

Honesty as a Manifestation of Social Piety Values in the Novel *Orang-Orang Proyek* by Ahmad Tohari to Strengthen Character Education

Teguh Prakoso

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Agus Nuryatin*

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Teguh Supriyanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Nas Haryati Setyaningsih

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Abstract—Honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety is an attitude that must be an important provision in the education system in Indonesia, especially character education. It is important, considering that hedonism and other materialistic attitudes are widespread. The nickname crazy rich or 'sultan' for rich young people can be an inspiration counterproductive to the value of honesty. Some of those who accentuated their lavish lifestyles were dishonestly acquired. Ahmad Tohari, in the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek*, tries to convey that honesty is an attitude that should be the foundation of everyday life. The sociology of literature approach, with the basis of genetic structuralism theory used, can reveal that honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety has been exemplified clearly in the story told in the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel. The attitude and behavior shown by Kabul, Basar, and Pak Tarya symbolize the importance of honesty. This symbolization is important to strengthen character education in preparing Indonesia's golden generation.

Index Terms—character education, honesty, values of social piety, Ahmad Tohari

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the challenges of education in Indonesia continue to grow. The dynamics require educators and educational staff to keep abreast of existing developments. In terms of the quality of learning, for example, if educators continue to use the 'old' style, of course, it will only lead to the boredom of their students. Various learning platforms are available, offering material enrichment programs that are easy to follow and the flow of thought. Information, communication, and technology (ICT) have rapidly spread within and spread to educational systems around the world through the development of several web-based educational systems for teaching and learning (Nuryatin et al., 2023; Lim & Tan, 2022). With abundant learning resources through ICT, with just a touch of a finger, all the information needed can be easily accessed. Unfortunately, the development of advanced technology using ICT also has an impact that is not small. No matter how great students learn through internet media, a touch of learning psychology must still be given. It is a challenge to educate people in Indonesia. Without this soft skill touch, the born generation will only produce smart products in science but lack empathy. They also lack politeness, are selfish, feel the greatest, and are drugged by instant things. What is more, the world that Indonesia's golden generation is facing recently also often exhibits bad attitudes, such as showing off wealth. Impressions of the younger generation with abundant wealth are misleading references.

Based on these conditions, the researcher believes that efforts to stem the influence of an improper lifestyle due to dishonesty must be conveyed. For some of the younger generation, as the researchers convey, a culture that wants everything instantaneous seems to be a threat. When you see the phenomenon of young people who turn out to be rich, with luxurious cars, flashy houses, and also very beautiful cruise places in various parts of the world, complete with top-notch culinary delights, it reminded researchers of an incident that had become a concern in Indonesia in 2016 when a scientist was also a victim of money-replicating practices (Sindonews.com, 2016). It shows that wanting to go fast by ignoring honesty threatens Indonesia's younger generation. Therefore, recalling the importance of being honest from an early age is one of the reinforcements that must be carried out through character education. Therefore, through this

* Corresponding author. Email: agusnuryatin@mail.unnes.ac.id

article, the researcher wants to show that literary works can be used as a variable to strengthen character education, for example, through the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek* (in English: "Project People") by Ahmad Tohari, which has the theme of corruption, aka dishonest acts.

Through this article, the researcher wants to describe the results of an in-depth analysis of honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety, as the researcher found in the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek* by Ahmad Tohari. In Arabic, the word 'honest' is a translation of the word *shiddiq* which means true and trustworthy. Honest emphasizes the importance of conformity and truth to words or deeds. Because of this, being honest provides many benefits, such as making associations wider, living in peace and tranquility, and getting the blessing of God (Widiyani, 2021). From the researcher's point of view, this topic is important to convey, considering that hedonism has now become a normal phenomenon that travels on various social media platforms. The term 'sultan' or the nickname crazy rich is a title addressed to those studded with luxury goods from various world-class brands. Some of those who received this title were young people who later became a kind of idolized figures. It is then dangerous for Indonesia's younger generation because some of them practice dishonesty, for example, in the cases of Indra Kenz and Doni Salmanan (Kompas.com, 2022). For the generation of Indonesians who are educated in schools that are connected to the internet, be it elementary school, junior high school, or senior high school, a materialistic culture must be anticipated. One of the efforts must be made to instill honesty as part of moral values through character education.

