. Furthermore, Moses' exile to Midian (QS. Al-Qasas 20–28) illustrates the phase of *tajrībī* (direct experience), where it is forged through simple life, hard work, and social interaction. Here, faith is not only abstract, but born from concrete experience.

The peak of the search for God occurred at the event of revelation in Thur Sina (QS. Taha 9–14). Moses, who initially sought physical fire, instead found spiritual light, accompanied by the miracle of a luminous staff and hand (Quran 17–23), confirming that faith is not only rational but also empirical. In this phase, Moses' faith was confirmed through direct evidence and transcendental experiences.

Finally, the command to preach (QS. Taha 24) shifting faith from the private to the public realm: truth cannot be internalized enough, but must be communicated to counter tyranny. Moses' awareness of his limitations then led him to ask for Harun's companion (QS. Taha 29–32), which shows that faith is also rational and strategic: it requires collaboration for the message to be effective.

Thus, these tables and narratives reveal a consistent pattern: Moses' faith was shaped through a risky historical journey, reflective personal experience, spiritual strengthening through revelation, and socio-political expansion through preaching. The rationalization of the search for God was not an instantaneous process, but a series of stages that balanced reason, sensory experience, and transcendent obedience.

1.2 Theological, Ethical, and Pedagogical Dimensions of the Story of Moses

The dialogue between the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh opens up space for a profound theological understanding of the concept of divinity. When Pharaoh arrogantly asks who Moses's God is, Moses's response doesn't stop at a personal claim but develops into a cosmological argument: Moses's God is the Lord of all the worlds, the creator of the heavens, the earth, and everything in between. This pattern of responses demonstrates that the Qur'an presents the theology of monotheism not merely as dogma, but as a truth that can be explored through reason. In other words, Moses presents Allah's divinity in rational language that can be understood by both courtiers and commoners (Afrough, 2022).

The debate also revealed the ethical side of Moses' message. Pharaoh tried to remind Moses of the palace's services to him since childhood, including the accusation of murder he had committed. Moses did not deny it, but rather put it in context: he was merely an adopted son due to Pharaoh's tyranny, who ordered the mass murder of the baby boys of the Children of Israel. He also acknowledged that the accidental killing was a mistake born of Satan's temptation, then he repented and actually gained wisdom in his subsequent journey. Moses' response demonstrates the ethics of responsibility: admitting mistakes, not covering up the facts, but turning them into a momentum for improvement and moral legitimacy for the prophetic mission.

From a pedagogical perspective, the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh demonstrates a method of *mujadalah* that is both argumentative and polite. Moses does not use harsh words, even

when confronted by a tyrannical figure who claims to be God. He constructs his argument step by step, defining the concept of divinity, explaining God's relationship with nature, and ultimately affirming God's role as the creator and guide of the universe. This is a model of ethical religious communication that emphasizes conceptual clarity, strong arguments, and rhetorical delicacy. In education, this approach is relevant as an example that religious truth should be conveyed dialogically, not coercively (Issa, 2020).

The theological dimension is further strengthened by the presence of miracles. When Pharaoh demanded proof, Moses threw his staff, transforming it into a large snake, then revealed a glowing hand. These two signs became a concrete epistemology of faith: based not only on claims or dogma, but also on observable, empirical evidence. The magicians invited by Pharaoh, with their expertise, immediately realized that what Moses had shown was no trick. They then prostrated themselves, declaring their faith in the God of Moses and Aaron. This moment demonstrates that those with scientific authority are quickest to accept the truth when the evidence is clear (Meeks, 2017).

The conversion of the magicians carries a profound ethical message. They willingly faced Pharaoh's threats of amputation and crucifixion, but remained undeterred. They asserted, "We have seen the clear evidence." The ethics of moral courage is born of epistemic certainty. This teaches that faith based on solid evidence cannot be shaken by external threats. From a pedagogical perspective, this story serves as an important model for religious education: students must be trained to recognize evidence so that their beliefs are not fragile when tested by social pressures or power (B. Wheeler, 2017).

Pharaoh, defeated in the argument, unleashed his cruelty on the Children of Israel. He ordered the killing of baby boys as a political strategy to weaken Moses and his followers. However, it was precisely under this pressure that collective faith formation took place. Moses reassured his people, instilled patience and trust in God, and promised that the earth would be inherited by God's righteous servants. This demonstrates the pedagogy of spiritual resilience: facing crises not with panic, but with strengthened faith and eschatological hope.

