



Internalizing Prophetic Leadership Values: A Hadith-Based Framework for Youth Character Development

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Abstract

In the digital age, the younger generation often faces many significant challenges, one of which is freedom of expression, particularly when voicing opinions. However, this freedom of expression is often not accompanied by ethical and moral responsibility. This has become a critical issue that requires proactive solutions to address it. This study aimed to revive the leadership values contained in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and to develop a strategic framework for internalizing these values into the democratic character of today's youth. This study employed a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach. Data were obtained from hadith collections (*Kutubut Tis'ah*) and contemporary scholarly literature on character education and democracy. This study found that hadiths on leadership contain key principles of democratic character, namely *amanah* (high integrity), justice, consultation, and responsibility (*mas'uliyah*). The strategy for this internalization is formulated through a conceptual approach that integrates theological-moral awareness based on prophetic texts (the internalization of values), communication ethics through digital media discourse and the principle of *tabayyun*, as well as democratic values through dialogical reasoning and intellectual openness (*syura*).

Keywords: *Hadith; Leadership; Character; Youth*

Abstrak: Di era digital, generasi muda kerap kali dihadapkan pada banyak tantangan besar, salah satunya yaitu kebebasan berekspresi, khususnya dalam hal mengemukakan pendapat. Di mana sering kali kebebasan berpendapat tidak dibarengi dengan etika dan tanggung jawab moral. Sehingga di dalam diri generasi muda kini tengah terjangkit krisis karakter dalam kepemimpinan yang dibarengi oleh pudarnya nilai-nilai beretika dalam berdemokrasi. Tujuan penelitian ini dilakukan sebagai bentuk upaya membangkitkan kembali nilai-nilai kepemimpinan yang terkandung di dalam hadis Nabi Muhammad SAW, serta dibarengi dengan menyusun kerangka strategis untuk menginternalisasikannya ke dalam karakter demokrasi anak muda masa kini. Jenis penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan (*Library Research*) dengan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif. Data diperoleh dari kitab-kitab hadis (*Kutubut Tis'ah*) dan dari literatur ilmiah kontemporer tentang pendidikan karakter dan demokrasi. Penelitian ini memperoleh hasil bahwa hadis kepemimpinan mengandung prinsip utama dalam karakter demokrasi, yaitu berupa *amanah* (integritas tinggi), keadilan, musyawarah, dan tanggung jawab (*mas'uliyah*). Adapun strategi internalisasinya dirumuskan melalui pendekatan konseptual yang memadukan kesadaran teologis-moral berbasis teks profetik (transinternalisasi nilai), etika komunikasi melalui diskursus media digital dan prinsip *tabayyun*, serta nilai demokrasi melalui nalar dialogis dan keterbukaan intelektual (*Syura*).

Kata Kunci: *Hadis; Kepemimpinan; Karakter; Anak Muda*

INTRODUCTION

The future of democracy is fundamentally determined by the quality of its younger generation. This proposition is particularly relevant to Indonesia, where democratic development has historically and contemporarily depended on youth as agents of social and political transformation. Their character, moral integrity, and intellectual capacity shape not only public participation but also the direction of national policymaking. Democratic maturity is reflected in the responsible exercise of political rights, freedom of expression, and active engagement in public affairs. Accordingly, strengthening democratic consciousness among young people is indispensable for fostering a democratic system that is not merely procedural but also just, accountable, dignified, and humane (Lestari et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of digital technology has created a paradox in youth democratic participation. Social media algorithms have broadened opportunities for political expression and civic engagement, contributing to more inclusive political participation among young citizens (Evita, 2023). At the same time, however, these platforms have accelerated the spread of hate speech, misinformation, cyberbullying, hostile online debates, and declining respect for political differences (Amril & Sazali, 2025; Haqqi et al., 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that unrestricted freedom of expression, when detached from ethical responsibility and emotional maturity, threatens the moral foundations of Pancasila democracy and risks producing future leaders who are ethically fragile, resistant to criticism, and socially irresponsible.

Responding to this moral crisis requires approaches that extend beyond formal legal regulations and practical political mechanisms. Although top-down governance remains necessary, it often fails to address the deeper moral and spiritual dimensions underlying democratic behavior. Therefore, reconstructing the ethical mindset of young people through the internalization of religious values becomes increasingly important. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, the Prophetic Hadith on leadership (*al-imārah* and *al-qiyādah*) offers universal ethical principles, including justice, trustworthiness, responsibility, consultation, and compassion, all of which provide a normative foundation for cultivating democratic character in contemporary digital society.

