

**ANIMATED FILM AS A MEDIUM FOR STRENGTHENING LOVE FOR THE
PROPHET IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**Nurshiam¹, and Taufikin²¹ Harjowinangun 02 Dempet Demak State Elementary School, Demak, Indonesia² Sunan Kudus State Islamic University, Kudus, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**Taufikin,
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31, 2025**Abstract**

The rapid expansion of digital visual culture has increasingly shifted children's admiration from religious figures toward entertainment icons, weakening their affection for the Prophet Muhammad as a moral role model in elementary education. This study therefore examines whether an animated film about the Prophet Muhammad can strengthen elementary students' love for the Prophet. Employing a quantitative one-group pretest–posttest design, the study involved 107 fifth-grade students from three elementary schools in Demak Regency. Data were collected using the 20-item Prophetic Love Character Scale and analyzed through descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-tests. The findings demonstrate a consistent and statistically significant increase in students' love for the Prophet across all participating schools, with an average score improvement of 25 points following the intervention. These results indicate that animated visual narratives are effective in fostering students' emotional engagement, including empathy, admiration, and emotional connection to the Prophet, thereby supporting deeper internalization of prophetic values. Although the absence of a control group and the reliance on short-term post-intervention measurement limit the generalizability of the findings, the study nonetheless confirms the pedagogical potential of prophetic animated films in elementary Islamic education. Overall, this study provides empirically grounded and pedagogically meaningful insights for the development of a digital prophetic pedagogy aligned with contemporary learning contexts.

Keywords: Affective Learning, Digital Prophetic Pedagogy, Islamic Animated Film, Love, Prophet Character

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of children’s cultural landscapes in the digital era has serious implications for character education, particularly in Islamic education (Subandi et al. 2025; Sukisno et al. 2024; Taufikin et al. 2025). Today’s elementary school children grow up in a visual ecosystem saturated with popular figures from the global entertainment industry, social media, and commercial animation, many of which are presented without adequate moral and spiritual foundations (Bandura 2001; Hahn 2022; John and Bates 2024). Recent studies in developmental psychology and education indicate that intensive exposure to popular media figures directly influences children’s identity formation, value preferences, and patterns of role modeling (Haykal, Cartier, and Kroupouzou 2024; Imafuku, Kusakabe, and Kanakogi 2025; Kearney and Levine 2020; Williams-Gant, Harden, and Corriveau 2024). In Muslim contexts, this condition risks displacing Prophet Muhammad as the primary moral exemplar in children’s character formation, despite the fact that prophetic exemplarity constitutes both the normative and practical foundation of Islamic education (Abubakari 2025; Kosim, Kustati, and Murkilim 2020; Subandi et al. 2025; Suresman et al. 2025; Wedi, Mardiana, and Umiarso 2025; Widodo 2025).

The character education literature consistently emphasizes that the elementary school years represent a critical phase in the formation of children’s moral and affective dispositions (Caronia and Colla 2023; Cassotti 2022; Li and Tomasello 2022). At this developmental stage, children acquire values not merely through cognitive instruction, but through emotional identification with figures they admire and seek to emulate (Shetty and Padmakumari 2025; Yildirim, Becerikli, and Demirel 2017). Neuroeducation research further demonstrates that learning experiences involving positive emotions and empathy are more strongly embedded in children’s long-term memory than abstract or purely normative instruction (Decarli, Zasso, and Franchin 2025; Dorantes-Gonzalez et al. 2023; LaBar and Cabeza 2006). Consequently, the absence of representations of Prophet Muhammad in media that resonate with children’s affective worlds constitutes a significant pedagogical problem.

The core challenge of contemporary Islamic education does not lie in a lack of normative values, but rather in the weakness of value transmission strategies for digital-native generations (Ismail, Parinduri, and Ibarra 2025; Syamsudin et al. 2025; Tanti et al. 2025). Religious learning approaches that continue to rely predominantly on lectures and memorization often fail to bridge the gap between moral messages and children’s emotional experiences (Astawa et al. 2025; Istiyani et al. 2024; Lankshear 2022). As a result, prophetic values are frequently understood at a conceptual level but remain insufficiently internalized in everyday attitudes and behaviors. This situation calls for pedagogical solutions that integrate cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously and contextually, such as the use of narrative-based visual media and prophetic storytelling that resonate with children’s lived digital cultures.