When the Children of Israel finally left Egypt, theological, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions converged in the exodus (Meier, 1999). Facing the Red Sea and the threat of Pharaoh's army, Moses asserted, "Indeed, my Lord is with me; He will guide me." Revelation descended, commanding Moses to strike the sea with his staff, thus opening a dry path. This event affirmed that monotheism is not merely an abstract concept, but a concrete force of liberation. Ethically, it demonstrated Moses' leadership in maintaining the people's calm amidst the crisis. Pedagogically, the exodus experience became a "practical lesson" for the Children of Israel: faith provides a concrete solution when human reason fails.

However, the story does not end with liberation. After their salvation, some of the Israelites asked Moses to make them idols like those they saw worshipped by other nations. This incident demonstrates that external liberation does not necessarily lead to internal liberation. Moses firmly refused, rebuking them as foolish, and reminding them of the blessings they had just experienced from God. Theologically, this underscores the danger of polytheism. Ethically, he rejects value relativism. Pedagogically, he demonstrates that faith education is an ongoing process that must remove "mental idols" after political idols have fallen (Afrough, 2022).

God also educated the Children of Israel by providing manna, *sa/wa*, and twelve springs of water. This was not merely physical nourishment, but pedagogical scaffolding so the people could continue their spiritual journey. However, when they demanded a diet of vegetables and onions in exchange for divine gifts, Moses taught an ethical principle: do not exchange the better for the inferior. From this, we learn that faith must prioritize spiritual values over material pleasures. The pedagogy is clear: religious education must train students to manage desires, distinguish priorities, and appreciate essential blessings (O'Kane, 1996).

The entire story of Moses demonstrates a consistent pattern: the theology of monotheism is established through rational argumentation, empirical evidence, and historical evidence; ethics is demonstrated through accountability, moral courage, and social justice; and pedagogy is exemplified through dialogue, example, collaboration, resilience, and practical experience. From this, it can be concluded that the story of Moses is not only relevant to religious history but also presents a model for a faith curriculum that integrates reason, morality, and experience (Holm, 2014). Thus, the theological,

ethical, and pedagogical dimensions of the story of Moses make a significant contribution to contemporary Islamic education, which seeks to shape individuals who are faithful, rational, and socially civilized.

Table 2. Visualization of the Theological, Ethical, and Pedagogical Dimensions of the Story of Moses

Episode of the Story of Moses	Theological Dimension	Ethical Dimension	Pedagogical Dimension
Dialogue Musa-Fir'aun	Rational monotheism: God of all creation, creator of the heavens and the earth	Moses' accountability for his past, moral transparency	Dialogic mujadalah method, gradual arguments, polite language
Miracle of the Wand & Hand	Empirical signs as proof of prophecy, divine verification	Honesty in accepting evidence, epistemic justice	Learning through sensory experience, learning by seeing
Witch Conversion	Scientific authority is subject to the truth of signs	Moral courage in the face of Pharaoh's threat	Evidence-based education, strengthening solid beliefs
Pharaoh's Repression of the Children of Israel	Tawhid as a theology of liberation	Solidarity with the oppressed, collective patience	Resilience pedagogy, instilling patience and trust in God
The Exodus & The Parting of the Red Sea	Divine intervention in history, faith gives birth to liberation	Musa's leadership maintains the peace of the people	Experiential learning: faith is tested in a real crisis
Idol Request	Rejection of polytheism, purification of monotheism	Rejecting value relativism, consistency of faith	Spiritual debriefing, educating the people not to regress after being released
Manna, Salwa, and Spring	Divine preservation as favor	Priority ethics: don't trade high for low	Scaffolding: meeting the basic need for spiritual focus

The table above shows how each episode in the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) contains three complementary layers: theological, ethical, and pedagogical. At the theological level, this story affirms rational monotheism, in which Moses presents logical arguments about God, demonstrates empirical signs through miracles, and affirms that true faith implies liberation from tyranny. At the ethical level, Moses serves as an example of moral responsibility, courage in facing threats, solidarity with the oppressed, and steadfastness in rejecting value relativism. Meanwhile, at the pedagogical level, each episode demonstrates a pattern of faith education: dialogical mujadalah, experiential learning, spiritual resilience in crisis, post-liberation reflection, and scaffolding in the form of physical care so that the community can focus on spiritual growth.

Thus, the story of Moses not only presents a historical narrative but also presents a faith curriculum that integrates theological conviction, humanitarian ethics, and pedagogical methods. This narrative is relevant for contemporary religious education because it can cultivate a generation with rational faith, noble morals, and resilience in facing the challenges of the times.

