



## **THE EXEMPLARY CHARACTER OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD AS A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL FOR ADOLESCENTS IN THE VIRTUAL ERA**

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### **Abstract:**

The digital era has fundamentally changed how teenagers interact and form their character. This research aims to analyze the relevance of Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character as a positive character reference for teenagers in the virtual era. Using qualitative research methods with a library research approach, this study examines various literature related to Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character, Islamic character education, and challenges faced by teenagers in the digital era. The research results show that the four main characteristics of Prophet Muhammad, namely siddiq, amanah, tabligh, and fathonah, have very significant relevance in the digital context. The siddiq trait provides a foundation for healthy digital literacy, amanah teaches responsibility in technology use, tabligh provides guidance for positive communication, and fathonah encourages wise use of technology. The main challenges faced by teenagers include digital identity crisis, online social pressure, technology addiction, and excessive information exposure. The implementation model developed includes a character education framework based on exemplary behavior, mentoring programs with a sunnah approach, and integration of Islamic values in digital literacy curriculum. Practical implementation is carried out through developing Islamic netiquette, information verification techniques based on tabayyun principles, and forming positive communities on digital platforms. This research contributes to the development of character education strategies that are appropriate to the challenges of the digital era.

**Keywords:** *Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character, teenage character, digital era, Islamic character education, digital literacy*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The digital era has fundamentally transformed human life, particularly for the younger generation who grow up amid the rapid development of information and communication technology. Today's adolescents face complex challenges in shaping their character within virtual environments filled with both positive and negative stimuli. According to Naswa and Muthoifin (2025), teenagers spend an average of 6.6 hours per day accessing social media, with 11% of them spending more than 15 hours daily. This phenomenon illustrates the profound influence of the virtual world on contemporary youth life. In the context of character formation, digital-era adolescents face complex identity dilemmas. As digital natives, they grow in environments that allow unlimited access to information, yet often lack adequate moral filters to discern constructive values. Social media, as the primary platform for adolescent interaction, has become a

space not only for self-expression but also a venue rife with social pressure, cyberbullying, and exposure to content inconsistent with moral values (Kompasiana, 2024). This condition necessitates a strong and authentic character reference to help adolescents build a positive self-identity.

In Islamic tradition, the figure of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is recognized as *uswatun hasanah* — the perfect exemplary model for all humanity. Allah affirms in the Qur'an that within the Prophet resides an excellent example (*uswah hasanah*). The Prophet's exemplary character encompasses various aspects of life, including moral integrity, leadership, patience, and adaptability to changing times. These characteristics are highly relevant to serve as references in facing the challenges of the digital era. The significance of Prophet Muhammad's example in the context of adolescents in virtual spaces can be seen from several fundamental aspects. First, the aspect of honesty (*siddiq*), which forms the foundation for interaction in cyberspace. In an era of fake news and hoaxes, the Prophet's honesty is highly pertinent for building a culture of healthy communication on digital platforms. Second, the aspect of trustworthiness (*amanah*), essential for establishing authentic social relationships on social media. Third, the aspect of conveying truth (*tabligh*), vital for disseminating constructive and educational information. Fourth, the aspect of wisdom (*fathonah*), necessary for using technology wisely and productively (Syarif, 2024).

Recent studies show that adolescents face a significant identity crisis in the digital era. Social media has become an inseparable part of adolescent life, yet often without an adequate understanding of moral values. Positive digital citizenship remains a major challenge, as many adolescents lack sufficient digital literacy to filter information and build a healthy character in virtual spaces. The exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in confronting various life challenges offers a comprehensive framework for adolescent character development. One of the most important examples from the Prophet is his patience and resilience in facing life's trials. These traits are very relevant for adolescents who often encounter social pressure and peer pressure on social media. The Prophet's ability to steadfastly uphold moral principles despite opposition and resistance provides inspiration for youth to build resilient character in the digital age (Wulandari, 2022).