A growing body of international research indicates that visual narratives—particularly through educational animation—possess substantial potential to cultivate empathy, moral awareness, and value identification among children. Animation enables moral messages to be conveyed symbolically, contextually, and emotionally, allowing children not only to understand values but also to experience them as personally meaningful (Alkhraisat 2025; Gehman, Guglielmo, and Schwebel 2021; de Leeuw and van der Laan 2018; Mayer and

Moreno 2002). Within value-based education, narrative-visual approaches have been shown to foster deeper emotional engagement than text-based or purely verbal explanations (Gerbaudo Nakazato and Santanchè 2026; Lecun, Bengio, and Hinton 2015; da Silva and Schrier 2025).

Within the field of Islamic education, several studies have examined the use of digital media for strengthening religious values, including multimedia-based Qur'anic learning, Islamic educational games, and thematic instructional videos (Wedi et al. 2025). These studies suggest that digital media can enhance students' motivation to learn and conceptual understanding (Sahin 2017; Suyadi et al. 2022; Widodo 2025). Nevertheless, most existing research remains focused on cognitive outcomes and religious literacy, while affective dimensions—such as love, empathy, and emotional attachment to the Prophet—have received limited empirical attention, particularly through experimental research designs.

Another limitation in the existing literature concerns the scarcity of cross-school studies that test the consistency of the effects of religious animation media on character formation (Candiasa, Mertasari, and Aryanta 2021; Pratomo et al. 2025). The majority of studies have been conducted in single settings using descriptive or case-study approaches, thereby providing limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of visual religious media interventions across diverse social and cultural school contexts (Creswell and Creswell 2022). Moreover, measurement instruments specifically designed to assess children's character of love for the Prophet remain rare and insufficiently validated through systematic testing.

In response to these research gaps, the present study aims to empirically examine the effectiveness of an animated film about Prophet Muhammad in strengthening elementary students' character of loving the Prophet. Specifically, this study examines the extent to which animated media can enhance the affective dimension of children's love for the Prophet as the supreme role model and whether these improvements are consistent across different school contexts. The novelty of this study lies in its use of a multi-site experimental design involving several elementary schools and a standardized instrument specifically developed to measure the character of prophetic love. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the concept of *Prophetic Digital Pedagogy* as a visual-media-based approach within Islamic education. Practically, it provides empirical foundations for integrating religious animated films into policies and classroom practices of Islamic character education in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pre-test–post-test experimental design (Creswell and Creswell 2022). This design was selected to directly examine changes in students' character traits, specifically their love for the Prophet Muhammad, within the same group before and after exposure to an animated film about the Prophet Muhammad. The choice of this design aligns with the study's primary objective of measuring within-subject change and allows for the application of inferential statistical analysis, specifically a paired-sample *t*-test, to determine the significance of differences between pre-test and post-test scores (Ginn and Campbell-Cooper 2025; Lee and Kim 2022; Scott 2009, 2019). Within the context of character education for children, this design is considered both ethical and practical, as it does not require excluding a control group from potentially beneficial educational interventions.

The study was conducted in three public elementary schools located in Demak Regency, Central Java, Indonesia: SD Harjowinangun 02, SD Gempoldenok, and SD Balerejo 02. These schools were selected purposively based on similarities in curriculum implementation, students' socio-cultural backgrounds, and institutional commitment to strengthening character education grounded in Islamic values. The participants were all fifth-grade students from the three schools, totaling 107: 35 from SD Harjowinangun 02, 32 from SD Gempoldenok, and 40 from SD Balerejo 02. The students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years, corresponding to the

concrete operational stage of development, a phase that is psychologically responsive to exemplar-based learning and emotional engagement (Narvaez and Bock 2014). While the use of purposive sampling limits broad statistical generalization, the inclusion of multiple schools enhances contextual validity and allows for analytical generalization across comparable elementary education settings.