1.2.1. The Relevance of the Story of Moses for Contemporary Religious Education

The story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an has significant relevance to the practice of religious education in the contemporary era, particularly in building a contextual, critical, and applicable learning model (Rendtorff, 1997). The main dimension that can be drawn is the integration of *tajribī* values (experiential learning), where faith is not only acquired through memorization and dogma, but through direct experience that can be felt, reflected on, and internalized. Moses, from infancy to becoming a prophet, underwent a series of life tests that shaped him into a rational, reflective, and spiritually strong believer. This experiential learning model is highly relevant in the context of modern Islamic education, where the younger generation needs to be invited to "experience" religion, not just know it.

Moses' experience of being swept away in the Nile River, pedagogically, teaches complete submission to God, which simultaneously produces a strong belief in His promises. This incident can be used as a paradigm that in religious education, students need to be given space to practice believing in values that may empirically seem impossible (Taqiyuddin, 2023). The process of "witnessing" God's signs in everyday

life, such as Moses witnessing the miracle of the staff and the light in his hand, teaches that faith is strengthened when it is obtained through evidence and real experience. This relevance emphasizes the need for religious education that is not only normative, but also involves the sensory, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of students.

In addition to the *tajrib* aspect, the story of Moses contains an important message about religious moderation. When Moses was commanded to approach Pharaoh, he was asked to use *qaulan layyin*—gentle words. This emphasizes that *da'wah* must prioritize a dialogical, persuasive, and wise approach, even to the most oppressive rulers (Meeks, 2017). In the context of religious education in multicultural Indonesia, this story is highly relevant for building a friendly, inclusive, and moderate Islamic narrative. Religious moderation is not only about compromise, but about a commitment to presenting religion as a moral force that prioritizes justice, compassion, and respect for humanity.

The contemporary context also shows that many young generations face a crisis of meaning due to the rapid currents of globalization, secularization, and hedonism. The story of Moses facing Pharaoh's tyranny can be used as a model of religious education that trains moral courage to reject injustice and falsehood (Issa, 2020). Moses not only appeared as a prophet who brought the law, but also as a social liberator. That is, relevant religious education should not stop at reinforcing ritual aspects, but should also produce a generation that cares about humanitarian issues and social justice. Thus, Islamic religious education can help form a well-rounded individual who is balanced between spirituality and social responsibility.

Another relevance appears in the reflective dimension in the story of Moses. It does not cover up its mistakes in the past, but makes it a momentum to improve itself and strengthen its mission (Afrough, 2022). This reflective attitude can be adopted in religious education through the habituation of reflection, self-evaluation, and critical reflection on learning experiences. In this way, students are trained to develop a high self-awareness, not only accepting the truth passively, but also living it actively and fully aware.

Furthermore, the challenging exodus of the Children of Israel can be positioned as a historical laboratory in religious education. This narrative teaches leadership skills, solidarity, and crisis management. Religious teachers can use it as a case study to train students in critical thinking, decision-making, and collaboration in facing challenges. Thus, the story of Moses is not only a story from the past but also a character education tool that prepares students for the dynamics of modern life.

The story of Moses after the liberation of the Children of Israel is also relevant to contemporary religious education. Their demand for idols and worldly food reflects the human tendency to revert to old patterns even after experiencing spiritual liberation. Moses strongly rebukes this attitude, while reminding them that true faith requires consistency. In education, this can be translated into a spiritual debriefing strategy, the process of linking religious experiences with ethical values to prevent students from easily experiencing spiritual regression (Meeks, 2017).

Ultimately, the relevance of the story of Moses for contemporary religious education lies in its ability to unite theology, ethics, and pedagogy into a coherent narrative. The theology of monotheism presents the rationality of faith, ethics teaches moral responsibility and courage, and pedagogy presents dialogical, reflective, and experiential learning methods (Meier, 1999). If applied to the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, the story of Moses can serve as a faith curriculum that shapes a religious generation with rational faith, noble morals, and a moderate attitude capable of coexisting in a pluralistic society.

DISCUSSION

This study found that the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an presents three main dimensions: first, the rationalization of the search for God through existential, reflective, and revelatory experiences; second, the theological, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions that are integrated in the narrative of Moses as a liberator, legislator, and mediator; third, the relevance of the story for contemporary religious education through an experiential learning model (*tajribī*) and religious moderation. In general, the results of the study indicate that the story of Moses functions not only as a historical narrative, but also as a faith curriculum that unites reason, morality, and pedagogy.

