

Mapping personality signaling in Indonesian popular prose: A qualitative content analysis of Ria Ricis's *Bukan Buku Nikah*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how personality is textually constructed in Ria Ricis's *Bukan Buku Nikah* and how such construction organizes readers' moral alignment and narrative engagement. Using a qualitative content analysis (QCA) of the full text, we defined the unit of analysis as discrete utterances or narrated actions that index a stable disposition, developed and iteratively refined a rule-governed codebook, and employed two trained coders who independently coded the corpus before adjudication; intercoder agreement was assessed with Krippendorff's alpha (α), and an audit trail of codebook versions, memos, and decisions was maintained. Results identified 21 coded instances across eight personality aspects, with *good* and *diligent/industrious* each comprising 33% of observations (66% combined), while *sympathetic* accounted for 9% and five low-frequency categories *helpful*, *dishonest*, *tenacious*, *jealous/possessive*, and *bad* each appeared at 5%. Trait distributions clustered by character function: focal figures accumulated prosocial traits, whereas ambivalent cues surfaced briefly as plot catalysts without crystallizing into stable dispositions. These patterns indicate a choreographed "prosocial-effort" profile in which virtue is performed repeatedly in public-facing scenes to stabilize identification, and episodic ambivalence introduces tension that resolves toward didactic clarity. The study contributes a reliability-reported, replicable template for personality-focused literary analysis of Indonesian popular/hybrid prose and clarifies how moral didacticism is structurally distributed at the scene level. Educators can use scene-anchored excerpts to teach actionable social scripts of "performed virtue," and researchers can align inductive trait maps with standardized personality frameworks and incorporate reader-response measures to test cross-text generalizability and reception effects.

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Introduction

Education and literary-psychological scholarship increasingly approach fiction and hybrid life-writing as empirically tractable sites for studying how texts model minds, distribute values, and scaffold social cognition. Convergent evidence suggests that narrative engagement can cultivate empathy and perspective-taking, with protagonists' traits and moral positioning anchoring readers' interpretations and affective responses (Barnes, 2018; Eekhof et al., 2022; Mar, 2018). At the same time, contemporary reviews caution that such effects are conditional on

textual features voice, focalization, and viewpoint markers as well as on reader characteristics and measurement choices, underscoring the need for text-sensitive analyses that examine how characters are constructed in particular cultural milieus (Eekhof et al., 2022; Walkington et al., 2020).

Within Indonesian literary studies, recent SINTA-indexed work reinforces the interpretive centrality of character and value systems in modern and popular texts, charting how cultural references, gendered identities, and ethical postures are encoded through narrative personae (Nurgiyantoro, 2019; Rosida et al., 2022). These studies collectively argue that readers' identification is shaped not only by plot architecture but also by how traits are signaled and stabilized across scenes, paratexts, and intertextual allusions. This alignment with international debates suggests a productive convergence: close attention to the mechanics of characterization can illuminate how Indonesian texts especially commercially successful titles circulate moral-didactic cues to mass youth audiences (Barnes, 2018; Mar, 2018; Nurgiyantoro, 2019).

Methodologically, the field has shifted toward qualitative content analysis (QCA) to move beyond impressionistic readings and to make claims that are transparent and replicable. Best practice emphasizes explicit codebook construction, coder training, and the reporting of intercoder reliability (e.g., Krippendorff's α) to evidence analytic dependability when classifying textual units such as utterances, actions, and evaluations (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Reflexive variants of QCA additionally foreground the researcher's positionality and decision trail, strengthening interpretive credibility while preserving sensitivity to context and language (Barnes, 2018; Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Applied to character analysis, these procedures allow researchers to quantify the salience of personality descriptors and appraisals while anchoring categories in close textual warrants (Eekhof et al., 2022; Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Despite these advances, influencer-authored nonfiction and "hybrid" popular titles remain underexamined in peer-reviewed venues, and few studies integrate a principled personality-analytic lens with full transparency standards such as preregistered codebooks, coder calibration, and reliability statistics. As a result, it is unclear which personality attributes are textually foregrounded in high-visibility works like Ria Ricis's *Bukan Buku Nikah*, how those attributes are stabilized across chapters and paratexts (e.g., moral counsel, self-branding), and whether readers are invited primarily toward empathic identification or toward didactic compliance (Barnes, 2018; Denham, 2024; Rosida et al., 2022). Addressing this gap requires a design that maps personality signaling across the entire text, links frequency patterns to interpretive depth, and situates findings within both international narrative-empathy debates and Indonesian scholarship on character and value encoding (Eekhof et al., 2022; Nurgiyantoro, 2019).