In the context of character education, Prophet Muhammad's example offers a holistic and practical approach. With noble morals, wise leadership, care for family, encouragement to seek knowledge, patience, and teachings about tolerance, he provides a model worthy of emulation by every Muslim. These values can be implemented in adolescents' virtual lives to build a positive and constructive digital character. The digital era also brings challenges for *da'wah* (Islamic propagation) and dissemination of Islamic values. Amid the rapid development of digital technology, cyberspace has become a new field for spreading Islamic teachings. This shows that traditional approaches in character education must be adapted to digital contexts, where adolescents can be positive agents of change on social media by following the example of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Character building for adolescents in the digital era requires a systematic and sustainable approach. These efforts are not meant to restrict youth or hinder positive developments within them but serve as a foundation to keep adolescents on the right path in building responsible character for a bright future. The exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides a clear roadmap

to achieve this goal. This study is important as it combines classical approaches in Islamic character education with contemporary challenges of the digital era. As digital natives, adolescents need a reference model that is not only historically relevant but also applicable within their virtual life context. The universal and timeless exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) holds potential as an effective solution to the adolescent character crisis in the digital age.

Therefore, research on the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character as a positive character reference for adolescents in the virtual era is highly relevant and urgently needed. This study is expected to contribute to the development of a character education framework tailored to the needs of adolescents in the digital era and provide practical guidance for educators, parents, and other stakeholders in guiding adolescents to build positive character in virtual spaces.

Based on the background outlined, the research questions are: (1) How relevant are the exemplary values of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in shaping positive adolescent character in the virtual era? (2) What challenges do adolescents face in implementing the Prophet's example in digital environments? (3) How can an effective model for implementing the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character be developed to foster positive character in adolescents in the virtual era?.

This study aims to: (1) Analyze the relevance of the exemplary values of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the context of shaping positive adolescent character in the virtual era; (2) Identify the challenges and obstacles adolescents face in implementing the Prophet's example in digital environments; (3) Formulate an effective and practical model for implementing the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character to build positive adolescent character in the virtual era. This research is expected to offer theoretical benefits by contributing to the development of Islamic character education theory in the digital era and enrich the scientific corpus regarding the relevance of classical Islamic values in modern contexts. Practically, this study serves as a guide for educators, parents, and education stakeholders in developing adolescent character-building strategies suited to digital-era challenges, as well as providing a practical framework for implementing the exemplary values of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in adolescents' virtual lives.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a library research approach. The qualitative method is chosen because it provides a deep and comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon under investigation, namely the relevance of Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character in shaping adolescents' character in the virtual era. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore meanings and interpretations thoroughly regarding the concepts studied (Dr. H. Zuchri Abdussamad & Dr. Patta Rapanna, 2021). Library research is selected as the research strategy due to its suitability for studies focused on conceptual and theoretical analysis based on relevant written sources. Library research is considered a high-level qualitative study that produces data in the form of texts and writings analyzed from a holistic, comprehensive, and integrative perspective (Hamzah, 2020). This method enables in-depth analysis of various literature related to the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad and the challenges of adolescent character building in the digital era.

The data sources of this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data include the Qur'an and Hadith as the principal sources of Islamic

teachings concerning the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad. Secondary data comprise books, scientific journals, articles, and other scholarly works discussing the Prophet's exemplary character, Islamic character education, and adolescent challenges in the digital age. The selection of data sources is based on relevance, credibility, and the currency of the information presented (Safrudin et al., 2023). Data collection techniques involve systematic documentation and recording of various literature sources relevant to the research topic. The data collection process applies a snowball sampling approach to ensure comprehensiveness, starting from primary sources and expanding to related references cited therein. Each data source is evaluated according to academic quality, topical relevance, and its contribution to understanding the research problem (Kusumastuti et al., 2019).

Data analysis employs content analysis using an inductive approach. The analytical stages include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions as outlined by Miles and Huberman. The analysis process begins by identifying main themes emerging from various sources, followed by categorizing and classifying the data based on its relevance to the research objectives. Subsequently, interpretation and synthesis are conducted to produce a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad and adolescent character development in the virtual era (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, by comparing and contrasting information from diverse sources to confirm the consistency and accuracy of findings. Additionally, peer review involving experts in Islamic studies and character education is conducted to validate the interpretations and conclusions of the research. The analysis process also applies member checking by confirming findings with specialists possessing relevant expertise (Winarni, 2021).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Relevance of Prophet Muhammad's Exemplary Values in the Digital Era**

The digital era has fundamentally transformed how individuals interact and process information, making the prophetic trait of *siddiq* (truthfulness) highly relevant as the foundation of healthy digital literacy. As Muhammad Rafly Amriz et al. (2024) emphasize, virtues such as honesty, wisdom, and compassion form a strong character essential for future leadership. In the digital context, truthfulness extends beyond accurate information sharing to include moral responsibility in avoiding the spread of hoaxes or unverified content. Adolescents must develop critical thinking skills to responsibly filter and share information, reflecting the Prophet's example in conveying divine messages truthfully. This ethical foundation is vital in combating misinformation and fostering trustworthy digital communication.