Despite their relevance, previous studies have predominantly examined leadership-related Hadith from normative and textual perspectives or within the managerial contexts of Islamic boarding schools, schools, and madrasahs (Nasukah et al., 2020). Consequently, their contribution to addressing the ethical challenges of democratic participation among the digital generation remains insufficiently explored. This study addresses that gap by bridging classical Prophetic ethics with the contemporary sociopolitical realities of

digitally connected youth. Its novelty lies in developing a conceptual framework of democratic character grounded in the ethical values of the Prophetic traditions on leadership. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What democratic character values are embedded in the Prophetic traditions on leadership, and how can these values contribute to strengthening the democratic character of young people in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design to examine the ethical values embedded in the Prophetic traditions on leadership and their relevance to strengthening the democratic character of young people. A qualitative library-based approach was considered appropriate because the objective of the study was not to measure empirical phenomena statistically but to interpret, analyze, and contextualize religious texts within contemporary sociopolitical realities. Accordingly, the study focused on exploring the normative and ethical dimensions of the Hadith and relating them to current issues surrounding youth democracy in the digital era.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of leadership-related Hadith (*al-imārah* and *al-qiyādah*) and narrations concerning individual moral responsibility documented in the *Kutub al-Tis'ah* (The Nine Canonical Hadith Collections). These traditions were purposively selected based on their relevance to ethical leadership, accountability, justice, consultation, and social responsibility. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other authoritative publications addressing democratic character education, youth psychology, civic ethics, and digital democracy.

Data collection involved systematic literature identification, critical reading, source classification, and note-taking to extract concepts relevant to the research objectives. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using content analysis and contextual analysis. Content analysis was employed to identify the ethical principles contained in the selected Hadith, while contextual analysis interpreted these principles in relation to the challenges of democratic participation among contemporary youth. To strengthen the interpretative process, the analysis adopted a sociological-hermeneutic perspective, enabling the reconstruction of Prophetic ethical values into a conceptual framework applicable to the digital democratic ecosystem. Finally, conclusions were drawn deductively by synthesizing the textual findings with contemporary democratic discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hadith on Leadership as the Foundation of Democratic Character

To understand how Islam establishes the foundations of democratic engagement, the initial step requires mapping and extracting substantive

moral values from the prophetic text itself. A seminal Hadith underpinning the concept of leadership responsibility is narrated by Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), in which the Prophet Muhammad stated:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ: أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

Translation: "Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you will be held accountable for his flock." (Al-Bukhari, 2002; Al-Naysaburi, 2000).

When examined through textual content analysis, this Hadith—recorded across the nine canonical collections (*Kutub al-Tis'ah*)—reveals a fluid philosophical dimension that transcends the boundaries of formal political authority. While the term *ra'in* linguistically denotes a "shepherd," in a modern context it implies that every individual, including the youth, possesses agency, authority, and control over themselves and the public spheres they navigate. Thus, this prophetic tradition addresses not merely monarchs or state officials but directly awakens the theological consciousness of every human being.

Textually, the terminology *ra'in* in this Hadith has been meticulously analyzed by classical Hadith commentators. In his landmark commentary *Fath al-Bari*, Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani explains that the essence of *ra'in* is *al-hafiz al-amin*—a trustworthy guardian entrusted with preserving the material and spiritual well-being (*maslahah*) of those under their purview (Al-Asqalani, 1993). Ibn Hajar emphasizes that this leadership responsibility is universal; it demands justice, the fulfillment of rights owed to subordinates, and the strict prohibition of any form of oppression or neglect of duty.

Echoing this perspective, Imam An-Nawawi, in *Syarah Shahih Muslim*, highlights that the concept of accountability (*mas'uliyah*) encompasses a moral commitment to offer sincere advice (*nasihah*) and to safeguard both the worldly and spiritual affairs of those under one's stewardship (An-Nawawi, 1994). In An-Nawawi's view, anyone who neglects the welfare of subjects under their authority betrays this prophetic trust.

Extrapolating these classical commentaries into contemporary discourse, the responsibility of the youth as *ra'in* today manifests in their capacity for self-leadership when interacting within digital public spaces. Cultivating the awareness of being *al-hafiz al-amin* in the cyber era entails a commitment to restraining one's speech and online actions from spreading destructive social narratives, thereby ensuring that digital activity yields societal benefit (*maslahah*) rather than harm (*mudarat*).

Through this conceptual framework, it becomes evident that the pillar of responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) highlighted by Ibn Hajar and An-Nawawi does not exist in a vacuum. Within the Islamic moral architecture, *mas'uliyah* is the fruit of a tree planted by the value of trust (*amanah*). Given that Ibn Hajar defines it as *al-hafiz al-amin*, it is impossible to demand high-minded moral accountability from the youth regarding their digital speech and interactions without first examining their integrity in maintaining digital trust.