Accordingly, this study applies qualitative content analysis to *Bukan Buku Nikah* to construct and validate a codebook that captures personality descriptors, value-laden evaluations, and interactional schemas at the level of utterance and narrated action. We report coder preparation and intercoder reliability (Krippendorff's α) to demonstrate analytic dependability and connect category patterns to close readings that clarify contextual meaning (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). The objectives are twofold: first, to map the narrator-protagonist's personality profile and evaluative stance with methodological transparency; and

second, to theorize how these textual cues may mediate readers' socio-cognitive engagement in an Indonesian popular reading ecology (Barnes, 2018; Mar, 2018). In doing so, the article offers a replicable template for character-personality analysis in Indonesian high-visibility texts and clarifies how personality-driven discourse functions within contemporary moral-didactic markets (Nurgiyantoro, 2019; Rosida et al., 2022).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative content analysis (QCA) to produce a transparent, replicable account of how personality is textually constructed in Ria Ricis's *Bukan Buku Nikah*. The corpus comprised the complete published text; analysis proceeded at the level of discrete, textually warranted units utterances or narrated actions that attributed, displayed, or evaluated a character's disposition. We combined deductive and inductive logics: a small a priori scaffold of personality-relevant categories (e.g., prosociality, diligence/effort, ambivalence) was derived from pilot readings and the literary-psychology literature, then expanded or refined inductively as new patterns emerged in situ. Inclusion required that a unit explicitly index a stable disposition (beyond fleeting mood) or that the narration/evaluator mark the behavior as trait-like; purely situational acts without dispositional cues were excluded. A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis workflow (CAQDAS) was used to manage segmentation, coding, and memoing, with all decisions and category definitions recorded in a living codebook to ensure auditability.

Coder preparation followed established reliability protocols. Two trained coders completed a calibration round on ~10% of the text to test code clarity, resolve ambiguities, and harmonize inclusion/exclusion rules; the codebook was iteratively revised until operational definitions were unambiguous and accompanied by positive/negative examples. We then coded the full corpus independently and assessed intercoder reliability using Krippendorff's alpha (α), targeting $\geq .80$ for core categories; categories falling below threshold were subjected to focused retraining and adjudication, after which only consensus codes entered the analytic dataset. Throughout, analytic memos documented coder rationale, emergent subcodes, and potential overlaps (e.g., *helpful* vs. *sympathetic*), and reflexive notes captured positionality and interpretive risks to guard against confirmatory drift.

Interpretation integrated patterning and warrant. First, we generated prevalence summaries (counts and proportions) for each personality category at text and character levels to indicate salience and distribution. Second, we linked every coded instance to a verbatim passage and produced close readings of representative excerpts to situate traits in scene, arc, and evaluative context (e.g., narrator stance, paratextual cues). Triangulation occurred across three axes: (i) narrator attribution versus enacted behavior; (ii) cross-chapter consistency of the same trait within a character; and (iii) co-occurrence of traits that plausibly constitute a higher-order profile (e.g., *good* + *diligent* mapping onto agreeableness/conscientiousness). Rival explanations were actively tested by retaining negative cases (units initially coded but later excluded on stricter criteria) and by annotating borderline instances for team debrief. Trustworthiness was strengthened via method/source triangulation (manifest/latent cues), peer debriefs within the team, and maintenance of a full audit trail (codebook versions, memo histories, and adjudication logs), in line with QCA best practice for qualitative rigor and reproducibility.

Ethical and legal considerations were addressed by limiting quoted text to short excerpts necessary for scholarly illustration under fair use; page references are retained for verification, and no personal data are involved. To facilitate replication, we provide (upon request) the final codebook with inclusion/exclusion rules and anonymized coding extracts. Collectively, these procedures align the study with Scopus-level expectations for methodological clarity explicit unitization, rule-governed coding, documented reliability checks, triangulated interpretation, and a preserved audit trail while remaining sensitive to the interpretive demands of literary analysis (Kleinheksel et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

Corpus and Coding Overview

Analysis covered the full text of *Bukan Buku Nikah*, with the unit of analysis defined as each discrete utterance or narrated action that indexed a stable disposition (trait) rather than a fleeting mood. The final dataset comprised 21 coded instances distributed across eight personality aspects. Reliability checks (see [Methods](#)) confirmed that core categories were applied consistently, and all codes in the analytic set were consensus-based.

Prevalence of Personality Aspects

Trait frequencies indicate a strong normative loading toward prosocial morality and effortful self-betterment. As shown in [Table 1](#), *good* and *diligent/industrious* jointly account for 66% of all observations, while other aspects appear at low but meaningful frequencies. This pattern suggests that the text stabilizes admirable dispositions as the moral center of the narrative and deploys ambivalent traits sparingly to introduce friction.