Another key prophetic virtue, *amanah* (trustworthiness), plays a crucial role in fostering responsible digital citizenship. It encompasses moral accountability for technology use, data privacy, and respecting others' rights. Nola et al. (2025) highlight the weakening of moral values amid digital influences, which underscores the urgency to reinforce *amanah* among youth. Understanding the ethical implications of digital actions helps adolescents realize the real-world impact of their online behavior. This trust-centered approach promotes technology as a tool for good, discouraging misuse or manipulation. By integrating *amanah*, digital literacy education can cultivate morally conscious

users who uphold integrity in virtual environments.

The prophetic characteristic of tabligh—communicating Islam with wisdom and compassion—holds significant importance for effective digital communication. Marti et al. (2023) note that religious and social content tailored to adolescent interests can engage youth meaningfully. Implementing tabligh online requires youths to develop polite, constructive communication skills that inspire and educate. The Prophet's method of delivering clear, context-aware messages remains relevant for navigating diverse digital audiences. This approach fosters respectful dialogue and positive influence, strengthening online communities and supporting adolescents in expressing their values thoughtfully and effectively.

Lastly, fathonah (intelligence) encompasses critical contextual understanding, situational analysis, and sound decision-making—skills essential in today's digital landscape. Muafin et al. (2024) argue that millennials should be taught to maximize technological opportunities wisely. Digital intelligence includes grasping social media algorithms, detecting biased information, and utilizing technology productively. Competency-based education supports this adaptive intelligence by nurturing individual capabilities aligned with the Prophet's teachings on critical thinking. Integrating fathonah into digital literacy empowers adolescents to navigate complex information environments effectively, fostering informed, responsible, and innovative digital citizens.

### **The virtual era has introduced new complexities in shaping adolescent identity**

The virtual era has introduced new complexities in shaping adolescent identity. Nola et al. (2025) highlight that "the digital era has brought changes in students' mindsets and behaviors that potentially weaken moral values." This identity crisis manifests in various forms, including tendencies to create digital personas distinct from their true selves and confusion in adopting consistent value systems. The example of Prophet Muhammad SAW in maintaining character consistency between private and public life offers a valuable solution to this crisis. Muhammad Rafly Amriz et al. (2024) emphasize that studies on the Prophet's life aim to "present exemplary models applicable to daily life." Such character consistency is crucial for forming an authentic and meaningful digital identity among youth.

Social pressure and cyberbullying pose serious challenges to adolescent character development in the virtual space. Digital interaction dynamics often exacerbate peer pressure due to the wider reach and permanence of online content. Marti et al. (2023) underscore the importance of "addressing challenges such as the appropriate use of digital media" in da'wah contexts, which is also relevant for youth character building. The Prophet's steadfastness in facing societal opposition in Mecca inspires adolescents to uphold moral principles despite social pressure. His patience, wisdom, and unwavering adherence to truth provide a guiding framework for confronting cyberbullying and digital social stress.

Digital addiction and the fear of missing out (FOMO) have emerged as phenomena affecting adolescent moral development. Nola et al. (2025) propose a "holistic technology-based approach grounded in Islamic values" to address these challenges. The Prophet Muhammad's balanced life between worldly affairs and spirituality offers a model for overcoming digital addiction. The Islamic

principle of moderation (wasathiyah), practiced by the Prophet, is key to fostering healthy relationships with technology. Zamroni et al. (2022) stress that "entrepreneurship basics must be understood by the trained age," indicating that character education should equip youth to use technology productively rather than merely consuming it passively.

The information age presents new obstacles such as information overload and the formation of echo chambers that can narrow adolescents' perspectives. Marti et al. (2023) identify the necessity to "recognize complex differing viewpoints" within digital da'wah, which is also critical for developing balanced perspectives. Prophet Muhammad's example of seeking truth through diverse sources and consultation with companions offers an effective learning model for the digital era. Emphasizing information verification, open dialogue, and continuous truth-seeking is key to addressing information overload and echo chambers. Muafin et al. (2024) highlight the importance of "curriculum development and extracurricular activities based on competency-based evaluation (CBE)" that enable students to cultivate critical thinking. This aligns with the Prophet's teachings that encouraged critical inquiry and deep understanding. Implementing the prophetic values in the virtual era requires a comprehensive, sustained approach integrating religious education, technology, and character formation to meet the challenges of the digital age while preserving noble Islamic values.