Character education has always been an interesting topic of discussion to continue to study more deeply (Sudjalil et al., 2022). It is not without reason because the discourse on strengthening character education at the school level has existed from 2010 to the present. Unfortunately, the implementation of character education values itself is still low. Phenomena of moral decadence among Indonesian students, such as acts of violence, bullying, and brawls between students. Students who experience moral decadence will usually ignore the rules that apply and violate the norms in their environment (Hidayah et al., 2022). In essence, the character teaches about things considered good for someone. Character refers to behavior by religious, social, and cultural norms that apply in people's lives. For this reason, character education can be interpreted as teaching or guidance regarding good and bad things to students. Character education can give students character to meet future generations (Achsani, 2018). Character education is indeed an important topic, articles related to this topic have been published in various journals, for example, written by Freeman (2014), Setiawati (2017), Storozhenko et al. (2018), Imron & Nugrahani (2019), Na & Kobylko (2020), Muassomah et al. (2020), Prayitno et al. (2020), Mustakim et al. (2020), Hart (2020), Mujahid (2021), Jónsson et al. (2021), Novianti (2017), Muhtar et al. (2021), Sukarno et al. (2021), Nugroho et al. (2022), Rakhman (2022), and Maisyaroh et al. (2023).

One alternative that can be used as an effective way to instill character education is through literary works, including through the theme of the importance of honesty as found in *Orang-Orang Proyek* novels. However, the point of view regarding the use of literary works, particularly concerning honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety and its relation to character education, has never been discussed. Character education's value is not limited to school activities through television shows, murals, expressions of wisdom, and films. The value of character education can also be found in literary works, such as legends, novels, short stories, and children's stories (Achsani, 2018; Cahyati & Arifin, 2021; Hidayah et al., 2022). It is the statement that literary works, in addition to entertaining, can also be used as an educative medium for people's lives.

Relevant research that analyzes *Orang-Orang Proyek* novels includes research conducted by Nurhasanah (2015), Faruq (2017), Jonindo (2017), Mandra (2018), Prasetyo (2019), Muqit (2019), and Mahdijaya et al. (2021). Some of the themes in the research are about corrupt behavior. However, there has been no discussion about the importance of honesty related to its use to strengthen character education. On that basis, the following discussion is the result of the analysis that the researcher conducted as an answer to the problem that honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety must be conveyed as a provision to strengthen character for Indonesia's golden generation.

II. METHOD

The method used in writing this article is qualitative with a literary sociology approach with Lucien Goldman's genetic structuralism theory (Wibowo et al., 2021). This research will reveal the value of honesty represented in the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek* by Ahmad Tohari as a manifestation of the value of social piety. It must also be viewed as a sociocultural event related to factors outside the text (Damono, 1978; Goldmann, 1980). Data were collected by reading the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek*. In addition, interviews with the author were also conducted to obtain more concrete additional data, namely on June 8, 2022, and August 14, 2022, which were conducted at Ahmad Tohari's residence, in Tinggar Jaya Village, Jatilawang District, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Data analysis was carried out by conducting in-depth reading (hermeneutic) to obtain more in-depth research results (Rokhmansyah et al., 2023).

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

To make it easier to read the results of the analysis, the researcher analyzed it systematically, which consisted of (a) the structure of the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel, (b) honesty as an entity of social piety values, (c) the importance of honesty as an important variable in character building.

A. Story Structure of *Orang-Orang Proyek* Novel

The structure of the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel, which the researcher presents at the beginning, is the basis for the analysis to find honesty as a social entity and an important variable in character building. In addition, as a study of Lucian Goldman's structuralism, the stories told are collective subjects and facts of humanity. Both are ways to discover Ahmad Tohari's worldview. The figures (humans) that were examined as tools were Kabul, Basar, Pak Tarya, Dalkijo, Pak Baldun, Wati, Mak Sumeh, Sonah, Sri, Martasatang, Wircumplung, Sawin, Kang Aacep, Cak Mun, Aunt Ana, Wiyoso, Kang Sanu, Kang Bolot, Kang Setu, and Kang Dalim. In the story told, the conflict of corrupt behavior on all fronts is the centre of the story, which is supported by the environments and oppositional relations, which are explained as follows. First, the natural environment described in *Orang-Orang Proyek* is rural. At this location, there is the Cibawor river. During the bridge construction, the concrete piles tilted due to heavy rain. This incident is the story's beginning that conveys the message of being honest. Second, the cultural environment described in *Orang-Orang Proyek* is an environment that represents the atmosphere of bridge construction which involves many workers from various ethnic groups and beliefs. They are unique; some are religious, but others are *abangan*¹. They represent also represented as manual labor but honest. Meanwhile, the culture also depicts the typical stereotype of a corrupt project leader. Third, the social environment in *Orang-Orang Proyek* describes the typical characteristics of rural life combined with the enthusiasm of workers in project development. The severity of their work makes them happy to vent their pleasure when receiving a salary every weekend. Different things were experienced at the project leader level, namely Dalkijo. Instead, he tried to find the difference in the project value with various pretexts and reasons that ended up corrupt behavior. Uniquely, among the opposition that occurred, there was a belief in the "occult" as the thoughts of Wircumplung and Martasatang regarding the sacrifice of bridge casting (Tohari, 2019, pp. 141–143). This phenomenon is a characteristic of rural life where some residents still believe in their ancestors' culture, including superstitious ones. Fourth, the ideological environment in *Orang-Orang Proyek* is a picture of Islamic ideology packed with enlightening messages. Moral values and invitations to do good are very thick in this context. One of the important messages conveyed was an invitation not to cheat, such as corruption. Teachings to criticize and eradicate corruption. However, when resistance to the invitation to corruption occurred, the PKI member's "clean" stamp became a means to threaten him. It reminds researchers of the leadership style of one of the regimes that once ruled Indonesia.