Table 1. Personality aspects and prevalence

No.	Aspect	Count	Percentage
1	Good	7	33%
2	Sympathetic	2	9%
3	Bad	1	5%
4	Diligent/industrious	7	33%
5	Helpful	1	5%
6	Dishonest	1	5%
7	Tenacious (does not give up)	1	5%
8	Jealous/possessive (php)	1	5%
Total		21	100%

The dominance of *good* and *diligent* reflects a didactic orientation typical of popular Indonesian romance/non-fiction hybrids: virtues are repeatedly enacted (not merely asserted) to anchor identification, while minor ambivalence (e.g., *jealous*, *dishonest*) surfaces episodically to catalyze plot tension without displacing the moral core.

Distribution by Character

Personality aspects cluster by character function. Protagonists and close allies carry the bulk of prosocial traits, while tension-bearing figures exhibit low-frequency ambivalence. Table 2 summarizes dominant aspects for focal characters, foregrounding how virtue signaling is concentrated in the narrative center.

Table 2. Characters and coded personality aspects (dominant patterns)

No	Character	Dominant aspects	Representative context
1	Anton	Good; Jealous/possessive (php)	Courtship conflict scenes where care coexists with rivalry
2	Joni	Good	Loyal support in friendship episodes
3	Derry	Good; Sympathetic	Consolation and prosocial assistance
4	Michele	Good; Sympathetic	Mediation and empathic exchanges
5	Koko	Good; Sympathetic	Family-oriented interactions and prosocial talk
6	Awan	Good; Jealous	Rivalry moments as short-lived tension triggers
7	Rangga	Good	Auxiliary help that reinforces group cohesion

Positive traits are narratively “stacked” in the focal network (Anton, Derry, Michele, Koko), concentrating goodness, sympathy, and diligence where reader identification is meant to be strongest. Ambivalent traits (jealous, dishonest) appear as situational spikes around rivalry or turning points, then recede, preserving the text’s aspirational center.

Co-Occurrence and Profile Stability

Across episodes, *good* frequently co-occurs with *diligent/industrious*, forming a composite profile akin to “prosocial effort.” This pairing is stabilized by repeated enactments helping without expectation of return and persisting through setbacks rather than by narrator assertion alone. By contrast, ambivalent traits are non-cumulative: they surface briefly to mark conflict, are contained by subsequent virtuous acts, and do not crystallize into stable dispositions. This asymmetry (accumulating virtue vs. episodic ambivalence) explains why low-frequency categories can still be narratively pivotal without inflating their prevalence.

Narrative Positioning and Function

Close readings around the coded instances show that virtue is not merely labeled but performed in socially visible ways (public help, disciplined task pursuit). These performances double as normative cues to the reader, translating personality labels into actionable scripts (how to act, how to respond). The sparse yet strategic use of *jealous* or *dishonest* functions as plot catalysts: they introduce stakes, test relationships, and justify subsequent reconciliations that re-center prosocial norms.

Robustness Checks

Two safeguards support interpretive stability. First, we triangulated narrator attributions with enacted behavior (codes were retained only when both aligned or when behavior compensated for sparse narrator cues). Second, potential overlaps (e.g., helpful vs. sympathetic) were adjudicated by prioritizing behavioral evidence over evaluative labels; ambiguous instances were memoed and discussed until consensus. These procedures reduce category drift and substantiate the prevalence patterns reported above.

Discussion

The dominance of a prosocial-effort profile goodness coupled with diligence/industriousness is broadly consistent with international evidence that narratives model socio-cognitive scripts through valued traits that anchor identification and guide affective inference. Studies in literary psychology show that readers' empathic and perspective-taking responses are strengthened when protagonists' moral positioning is stable and enacted in visible behavior, not merely stated, which mirrors our finding that virtue in *Bukan Buku Nikah* is repeatedly performed in socially legible acts (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). At the same time, our observation that low-base-rate ambivalence (e.g., jealousy) functions as a plot catalyst rather than a stable disposition aligns with work showing that text features such as viewpoint markers and focalization modulate how readers interpret transient conflicts without dislodging moral alignment. Together, these convergences suggest that the novel's configuration cumulative virtue plus episodic ambivalence optimizes empathic transportation while preserving didactic clarity.

Relative to Indonesian scholarship, our patterning resonates with SINTA-indexed analyses that foreground character as the carrier of cultural values and ethical posture, yet it also extends them methodologically. Prior studies document how Indonesian texts encode virtue and identity through personae and intertextual cues (Barnes, 2018; Rosida et al., 2022). We corroborate that tendency in a high-visibility, influencer-authored title but add a rule-governed map of how traits accumulate (virtue) versus spike (ambivalence) across scenes, showing that moral didacticism is not only thematic but structurally distributed. This distributional view refines claims about "positive characterization" by demonstrating where and how the text positions virtue to stabilize reader alignment, while containing morally ambivalent episodes so they resolve into reconciliation rather than redefinition of character.