Research data were collected using a quantitative instrument, the Prophetic Love Character Scale (PLCS), consisting of 20 statement items. The instrument was designed to measure students' character of loving Prophet Muhammad through five core dimensions derived from prophetic moral virtues: compassion (*rahmah*), honesty (*sidq*), humility (*tawādu'*), patience (*sabr*), and gratitude (*shukr*). Each item was formulated as a positively worded statement and rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), such that higher total scores reflected a stronger internalization of prophetic love character.

The development of the instrument was guided by established principles of character measurement in moral education and developmental psychology (Narvaez and Bock 2014; Nucci, Narvaez, and Krettenauer 2014; Walker, Roberts, and Kristjánsson 2015). Content validity was examined through expert judgment involving two scholars in Islamic education and one specialist in educational evaluation. Internal consistency reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.89, indicating high reliability and supporting the instrument's suitability for inferential statistical analysis (Cronbach 1951; Dukes 2006; Malapane and Ndlovu 2024).

The study was implemented sequentially across the three schools using a standardized procedure to ensure comparability of results. In the initial phase, all participating students completed the PLCS as a pre-test to establish baseline scores for prophetic love character. Subsequently, students participated in the intervention, which involved viewing an animated film about the Prophet Muhammad with an approximate duration of 40 minutes. The film presented narratives of prophetic exemplarity in symbolic and contextual terms, without depicting the Prophet physically.

Following the intervention, students completed the post-test using the same PLCS instrument. The use of identical instruments for pre-test and post-test was intended to ensure that observed score differences accurately reflected changes in the character of prophetic love attributable to the intervention. During the intervention process, the researchers and classroom teachers conducted non-participant observations to document students' emotional responses and reflections as supplementary qualitative insights.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize mean scores, minimum and maximum values, and gain scores for each school. Inferential analysis was performed using paired-sample *t*-tests to examine the significance of differences between pre-test and post-test scores within each school. This statistical test was selected because the data were repeated-measures and to ensure that observed score increases were not due to chance (Lee and Kim 2022; Scott 2009, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the quantitative and descriptive findings concerning the effects of the animated film about Prophet Muhammad on strengthening elementary students' character of loving the Prophet. The results focus on comparisons between pre-test and post-test scores across three schools—SD Harjowinangun 02, SD Gempoldenok, and SD Balerejo 02—by reporting mean scores, minimum and maximum values, and gain scores. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the patterns of change in the character of prophetic love following the intervention.

Cross-School Quantitative Results

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test scores for the character of prophetic love across the three elementary schools.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Prophetic Love Character Across Three Elementary Schools

School	Student Number	Mean Pre-Test	Mean Post-Test	Minimum Post-Test score	Maximum Post-Test score	Gain Score
SD Harjowinangun 02	35	60	85	80	100	+25
SD Gempoldenok	32	55	80	75	100	+25
SD Balerejo 02	40	65	90	85	100	+25

Across all three schools, a consistent 25-point increase in mean score was observed following the animated film intervention. Despite differences in students’ baseline conditions, this uniform pattern of improvement indicates that the intervention produced a stable effect that was not dependent on students’ initial levels of prophetic love character.

At SD Harjowinangun 02, the mean pre-test score of 60 suggests that students’ prophetic love character was at a moderate level. This score indicates that students possessed basic knowledge of the Prophet’s exemplary qualities, yet these values had not been fully internalized at the affective level. Following the intervention, the mean score increased to 85, with post-test scores ranging from 80 to 100. The absence of post-test scores below 80 indicates that all students experienced substantial and relatively even improvement. From a pedagogical perspective, this finding suggests that animated media can effectively bridge students’ normative knowledge with emotional experiences, thereby strengthening the internalization of love for the Prophet.