Why do the results of this study lead to the integration of theology, ethics, and pedagogy? This is due to the way the Qur'an constructs the story of Moses with a lively narrative approach, combining personal dimensions (Moses' repentance for his youthful mistakes), social (defense of the Children of Israel), and transcendental (revelation on Mount Sinai). The story of Moses is *tajribī* (religious), combining empirical evidence in the form of miracles with rational argumentation and spiritual reflection. Thus, the relationship

between faith, reason, and experience becomes clear: faith is strengthened not only by the text, but also by lived experience and concrete evidence.

Compared with previous research, these findings have both similarities and important differences. Historical and narrative research (Bruni, 2019; Dragić, 2024; Mathews, 2012) emphasizes chronology and theophany, while this study focuses more on the epistemological aspect: how Moses' experiences shape the logic of faith. Theological-legal research (Assmann, 2018; Creech, 2012; Panczová, 2014) focuses on Moses as a legislator, while this study expands on the pedagogical dimension: Moses is not only a lawgiver but also a teacher who educates through dialogue, example, and crisis. Philosophical-symbolic studies (Attanasio, 2023; Bendinelli, 2018; Johnson & Rietveld, 2010; Kratz, 2018; Leuchter & Farber, 2019; Wineman, 2018) position Moses as a symbol of transcendence and plurality. This research is in line with, but emphasizes the novelty of the practical relevance of the story of Moses for contemporary Islamic education curriculum.

Historically, the story of Moses emphasizes that resistance to tyranny is an integral part of faith. Moses presents religion not merely as ritual worship, but as a force for social liberation. Socially, the narrative of Moses teaches a model of prophetic leadership: courageously confronting those in power, defending the oppressed, while still using persuasive dialogue. This provides an example for multicultural societies in presenting religion as a catalyst for solidarity, not conflict.

The concept of prophetic leadership itself emphasizes the integration of spiritual, moral, and ethical values into leadership practice. As explained by Udin and Dananjoyo (2023), prophetic leadership is grounded in integrity, moral courage, and an orientation toward social justice. This aligns with the story of Moses, who not only challenged Pharaoh's authority but also defended the rights of the Children of Israel to be free from oppression. This ethical emphasis demonstrates that true religious leadership must stand for the truth, even at great risk.

The inspirational dimension is also part of prophetic leadership. According to Sneller (2022), a prophetic leader is able to provide a long-term vision, guide his followers to a higher purpose, and inspire them with spiritual orientation. Moses' vision to liberate the Children of Israel from slavery and lead them to the promised land is a form of transformative leadership that transcends immediate interests. This vision is not only political but also theological, affirming that true liberation stems from monotheism.

Prophetic leadership also emphasizes the values of humanism and liberation from the status quo. Atiqullah (2024) demonstrates that this leadership model can create superior educational institutions through a spirit of humanism, liberation, and transcendence. In the story of Moses, this is reflected in his support for the oppressed and his call to Pharaoh to abandon absolutism. Prophetic leadership not only builds religious authority but also encourages social change toward a more just order.

In Indonesia, the implementation of prophetic leadership is also found in Islamic education. Islam. Abidin and Sirojuddin (2024) explain that Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) develop prophetic leadership through their curriculum, fostering religious traditions, and instilling values such as integrity, jihad, and piety. This relevance aligns with the figure of Moses, who educated his people not only with divine law but also with exemplary behavior, patience, and resilience in the face of crises. Thus, the story of Moses can serve as a pedagogical reference in instilling a spirit of prophetic leadership among the younger generation.

Recent research also links prophetic leadership to job satisfaction and organizational performance. Juhji dkk. (2025) found that prophetic leadership principles contribute to madrasah teachers' job satisfaction because they integrate moral and spiritual dimensions into management. These findings suggest that Musa's leadership style, which combines vision, ethics, and social commitment, can be adapted to improve motivation and well-being in modern organizations.

Thus, historical data about Moses and the literature on prophetic leadership converge on a common thread: true leadership not only governs but also guides, protects, and inspires. Theologically, Moses taught monotheism as the foundation of social justice; ethically, he exemplified moral courage and integrity; pedagogically, he formed a community through dialogue, vision, and liberation (Fadliah, 2022; Ma'sum, 2020; Rahman & Hamdi, 2021; Widayat, 2014). This prophetic leadership is highly relevant to the context of today's multicultural society, where religion needs to be present as a force for enlightenment and solidarity, not as a source of division.