Furthermore, fulfilling rights and preventing injustice, as emphasized in classical commentaries, requires justice (*'adalah*) as a moral benchmark so that youth remain objective and reject digital double standards. To prevent the manifestation of responsibility and justice from degenerating into self-righteousness, mutual consultation (*syura*) serves as an applied medium, encouraging the younger generation to remain open to inclusive dialogue.

Consequently, this foundational Hadith on leadership naturally binds together an interconnected system: *mas'uliyah* as the ultimate consequence, *amanah* as the structural foundation, *'adalah* as the moral substance, and *syura* as the sociological path forward. Based on these interconnected principles, the democratic values embedded within this Hadith commentary can be operationalized into the following core character indicators:

Mas'uliyah (Accountability and Moral Responsibility)

The primary indicator is *mas'uliyah*. In a digital democratic landscape, freedom of expression is frequently misunderstood as unrestrained license. Through this Hadith, the Prophet indirectly affirms that every keystroke on a smartphone, every comment in a social media thread, and every political narrative disseminated by youth will be held accountable—both before human law and in the ultimate divine judgment.

This awareness of *mas'uliyah* fosters a discerning youth character that refrains from spreading unverified information, eschews hoaxes, and exercises deliberation prior to digital expression (Muchtar et al., 2025). A concrete example is a young individual who demonstrates the resolve to halt the transmission of unverified information, even when such content promises short-term virality and millions of views. Such individuals view their digital footprints as reflections of personal integrity for which they are ultimately accountable.

Amanah (High Integrity)

A healthy democracy requires actors possessing high integrity (*amanah*). For the youth, *amanah* extends beyond holding organizational office; in a broader sense, it means maintaining informational integrity and refusing to manipulate facts for factional gain or temporary popularity. When youth uphold *amanah* regarding information accuracy, digital democratic discourse remains shielded from polarization and smear campaigns.

Aligned with this principle, a study by Untung et al. (2025) on moral fortitude in the technological era confirms that instilling *amanah* alongside spiritual accountability acts as a crucial filter protecting the youth from manipulative online behavior. A concrete example includes a young person exercising their democratic right to critique public policy by constructing arguments grounded strictly in honest, valid, and verifiable data. For them, protecting the public sphere from information pollution is the fulfillment of a civic duty.

'Adalah (Justice and Equity)

The principle of justice (*'adalah*) in the Hadith on leadership demands that individuals place matters in their proper context and treat others proportionally. On social media, young people frequently fall into bias, such as blindly defending their in-group while launching personal attacks against opposing groups.

The value of *'adalah* teaches the youth to remain objective, evaluate ideas fairly, and respect fundamental human rights despite political differences. In agreement with this principle, Khoirulloh et al. (2026) emphasize in their study on digital media ethics that cyber space is not a value-free zone, but a socio-religious environment requiring strict moral accountability. Their research demonstrates that ethical character formation in digital interactions requires individuals to maintain objectivity, respect digital rights, and sustain balanced perspectives without succumbing to group polarization.

A concrete example is when a youth refrains from participating in online mob mentality or cancel culture before conducting proper verification (*tabayyun*). To be just in cyberspace means refusing to act as a digital judge and choosing instead to serve as a bridge for reconciliation.

Syura (Deliberation and Open-Mindedness)

Prophet Muhammad exemplified that Islamic leadership prioritizes spaces for open dialogue (*syura*). This democratic value stands in stark contrast to the current digital reality of the youth, which is frequently dominated by unproductive disputes (*debat kusir*) and cyberbullying.

Internalizing *syura* cultivates an inclusive character in the younger generation—one that accepts constructive criticism, engages in healthy discourse, and views ideological differences as intellectual enrichment rather than cause for hostility. Correspondingly, Muttaqin and Apriadi (2020) note in their conceptual analysis of *syura* that mutual consultation is not merely a formal mechanism, but an Islamic life principle demanding open-mindedness, mutual respect for diverse viewpoints, and a commitment to consensus for the public good.

When translated to the digital realm, *syura* guides young people to transform reactive online debate into educational, respectful, and constructive exchanges of ideas. A concrete example is a youth who actively hosts or participates in open online forums as spaces for inclusive dialogue. An individual imbued with the spirit of *syura* possesses the humility to listen calmly, weigh arguments conscientiously, and gracefully acknowledge errors when presented with superior evidence for the collective good.

Hadith in Building Democratic Consciousness Among the Digital Youth

Extracting ideal values and substantive moral principles from prophetic leadership Hadiths represents merely an initial phase in this discourse. The

primary epistemological challenge lies in formulating a systematic conceptual framework to ground *mas'uliyah* (responsibility), *amanah* (integrity), *'adalah* (justice), and *syura* (mutual consultation) within the consciousness of digital natives navigating unrestricted information flows. As a qualitative library research study, this internalization process operates not as a rigid classroom policy intervention, but as a theoretical-moral reconstruction of consciousness built upon three key epistemic dimensions.