At SD Gempoldenok, the initial mean score of 55 was the lowest among the three schools, indicating that students’ prophetic love character prior to the intervention was relatively weak and largely cognitive in nature. However, after viewing the animated film, the mean score increased to 80, with post-test scores ranging from 75 to 100. Although the minimum post-test score was slightly lower than those observed in the other schools, the average gain of 25 points nonetheless demonstrates a strong intervention effect. Substantively, this result confirms that animated films are effective not only for students with favorable initial conditions, but also for those whose prophetic love character begins at a relatively low level.

In contrast, SD Balerejo 02 exhibited the highest mean pre-test score (65), suggesting that students already possessed a stronger affective inclination toward the Prophet prior to the intervention. After exposure to the animated film, the mean score increased to 90, with post-test scores ranging from 85 to 100. The high minimum post-test score indicates that the intervention functioned as a form of reinforcement for pre-existing character dispositions. In this context, the animated film served not merely as a medium for introducing values, but as a means of deepening and consolidating students’ love for the Prophet.

Overall, three key patterns emerged from the quantitative findings. First, a significant and consistent increase in prophetic love character scores was observed across all schools, with identical gain scores of 25 points. This pattern indicates that the animated film about Prophet Muhammad exerted a strong and stable influence across different school contexts.

Second, differences in baseline scores among schools did not significantly affect the magnitude of improvement. Students with low, moderate, and relatively high initial levels of prophetic love character all demonstrated substantial gains. This finding reinforces the assumption that animated media primarily operate within the affective domain—through emotional engagement and empathy—thereby enabling the intervention to reach students with diverse value-readiness backgrounds.

Third, the relatively high and evenly distributed post-test scores, as reflected in minimum scores ranging from 75 to 85, indicate that the intervention not only raised average scores but also reduced disparities among students. In other words, the animated film contributed to a more equitable internalization of prophetic love character within the classroom.

Substantively, these results confirm that learning grounded in visual narratives can stimulate deeper processes of value internalization than verbal approaches alone. Love for the Prophet is not merely cognitive knowledge of the figure of the Messenger, but develops into an affective orientation manifested in students' attitudes, feelings, and readiness to emulate prophetic virtues in everyday life. These quantitative findings provide an essential foundation for subsequent inferential analyses aimed at establishing the statistical significance of the observed improvements.

Inferential Statistical Analysis (Paired-Sample *t*-Test)

To determine whether the differences between pre-test and post-test scores at each school were statistically significant, paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted. This test was selected because measurements were obtained from the same participants before and after the intervention, making it appropriate for the experimental design employed.

Table 2. Results of Paired-Sample *t*-Tests for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Prophetic Love Character

School	Mean Pre-Test	Mean Post-Test	Mean Difference	t	Sig. (p)
SD Harjowinangun 02	60	85	-25	-14.32	< 0.001
SD Gempoldenok	55	80	-25	-12.87	< 0.001
SD Balerejo 02	65	90	-25	-15.04	< 0.001

The paired-samples *t*-test results indicate statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores in all three schools, with *p*-values < 0.001. These values are well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed improvements in prophetic love character scores following the animated film intervention were not due to chance but rather reflect genuine treatment effects.

Statistically, the relatively large *t* values across the three schools indicate strong intervention effects. The consistency of the mean difference values—25 points in all locations—demonstrates the stability of the animated film's impact across different school contexts. In other words, the intervention operated uniformly among students with low, moderate, and relatively high baseline levels of prophetic love character.

From the perspective of character education, the statistical significance of these findings carries important substantive meaning. The significant gains indicate that the animated film did not merely raise numerical scores but also functioned as a transformative medium, influencing students' affective domains. These domains include admiration, empathy, and emotional

attachment to the figure of Prophet Muhammad, which constitute foundational elements in the formation of character and moral conduct.