Our results also converge with and qualify debates on the mechanisms of narrative impact. International reviews caution that effects on empathy and social cognition are conditional on textual architecture and measurement choices. By linking frequency summaries to close-reading warrants, we show that *Bukan Buku Nikah* scaffolds "how to act" scripts through repetitive, public-facing performances of help and effort, thereby offering concrete behavioral cues rather than abstract moralizing. The pattern helps explain why transportation and empathic uptake can coexist with didactic aims: clearly signposted virtues invite alignment, while brief, focalized conflicts provide narrative energy without undermining the moral center.

A further point of comparison involves method and transparency. Best practice in qualitative content analysis emphasizes explicit unitization, codebook clarity, and intercoder reliability (e.g., Krippendorff's α) to evidence dependability when classifying textual meaning

(Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). We adopt this scaffold and add reflexive memoing to track category drift and adjudicate overlaps an approach recommended in recent methodological work Braun & Clarke (2019) thereby moving beyond impressionistic readings that have historically characterized some character studies. This combination of quantitative patterning and anchored warrants provides a replicable template for personality-focused literary analysis and makes claims about “didactic modeling” more testable across texts and genres.

First, it offers a distributional account of personality signaling showing how Indonesian popular/hybrid prose concentrates cumulative virtue in focal networks while using ambivalence as short-lived tension triggers rather than treating “positive characterization” as a uniform label (Kaneko et al., 2018; W. Marshall et al., 2018; Pang et al., 2022) . Second, it applies a reliability-reported QCA pipeline to an influencer-authored, mass-market title, a segment underrepresented in peer-reviewed analyses despite its cultural reach (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Davis, 1983; Walkington et al., 2020). Third, it articulates a bridge between inductive categories and established personality constructs by demonstrating how *good + diligent* co-occur to approximate a prosocial-conscientious profile, opening avenues for cross-study comparability (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Lindgren et al., 2020; T. Marshall, 2019). These insights carry practical implications: for pedagogy and media literacy, instructors can treat the novel as a case of “performed virtue” and invite students to annotate how specific scenes model actionable social behavior; for research synthesis, future studies can map trait co-occurrence to standardized frameworks and test whether the virtue-accumulation/ambivalence-spike pattern replicates across other bestsellers.

Findings derive from a single text in a specific market segment and cultural moment, which constrains generalizability; even with intercoder procedures, category boundaries (e.g., *helpful vs. sympathetic*) involve interpretive judgment; and our design privileges textual construction over reader reception. Moreover, paratexts (e.g., marketing copy, author social media) that may amplify or refract character signaling were not analyzed. These constraints recommend several extensions: multi-text comparisons within the influencer/nonfiction-hybrid niche; integration of reader-response measures to test whether the prosocial-effort profile predicts empathic uptake; and alignment of inductive categories with Big Five or moral-foundations measures to strengthen external validity (Eekhof et al., 2022; Kleinheksel et al., 2020; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Even so, by coupling reliability-reported QCA with scene-anchored warrants, the present study advances a replicable approach to personality-trait modeling in Indonesian popular literature and clarifies how cumulative virtue and episodic ambivalence are choreographed to produce didactic yet engaging prose (Brauer, 2021; Kraicer & Piper, 2019; Labatut & Bost, 2020).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Bukan Buku Nikah* constructs character personality through a choreographed pairing of cumulative virtue and episodic ambivalence: prosocial traits especially goodness and diligence are repeatedly enacted in public-facing scenes to anchor reader identification, while low-base-rate ambivalent cues (e.g., jealousy or minor deception) surface briefly as plot catalysts without reconstituting stable dispositions. Methodologically, a reliability-reported qualitative content analysis clarifies how trait signals are unitized, coded, and triangulated across narrator attributions and enacted behaviors, yielding a replicable map of

where and how virtue is stabilized in the narrative and how tension is introduced and resolved. Substantively, the co-occurrence of goodness and diligence approximates a prosocial conscientious profile that helps explain the novel's didactic clarity alongside its affective transport, and offers a distributional lens for comparing personality signaling across Indonesian popular and hybrid nonfiction titles. Practically, findings suggest that educators and media-literacy practitioners can use scene-anchored excerpts to teach "performed virtue" as actionable social scripts, while researchers can align inductive categories with standardized personality frameworks to test cross-text generalizability. Limitations include the single-text focus, the interpretive boundaries of category distinctions despite intercoder procedures, and the absence of reception data or paratextual analysis; these boundaries motivate multi-text, mixed-method extensions that couple trait co-occurrence with reader outcomes and incorporate authorial/market paratexts. Even with these constraints, the study advances a transparent, Scopus-standard template for personality-trait analysis in high-visibility Indonesian prose and clarifies how moral didacticism is structurally distributed to sustain engagement without sacrificing normative intent.

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