### **The Digital Era Has Fundamentally Transformed The Landscape Of Character Education For Adolescents**

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the landscape of character education for adolescents. Within this context, the exemplary role of Prophet Muhammad SAW remains highly relevant as a foundation for developing positive character traits among youth. As Amalianita et al. (2023) state, "character education is a crucial element in the development of every student, aiming to create a younger generation endowed with positive values." This urgency intensifies amid rapid globalization, which has contributed to a concerning decline in moral standards among students. Consequently, integrating prophetic values into character education offers a promising framework to counteract these moral challenges, fostering integrity, empathy, and resilience in the digital generation.

A character education framework based on the Prophet's exemplary life can be implemented through a holistic approach that integrates prophetic values into every aspect of digital learning. This aligns with findings that emphasize "the development and education of adolescent character as vital in preventing maladaptive behaviors, achievable through integrating character education in schools" (Amalianita et al., 2023). For instance, the prophetic virtue of honesty (shiddiq) can be applied in digital contexts by promoting integrity in information sharing and communication on social media platforms. Such an approach not only nurtures personal ethics but also encourages responsible digital citizenship, crucial for maintaining trust and authenticity in online interactions.

Internalizing prophetic values in adolescents' digital activities requires a comprehensive and adaptive approach to technological advancements. Kenedi and Hartati (2022) highlight the critical importance of "digital literacy skills as essential efforts to moderate Islamic education and prevent intolerance and dangerous religious misunderstandings." This internalization strategy can be operationalized by developing digital literacy competencies across ten stages:

accessing, selecting, understanding, analyzing, verifying, evaluating, distributing, producing, participating, and collaborating. Prophetic values such as trustworthiness (*amanah*) foster awareness of responsibility in digital technology use, while *tabligh* (conveying truth) manifests through adolescents' ability to disseminate accurate and beneficial information. *Fathonah* (intelligence) is reflected in critical evaluation skills toward digital content, addressing contemporary concerns such as excessive social media use, cyberbullying, and social comparison, which contribute to adolescent anxiety and depression (Nur Cahya et al., 2023).

Mentoring and peer education programs rooted in the Sunnah approach are effective strategies for character formation among digital-era youth. These programs adopt the Prophet Muhammad's pedagogical methods that emphasize learning through exemplary behavior, interactive dialogue, and personal guidance. Amalianita et al. (2023) observe that "guidance and counseling services play a role in developing adolescent character through various activities that optimize personal, social, learning, and career aspects." Designing mentoring programs to integrate prophetic values in each digital learning session strengthens not only technical skills but also empathy and social care. For example, the concept of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) can be applied through peer tutoring in digital literacy, where more technologically adept adolescents help their peers, fostering community spirit alongside competence.

Integrating Islamic values into digital literacy curricula is an urgent necessity to address the challenges of the digital era. Hajri (2023) asserts that "the role of digital technology in Islamic education in the 21st century requires a mature approach based on digital literacy concepts to overcome challenges and enrich religious learning experiences." A digital literacy curriculum embedded with Islamic values can simultaneously develop technical skills and strengthen adolescents' spiritual foundations. This integration can be realized through developing learning modules that combine technological concepts with Islamic principles. For instance, in cybersecurity education, youths can be introduced to the concept of *hifz al-'aql* (preserving the intellect), which teaches the importance of protecting the mind from harmful information. Likewise, digital ethics education can incorporate *husn al-khuluq* (good manners) as guidance for behavior in virtual spaces.

## **Practical Strategies for Implementing Prophetic Character on Social Media**

The development of courteous and wise communication guidelines on social media is a direct application of the Prophet Muhammad SAW's ethics within the digital context. Islamic netiquette adopts prophetic communication principles emphasizing *qaulan sadidan* (truthful speech), *qaulan ma'rufan* (kind speech), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech). This approach is crucial given research indicating that while "virtual learning processes can be carried out efficiently, they are less effective in building students' character" (Rahman et al., 2023). Implementing Islamic netiquette involves several fundamental aspects: verifying information before sharing (*tabayyun*), using polite and respectful language, avoiding unproductive debates, and spreading beneficial and inspiring content. These principles not only enhance the quality of digital communication but also contribute significantly to the formation of positive adolescent character.