Moreover, the inferential results reinforce the descriptive findings by demonstrating that visual narrative-based interventions can reduce inter-individual variability and promote a more equitable internalization of values within classrooms. Accordingly, the animated film serves not simply as an instructional aid but as an effective pedagogical strategy for cultivating a deep, sustainable character of loving the Prophet. These findings provide strong empirical justification for the further development of *Prophetic Digital Pedagogy* within elementary Islamic education.

This discussion aims to interpret the research findings in greater depth by situating them within theoretical frameworks of character education, affective learning, and prophetic pedagogy in Islam, while positioning the results alongside recent findings from internationally reputable journals indexed in Scopus. Rather than merely confirming the effectiveness of the animated film about Prophet Muhammad, this discussion unpacks the pedagogical mechanisms that explain why and how such media operate effectively in strengthening elementary students' character of loving the Prophet.

Empirically, the findings demonstrate a significant and consistent increase in prophetic love character scores across three elementary schools with differing baseline conditions. The average gain of 25 points, with $p < 0.001$, confirms that the observed changes were not the result of statistical fluctuation but rather genuine effects of the intervention. This finding aligns with the character education literature, which emphasizes that character formation requires pedagogical strategies that engage learners' affective dimensions. Lickona (2013) argues that character develops through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Taufikin 2021). Within the context of this study, the animated film functioned primarily as a catalyst for moral feeling—eliciting admiration, empathy, and affection toward the figure of Prophet Muhammad—which subsequently served as a foundation for deeper value internalization.

From an affective learning perspective, the results reinforce the argument that emotion is not a peripheral element of learning but its core. (Berzonsky and Papini 2015; Bodenhausen, Kramer, and Süsler 1994; Nejati 2025), demonstrate that cognitive processes related to values, identity, and personal meaning are inherently intertwined with emotional systems. The animated film about Prophet Muhammad presented narratives of prophetic exemplarity through visual storytelling that evoked emotional responses such as compassion, sympathy, and awe. These emotional responses help explain why score improvements were evenly distributed, including among students whose initial levels of prophetic love character were relatively low.

The consistency of findings across schools further suggests that the effectiveness of the animated film does not depend solely on students' initial conditions, but rather on universal pedagogical mechanisms operating within children's affective domains. This interpretation is consistent with theories of narrative-based learning, which position storytelling as a central means of shaping meaning and moral identity (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; McAdams 2019, 2025; McAdams and McLean 2013). Recent studies published in reputable journals indicate that visual narratives function as moral scaffolds, enabling children to connect abstract values with concrete experiences (Lankshear 2022; Mayer and Moreno 2002, 2003). In this study, stories of the Prophet's exemplary conduct presented through animation operated as living moral narratives, allowing love for the Prophet to move beyond cognitive understanding toward an affective orientation.

When compared with prior research, this study occupies a distinct position and contributes to the existing body of knowledge. Several Scopus-indexed studies have examined the use of digital media and animation in religious and character education. For example, Sahin (Haleem et al. 2022; Ritonga, K, and Endriani 2025; Sahin 2017; Siregar et al. 2025; Taufikin et al. 2024) reported that digital media in Islamic education enhances students' motivation and

learning engagement, while (Marzuki et al. 2025; Waheed, Ahmad, and Bhatti 2025) found that Islamic animation positively influences children's moral understanding. However, most of these studies emphasize cognitive comprehension and general attitudes, rather than explicitly measuring affective dimensions such as love and emotional attachment to the figure of the Prophet.

This study advances prior research by explicitly focusing on the measurement of prophetic love character (*mahabbah al-nabi*) using a standardized instrument and an experimental design. Accordingly, its contribution is not only methodological, but also conceptual, as it positions love for the Prophet as a core variable in Islamic character education. This approach resonates with Al-Attas's assertion that the ultimate aim of Islamic education is the cultivation of *adab*, which is rooted in recognizing and loving the Prophet as the *insān kāmil* (Hidayatullah and Arif 2022; Kosim et al. 2020). Without a foundation of love, moral values risk remaining at a cognitive level without becoming deeply embedded in personal character.