Ideologically, the story of Moses serves as an antithesis to the absolutism of power: monotheism negates human claims to divine authority, while simultaneously teaching moderation, critical reflection, and social ethics. Thus, this study broadens the understanding that the story of Moses is not only a spiritual

narrative, but also an ideological document that shapes religious paradigms. In Jewish tradition, Moses is seen as a liberator figure who freed the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, a motif that emphasizes the importance of liberation theology in their theological history (Panczová, 2014; Tshuma, 2016). Meanwhile, in Christianity, Moses is seen as a mediator of the law and a prefiguration of Christ—a leader who brings the law but also reveals the limitations of human understanding of revelation, as emphasized in patristic interpretations and the New Testament letters (Keddie, 2015; Puech, 2009).

In Islam, Moses is placed within the continuity of prophethood culminating in Muhammad (peace be upon him), and he also serves as a symbol of dialogue across scriptures and traditions that enriches the treasury of interpretations (Lowin, 2019; B. M. Wheeler, 2013). Thus, the figure of Moses across traditions functions not only as a spiritual leader but also as a political figure and ideological symbol. Philosophers like Philo and theologians like Gregory of Nyssa emphasize the mystical dimension of Moses as a mediator between divine transcendence and human experience (Attanasio, 2023; Bendinelli, 2018). This view strengthens Moses' position as an icon of critical reflection within the tradition of religious philosophy.

Furthermore, the figure of Moses is also brought to life in political symbolism. From medieval interpretations to contemporary rhetoric, Moses is often used to represent resistance to tyranny and the upholding of public ethics. In the Latin American context, for example, Moses serves as a model in liberation theology and modern discourse on political ethics (Ginzberg & Rein, 2025). In fact, the symbol of Moses is used in ecclesiastical rhetoric as an image of moral leadership that transcends practical politics (Lettieri, 2023; Shapira, 2024). Thus, the story of Moses forms an ideological tradition across religion, philosophy, and politics: a religious paradigm that integrates liberation, moderation, and social ethics within a single transcendent narrative.

The primary function of this research is to provide an interpretive framework that unites faith, reason, and experience. It has a positive function in formulating a more contextual, moderate, and experience-based model of religious education, making it relevant to the younger generation. However, there are potential dysfunctions: first, the focus on the rational aspect can neglect the mystical-spiritual dimension that is also important in religious traditions; second, the emphasis on moderation can be overinterpreted to the point of compromising principled values; third, the application of the story of Moses in contemporary education risks being understood simplistically as a moral story, rather than as a complete curriculum system (Arsah, 2015).

To address this dysfunction, a concrete action plan is needed. First, religious education needs to design a curriculum based on Quranic stories, particularly the story of Moses, that balances rationality, spirituality, and experience. Second, religious teachers need to be trained in dialogic and reflective pedagogy to emulate Moses' argumentative and courteous method of *mujadalah*. Third, Islamic education policy needs to encourage the integration of the social liberation values of the story of Moses into character education, so that religion does not stop at the place of worship but exists as a force for social transformation. With these steps, this research can make a significant contribution to formulating a religious education that is relevant to global challenges while also grounded in Quranic values.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an is not merely a spiritual narrative, but also a historical, social, and ideological document rich in educational significance. The main findings of this study indicate that Moses' journey—from his birth, exile, revelation experience at Tur Sina, to his mission to preach against Pharaoh—presents three important dimensions: the rationalization of faith through existential and reflective experiences, the formation of prophetic leadership that supports social justice, and pedagogical relevance in the form of experiential learning (*tajribi*) and religious moderation. Thus, the story of Moses can be seen as a model of critical, applicable, and transformative faith education, relevant for the formation of a religious generation in the contemporary era.

Scientifically, this study makes a novel contribution by integrating the analysis of the Qur'anic narrative about Moses with theories of prophetic leadership, liberation theology, and experiential education. This contribution lies in the presentation of an interpretive framework that unites theology, ethics, and pedagogy in a comprehensive model, which can serve as a basis for developing a modern Islamic religious education curriculum. This study also broadens the scope of thematic interpretation studies by demonstrating the relevance of the story of Moses across traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in shaping a moderate, critical, and socially just religious paradigm.

However, this study has limitations. First, it places greater emphasis on literature analysis and textual data, thus omitting empirical field studies, such as the implementation of the story of Moses in learning practices in schools or Islamic boarding schools. Second, this study focuses on a qualitative narrative approach, so the opportunity to quantitatively test its practical impact on changing student attitudes or behavior remains open for further research. Therefore, future research is expected to examine the application of the prophetic education model, based on the story of Moses, in both formal and non-formal educational contexts, while simultaneously measuring its actual impact on strengthening critical, moderate, and transformative religious literacy.

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