The environments that the researcher describes form an oppositional relationship. This relationship is formed by the imaginary universe of *Orang-Orang Proyek* novels, including cultural opposition, natural opposition, social opposition, ideological opposition, and human opposition, with the following explanation. The cultural opposition in *Orang-Orang Proyek* gave rise to Kabul and Pak Tarya (also Basar) as figures whose thoughts were opposite to those of Dalkijo and Pak Baldun. They both come from the village, but the association and interests of each make them different. The estuary is the positive pole represented by Kabul, Pak Tarya, and Basar, and Dalkijo and Baldun represent the negative pole. Ironically, Dalkijo and Pak Baldun's fraudulent thoughts targeted religious rituals in the name of mosque renovation but instead asked for it from the 'project' budget (Tohari, 2019, pp. 157–163).

The natural opposition in *Orang-Orang Proyek* describes the exciting reality of the life of the lower classes of society. They value a sense of family. They value a sense of family. The invitation to worship must be interpreted as diversity. The situation is real. Naturally, they are separated into two distinct dichotomies. One group represents a religious attitude, and the other represents an *abangan* attitude. The harmonization of the two is very fluid so that when the obligation to pray Friday arrives, the invitation to go to the mosque is answered with a joke for the *abangan* followers (Tohari, 2019, p. 41). The difference in their beliefs is common, and it is also worth it when Wircumplung and Martasatang accuse Kabul of using Sawin (Martasatang's son) as a casting victim (Tohari, 2019, pp. 137–149).

The social opposition of the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel can be seen in several ways. First, there are very different social classes in terms of educational background. In the bridge work project, Dalkijo and Kabul are educated figures, while the workers and shop owners and workers are ordinary people (proletarians). The only educated figures who do not represent the project workers are Pak Tarya and Basar. These ordinary people also represent the views of those who still believe in the occult, although some are religious. The educated dichotomy was not directly proportional to his behavior because Dalkijo's figure was included in the category of corruptors. Meanwhile, ordinary people do not have the same attitude as Dalkijo. So, even though Dalkijo has a higher social status than Kabul, Pak Tarya, Basar, and the project workers, he is not a role model for them (Tohari, 2019, pp. 30–36, 61, 207–210, 227–231).

The ideological opposition of the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel can be seen in the different perspectives between Dalkijo and Kabul. Even though they come from the same alma mater, they are different (Tohari, 2019, p. 228). It is said that Dalkijo's behavior does not show very high regard for honesty. For him, despite knowing that corruption is evil, what he did was normal to break the ropes of poverty that he had suffered (Tohari, 2019, p. 31). It is very different from what Kabul thinks. Meanwhile, ideological differences can also be seen in the opposition between Kabul, Pak Baldun, Basar, and GLM officials. When these differences cannot be reconciled, the threat of 'cleaning the environment' is always a sacred word that is very easy to pronounce (Tohari, 2019, p. 163). These oppositions then gave birth to an ideological opposition between the thoughts of Kabul, Pak Tarya, and Basar with an excellent religious rationale (Tohari, 2019, pp. 44–52) against Dalkijo and Pak Baldun, whose way of thinking was only worldly. Pak Tarya, Kabul,

¹ *Abangan* is a term for a class of Javanese Muslims who practice a more syncretic version of Islam than the more orthodox *santri* (students at Islamic boarding schools) (Muchtaron, 1988). The term, derived from the Javanese word for red, was first used by Clifford Geertz (1983), but today its meaning has shifted.

and Basar came to the idea that religious rites only focus on their implementation, not their manifestation. Such rites only produce ritual piety and not social piety (Tohari, 2019, pp. 48–49).