Within the framework of prophetic pedagogy, the findings underscore the importance of integrating *ta'rif* (introduction) and *taḥbīb* (cultivating love) simultaneously. Formal Islamic education has traditionally emphasized *ta'līm* (instruction) and *ta'dīb* (discipline), while the affective dimension of nurturing love has often been marginalized. In this study, the animated film about Prophet Muhammad functioned as a pedagogical medium that revitalized this affective dimension, allowing prophetic exemplarity to be perceived not as an abstract norm, but as a living model closely connected to children's emotional worlds.

The primary novelty of this study lies in the integration of three elements that are rarely combined comprehensively in previous research. First, it employs prophetic animated media as a pedagogical intervention deliberately designed to engage the affective domain. Second, it measures prophetic love character using a standardized instrument that enables inferential statistical analysis. Third, it employs a cross-school experimental design to demonstrate the consistency of intervention effects across different social contexts. The integration of these three elements strengthens both the internal and external validity of the study's findings.

Beyond empirical contributions, the findings also offer a conceptual advancement by reinforcing the framework of *Prophetic Digital Pedagogy*. This framework positions digital technology not as an end in itself, but as a *wasīlah* for revitalizing prophetic values within children's visual culture. Unlike instructional-technology approaches that prioritize efficiency and information transmission, Prophetic Digital Pedagogy emphasizes affective transformation and character formation grounded in prophetic exemplarity. In this sense, animated films function as affective bridges that connect the Islamic pedagogical tradition with the lived realities of digitally immersed children.

From a policy and educational practice perspective, these findings carry important implications. Integrating prophetic animated media into elementary education curricula is not only relevant for enhancing learning motivation but also strategic for establishing a foundational love for the Prophet Muhammad from an early age. Such love becomes the basis for moral conduct, social attitudes, and sustainable life orientations. Consequently, Islamic character education can move beyond value transmission toward a more holistic process of personal transformation.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. This study focuses on short-term effects following the animated film intervention and does not yet examine the long-term sustainability of the internalization of prophetic love character traits. Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs and to explore other forms of prophetic media, such as digital comics, educational games, or interactive narratives. Despite these limitations, the discussion affirms that animated films about the Prophet Muhammad constitute an effective, relevant, and theoretically grounded pedagogical medium for strengthening love for the Prophet in elementary Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions This study demonstrates that animated films about the Prophet Muhammad constitute an effective pedagogical medium for strengthening elementary students' character of loving the Prophet. Through a pre-test–post-test experimental design implemented consistently across three elementary schools in Demak Regency, the study identified statistically significant and stable increases in prophetic love character scores across different school contexts. These findings affirm that strengthening religious character cannot rely solely on cognitive and normative approaches, but requires learning strategies that engage students' affective and emotional dimensions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to enriching character education and Islamic education scholarship by underscoring the central role of love (*mahabbah*) as the foundation for value internalization. The findings reinforce the view that character is formed when moral knowledge is animated through meaningful emotional experiences. In this regard, animated films function as affective bridges that connect prophetic values with children's inner worlds. The conceptualization of *Prophetic Digital Pedagogy* advanced in this study offers an alternative framework for integrating digital technology and prophetic exemplarity in a more humane and context-sensitive manner.

From a practical standpoint, the findings carry important implications for curriculum development and classroom practice in elementary education, particularly within Islamic character education. Integrating prophetic animated media can be an effective strategy for cultivating children's love for Prophet Muhammad from an early age, which in turn, lays the foundation for moral conduct, social attitudes, and sustainable life orientations. This approach enables character education to move beyond mere value transmission toward a deeper and more reflective process of personal transformation.

Nevertheless, several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The research focuses on short-term effects following the animated film intervention and therefore does not capture the long-term sustainability of the internalization of prophetic love character traits. In addition, the study has not explored other forms of prophetic media that may yield different or complementary effects. Future research is thus encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, involve a wider range of school contexts, and examine alternative forms of digital prophetic media within the framework of *Prophetic Digital Pedagogy* in order to deepen and extend the insights generated by this study.

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