The principle of *tabayyun*, taught in the Quran, serves as the foundational basis for developing information verification skills in the digital age. Adolph

(2016) stresses the importance of skills such as "analyzing, verifying, and evaluating" as integral parts of digital literacy. Verification techniques based on tabayyun include validating information sources, cross-checking with trusted references, analyzing author credibility, and evaluating contextual relevance. Implementing tabayyun digitally requires developing critical skills that enable adolescents to distinguish between true information and hoaxes. This is particularly relevant given "the massive development of information technology and the ease with which information can be spread without any filter, which some use to propagate extreme religious views" (Kenedi & Hartati, 2022). Effective verification not only protects youth from misinformation but also cultivates wisdom and caution.

The concept of digital detox and time management rooted in Islamic teachings embraces the life balance principles taught by Prophet Muhammad SAW. Considering that "excessive use of social media" can contribute to "increased anxiety and depression among adolescents" (Nur Cahya et al., 2023), digital detox methods become essential for psychological well-being. Islamic-based time management can be implemented through principles such as: first, balancing time between worldly activities and spiritual obligations; second, using technology as a means for worship and learning; third, making digital time productive and beneficial; and fourth, avoiding overuse that interferes with spiritual and social duties. These guidelines promote healthier relationships with technology and enhance overall adolescent well-being.

The formation of positive communities on digital platforms exemplifies the Islamic concept of ukhuwah (brotherhood). Hajri (2023) emphasizes that "Islamic education in the digital era faces challenges of authenticity and accessibility but offers global opportunities and interactive learning methods." Positive digital communities can serve as venues for developing adolescent character through constructive and supportive interactions. Strategies to build such communities include: creating safe and open discussion spaces; developing collaborative programs integrating Islamic values with modern technology; facilitating peer-to-peer mentoring grounded in prophetic values; and producing inspiring, educational content that motivates and uplifts youth.

## CONCLUSION

The digital era has introduced complex challenges in shaping the character of adolescents, where uncontrolled technology use may lead to various moral and psychological issues. This study reveals that the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad SAW holds significant relevance as a positive role model for youth in the virtual age. The four primary attributes of the Prophet—siddiq (truthfulness), amanah (trustworthiness), tabligh (conveying truth), and fathonah (wisdom)—can be effectively adapted and implemented within the context of modern digital life. Digital transformation has created new interactive spaces that demand strong moral guidance. Siddiq provides a foundation for fostering healthy digital literacy, particularly in addressing the spread of hoaxes and misinformation. Meanwhile, amanah teaches adolescents responsibility in technology use, nurturing constructive digital citizenship. Tabligh guides positive communication on social media, while fathonah encourages wise and productive technology utilization.

The main challenges faced by adolescents in the virtual era include identity crises, digital social pressures, technology addiction, and information overload. These conditions necessitate a comprehensive approach integrating



prophetic values with contemporary educational strategies. The proposed implementation model encompasses a character education framework based on prophetic exemplars, internalization strategies of prophetic values, mentoring programs following the Sunnah approach, and the integration of Islamic values into digital literacy curricula. Such a holistic framework ensures that character development is aligned with the moral demands of the digital age.

Practical application of prophetic character on social media involves developing Islamic netiquette that fosters respectful and ethical online interactions. Verification techniques grounded in the principle of tabayyun (clarification) help youths critically assess information before dissemination. Additionally, the method of digital detox emphasizes a balanced use of technology, preventing excessive engagement that harms mental health. The cultivation of positive digital communities reflects the Islamic ideal of ukhuwah (brotherhood), providing supportive environments for adolescent interaction and growth. These strategies collectively facilitate not only good character development but also the preparation of responsible and productive digital citizens.

The integration of prophetic values with digital education is crucial in mitigating the moral erosion and psychological challenges experienced by today's youth. By internalizing siddiq, amanah, tabligh, and fathonah, adolescents gain moral anchors that enable them to navigate the complexities of online interactions responsibly. This integration also promotes resilience against cyberbullying, social comparison, and misinformation, which are prevalent in digital environments. The emphasis on mentorship and peer support further strengthens character development through experiential learning and community engagement.

In conclusion, the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad SAW proves to be an effective solution for addressing adolescent character formation challenges in the digital era. By combining prophetic teachings with modern pedagogical methods, educational stakeholders can cultivate a generation that embodies ethical digital citizenship. This approach not only enhances adolescents' personal development but also contributes positively to broader societal well-being in an increasingly interconnected digital world.

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