The *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel highlights human opposition in the basic categories of life, namely good-bad; educated-uneducated; religious-nonreligious; smart stupid; and rich and poor. The opposition, for example, is embedded in the characters of Wircumplung and Martasatang, Cak Mun, Kang Acep, and Bejo, as well as other figures. They are uneducated, religious-nonreligious, not rich, and stupid. As the only female worker on the project, Wati's figure is a very male harmonization of the project (Tohari, 2019, p. 27).

Based on the structure of the story, it can be found that a common thread about Ahmad Tohari's world views is a message of piety. This message was inserted during a dialogue between Pak Tarya, Basar, and Kabul during lunch at Basar's house. The material is a history which reads: The Prophet was not sent, except to perfect human morals (Tohari, 2019, pp. 42–43). The word 'except' provides a meaning that requires people to carry out the next keyword, namely "perfecting morals". Because apart from "perfecting morals" has been excluded. Apart from perfecting morals, it is not the purpose of sending Kanjeng Nabi (Tohari, 2019, pp. 44–45). With this view, if the purpose of religion has shifted from moral enforcement to sharia enforcement, then the deviation is very likely to happen. Religious rites were seen everywhere with large congregations. However, these activities only resulted in ritual piety (Tohari, 2019, pp. 42–49).

B. Honesty as an Entity of Values of Social Piety

The definition of social piety itself has been conveyed by many scientists such as Sobary (2007), Yusuf (2007), and Bisri (1996). Among the definitions put forward, there is an interesting one. Bisri (1996, p. 29) explains that social piety is interpreted as *muttaqi* piety, namely the piety of a devoted servant or a believer who does pious deeds, both ritually and socially pious. So, there is no dichotomy between social or ritual piety because piety is just *muttaqi* piety.

Honesty is a valuable entity for social piety, Istiqomah (2019, p. 128) explained that among the aspects of social piety and the prosocial theory used, there is a common thread in the form of measuring tools for social piety, which includes seven things. Thus, a person is considered to have the value of social piety if the person concerned can demonstrate the attitudes of (1) social solidarity, (2) *Orang-Orang Proyek* creation, (3) tolerance, (4) fairness and balanced, (5) considers the general welfare, (6) likes helping, (7) being honest. This seventh point is the essence of this article because this behavior is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Being honest provides provisions for anyone to avoid corrupt behavior.

In one of his writings, Azra (2020, pp. 167–168) expressed his anger about corrupt behaviors that are difficult to eradicate. The alternative approach, according to him, is the theological and religious approach. This approach then involved two Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. They conduct *fiqh* studies and formulations on corruption. The result was the birth of a book entitled *Koruptor itu Kafir* (in English: Corruptors are Kafir) and published by a well-known book publisher in Bandung. However, from the researcher's point of view, the phenomena that have occurred have not shown that attempts to call corruption infidels to create a deterrent effect. Corruption also targets religious funds and projects. By looking at such conditions, honesty as one of the values of social piety is necessary.

In line with this view, the story conveyed by Ahmad Tohari through *Orang-Orang Proyek* also shows Ahmad Tohari's great concern about corrupt behavior. With humility, Tohari said that he did not want to change the world. His small agenda is always to try to make his wife and children become human beings who are different from the others. No corruption. Even if you get sustenance, it is because you have given something (see Herliany, 2018, pp. 78–79). In such a context, "having given something" embodies civility to share goodness, for example, helping or helping those in trouble. What Tohari said was also contained in the discussions held between Pak Tarya, Kabul, and Basar. On the sidelines of lunch, they discussed the material for the sermon, which was always repeated: The Prophet was not sent except to perfect human morals (Tohari, 2019, pp. 42–43). The word 'except' is then the subject of their discussion. Pak Tarya is of the opinion that the word 'except' gives an interpretation that the choice of the word requires people to interpret the next word, namely "perfect morality". Therefore, if the purpose of religion has shifted—that is, from moral enforcement to Sharia enforcement—the deviation will be found. Religious rites look lively, but these activities only bear ritual piety, not social piety (Tohari, 2019, pp. 42–49). So, honesty is an initial tool to realize a mental free from corrupt behavior, which becomes a real variable in the form of social piety. In relation to strengthening character education, honesty is an important keyword that must be instilled early on in students, the golden generation of Indonesia. It is hoped that early planting will become a culture embedded in their hearts that being dishonest is a very disgraceful act. The discussion about this author discusses in the next part of this article.