The first-dimension centers on shifting religious textual interpretation from a rigid, textual-normative approach toward a dynamic, sociological-hermeneutical framework. Historically, discussions on leadership Hadiths have been isolated within classical political-administrative domains. Through this framework, the prophetic tradition "*Kullukum Ra'in*" is recontextualized into a universal digital citizenship ethic inherent to every individual. As emphasized in Islamic political thought, power must not be viewed merely through a formal-legal lens, but as a binding moral responsibility for every citizen (Hartono & Aminuddin, 2026).

Young citizens must build the theological realization that cyberspace is not a value-free domain, but a moral arena where personal accountability is actively tested. Internalizing these prophetic principles elevates democracy beyond mere external political mechanics into a substantive ethical consciousness guiding public behavior (Pangestu & Zulkarnain, 2026). This conceptual shift enables youth to autonomously adopt *mas'uliyah* and *amanah* without relying on coercive state controls. Furthermore, this internal transformation fosters an authentic moral commitment to democratic integrity that withstands the pressures of online anonymity.

The second dimension recognizes that cyberspace and modern social media ecosystems serve as the primary arenas shaping public opinion and youth political behavior. Consequently, this framework actively bridges classical scholarship with the realities of contemporary digital discourse. Epistemologically, practicing online communication ethics directly manifests the core principles of *amanah* (integrity) and *mas'uliyah* (accountability) found in the leadership Hadith. As Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani notes, the essence of a leader (*ra'in*) is to serve as *al-hafiz al-amin*—a trustworthy guardian of the public interest.

In the digital domain, this stewardship requires intellectual honesty when sharing information and a total refusal to manipulate data for short-term gain. Drawing on digital prophetic communication ethics, grounding Islamic values demands rigorous verification protocols (*tabayyun*) alongside respectful speech as a reflection of faith. Conceptually, the Prophet's guidance provides an ethical foundation for producing objective public narratives, rejecting misinformation, and dismantling toxic online hostility. This analytical perspective aligns with broader efforts to transform reactive digital behavior into reflective civic engagement.

This approach is further reinforced by Muizza and Al Ayubi (2024), who demonstrate that prophetic communication etiquette serves as an effective mental filter mitigating adolescent digital polarization. By cultivating critical reasoning, this transformation prevents moral decay online while actively promoting constructive digital participation. Youth learn to evaluate sources rigorously before sharing content, thereby neutralizing destructive viral trends. Consequently, the digital public sphere shifts from a battleground of outrage into a shared space for meaningful intellectual exchange and civic maturity.

The third dimension focuses on shaping an inclusive intellectual character through the operationalization of *syura* (deliberation) and *'adalah* (justice). In Islamic thought, mutual consultation is not merely a formal political procedure, but an embodiment of open-mindedness, rationality, and human dignity (Suparman, 2024). Conceptually, internalizing these principles encourages youth to transcend factional egocentrism within socio-political discourse. This intellectual transformation allows young citizens to value objective truth over blind group loyalty in polarizing online debates.

Integrating deliberative values expands democratic paradigms into frameworks enriched by moral substance, dialogic reasoning, and deep respect for ideological plurality (Srimulyani et al., 2024). When *syura* is deeply internalized as a primary worldview, youth develop the psychological maturity to view political differences as intellectual assets while firmly rejecting cyberbullying. This framework ensures youth engagement within democratic ecosystems remains grounded in dignified, constructive dialogue. Ultimately, it equips the next generation to lead digital democracy with ethical resilience and inclusive civic responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the Prophetic traditions on leadership embody a coherent set of ethical values that provides a normative foundation for strengthening the democratic character of young people in the digital era. The analysis demonstrates that the principles of *mas'uliyah* (moral accountability), *amanah* (integrity), *'adalah* (justice), and *shūrā* (deliberation) are not merely theological ideals but universal democratic virtues that encourage responsible political participation, ethical freedom of expression, respect for diversity, and constructive public dialogue. Accordingly, these leadership values offer a relevant ethical framework for addressing contemporary challenges such as hate speech, misinformation, cyberbullying, and political polarization within digital democratic spaces.

Furthermore, this study formulates a conceptual framework for internalizing Prophetic leadership values through three interrelated dimensions: reconstructing theological-moral awareness, strengthening ethical digital communication based on the principle of *tabayyun*, and cultivating dialogical

reasoning grounded in *shūrā* and justice. Theoretically, this framework expands the application of leadership Hadith beyond conventional educational and managerial contexts by positioning them as a conceptual foundation for democratic character formation. Practically, the findings provide an ethical reference for educators, families, policymakers, and youth organizations in designing character education programs capable of fostering a more responsible, inclusive, and morally grounded democratic culture in the digital age.

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