C. The Importance of Honesty as an Important Variable in Character Education

Articles on character education have been compiled by many experts and education experts in various articles. One of the interesting things for the authors to study is the definition presented by Setiawati (2017). According to him, character education can be interpreted as value education, character education, moral education, and character education which aims to develop student's abilities to make good and bad decisions, maintain goodness, and manifest and spread goodness in everyday life wholeheartedly. At the same time, this definition accommodates the importance of conscious effort with a serious intention so that each student can grow his character, and honesty is an important thing in this series. The next threatening behavior, corruption, can be avoided by building an honest attitude.

Honesty is one of the foundations that sustain a person from the temptation of corrupt behavior. It reminds the researcher of the view expressed by Hartsorne & May (see Lickona, 1992)—who revealed the "doctrine of specificity"—honesty and dishonesty committed by a person are very diverse and are determined by more specific situations (such as the level of risk that arises). Moreover, it is not simply defined in a consistent state that it is described as a "character". This provision must be conveyed to students at all levels of schooling, both in primary education, secondary education, and higher education. The conditions of the times that are tempted by hedonism and want everything to be easy, for example, are challenging. The character of students equipped with an honest attitude is expected to improve their personality. It is important because corrupt behavior does not only connote money. In the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel, Ahmad Tohari also conveys corrupt behavior in the field of education, especially in higher education, for example, through the manipulation of undergraduate degrees.

According to Tohari, someone who does not have the standard of intellectual intelligence, let alone emotional intelligence at the undergraduate level, but then officially gets a degree, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Of course, the degree obtained is not based on an academically accountable process but through fraud such as buying, attending distant classes, or fake lectures in a small town. The organizers are small colleges selling diplomas. With a title that should not be the right, they get a rise in staffing levels, salary, and other facilities. Suppose this manipulation occurs in thousands of employees at the central level to elementary school teachers. In that case, the shadow of the loss due to this covert corrupt behavior is certainly very large (Tohari, 2019, p. 61). In such a context, honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety is clearly illustrated in the story told in the *Orang-Orang Proyek* novel. Tohari's world view that hates cheating behavior through corruption can be clearly conveyed.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis that the author has done, at the end of this article, the researcher concludes as follows. For students, honest behavior is an attitude that must be an important part of the cultivation of character education. Honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety can strengthen character education for them as the golden generation of Indonesia. In everyday life, honest behavior is the main door that binds people's temptations to behave corruptly. To Pak Tarya, Kabul, and Basar figures, corruption is a primitive form of attitude to achieve certain goals incorrectly. On the other hand, through the figures of Dalkijo and Pak Baldun, it is also described that their greed is based on their selfish attitude. They have religious rites that only produce ritual piety because they have education and religion as well. Through the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek*, the author, Ahmad Tohari, conveyed a message of piety about honesty as a manifestation of the value of social piety.

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Teguh Prakoso is a doctoral student in Language Education at Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. He is also listed as a lecturer at Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Indonesia Open University. Undergraduate education was completed at IKIP Semarang in 1998 with the title of best graduate. Meanwhile, the master’s degree was completed at the Literature Study Program, Gadjah Mada University, in 2006 with the Cum Laude predicate. Apart from holding structural positions in several work units at Indonesia Open University, he is active in writing in various mass media, such as the Jawa Pos and Suara Merdeka newspapers, as well as national journals within the scope of literary criticism.

Agus Nuryatin is a professor of literature at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang. He completed his undergraduate education in Diponegoro University (1987). He studied master’s in literature in Universitas Indonesia (2001). As for his doctoral education in the field of Language Education, he obtained from the Postgraduate Program of Universitas Negeri Semarang, 2008 ago. Apart from teaching at the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, he is also active in writing books and scientific works, both in national journals and reputable international journals.

Teguh Supriyanto is a professor of Javanese literature at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang. He completed his undergraduate education at the Department of Regional Literature (Javanese Literature) at Sebelas Maret University (UNS), Surakarta and graduated as a literature scholar in 1986. It was during his studies at UNS that he rediscovered his hobby of puppeteering and the many ancient Javanese textbooks he read during his undergraduate studies. In 1994, he continued his master's degree in literature at UGM. He earned a Doctorate in Humanities in the field of literature in 2006 at Gadjah Mada University. Apart from teaching at the Department of Javanese Language and Literature, State University of Semarang, he is also active in writing books and scientific works, both in national journals and reputable international journals.

Nas Haryati Setyaningsih is a doctor in literary studies at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang. He completed his undergraduate education at Yogyakarta State University and graduated in 1981. Her master's education was taken at Universitas Negeri Semarang in 2002. He obtained his doctorate degree in 2018 at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Apart from teaching at the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, she is also active in writing books and scientific works, both in national journals and reputable international journals.