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# The Leadership Characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as an Example for Modern Leaders

**Abelia Heninda[1], Adel Aulia[2], Nahdiah[3], Ahmadi [4]**
[1]*Universitas Islam Negeri Palangkaraya, Indonesia*
[2]*Universitas Islam Negeri Palangkaraya, Indonesia*
[3]*Universitas Islam Negeri Palangkaraya, Indonesia*
[4]*Universitas Islam Negeri Palangkaraya, Indonesi*

adelaulia836@gmail.com

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**Abstract**

Leadership is a crucial aspect of human life because it plays a role in directing, guiding, and influencing society to achieve common goals. In the modern era, various leadership issues such as declining integrity, abuse of power, and weak morality demonstrate the importance of implementing leadership values based on ethics and spirituality. This article aims to examine the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and their relevance for modern leaders. This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach. Data were obtained from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, and articles related to leadership in Islam and the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation, while data analysis used qualitative descriptive analysis. The results of the study indicate that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) possessed leadership characteristics that include sidiq (intelligence), amanah (trustworthiness), fathanah (intelligibility), tabligh (prophetic conduct), justice, patience, and compassion and empathy. These values are still highly relevant to be applied in modern leadership, especially in building leadership with integrity, humanity, and a focus on the welfare of society. However, the implementation of these values also faces various challenges, such as technological developments, globalization, moral crises, and the influence of modern culture. Therefore, efforts are needed to actualize the leadership values of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in various areas of life in order to create just, wise and responsible leadership.

**Keywords**: Islamic Leadership, Prophet Muhammad SAW, Modern Leaders, Leadership Characteristics, Islamic Values

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a strength or ability within an individual. This leadership attitude is used when leading. One of the effects of this leadership attitude is its ability to influence others. This influence is intended to be exerted within a job or organization. This is because leadership attitudes are generally needed to lead a job or organization (Prayudi et al., 2022). The purpose of leadership is to function as someone capable of organizing and creating effective change and motivating the organization to carry out what is collectively desired (Nur', 2023).

In Islam, leadership is viewed as a trust that must be carried out with full responsibility and fairness. A leader's task is not only to organize and govern but also to

serve as a role model for those they lead. Therefore, Islam places great emphasis on the concept of leadership based on noble morals and humanitarian values. One of the primary role models in Islamic leadership is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Throughout history, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is known as a leader who always instilled compassion in educating his followers (Falihah, 2017). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known as a leader who was honest, trustworthy, intelligent, wise, just, and compassionate toward his people.

The Prophet's success in leading the people of Medina is clear evidence that leadership based on moral and spiritual values can create a harmonious, just, and prosperous society. The Prophet Muhammad not only succeeded in spreading the teachings of Islam but also united various ethnic groups and groups with a wise and tolerant approach. His leadership serves as an ideal example relevant to modern life, especially amidst various social problems and the current crisis of exemplary leadership.

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership characteristics, such as sidiq (honesty), amanah (trustworthiness), fathanah (intelligence), and tabligh (conveying the truth), are important values that can serve as guidelines for modern leaders. These values not only contribute to building public trust but also foster leadership with integrity and a focus on the common good.

The Quran itself contains numerous verses that touch on the importance of leadership, one of which is Surah An-Nisa', verse 59, where Allah SWT explains the crucial role of a leader in a community. Therefore, in this verse, Allah commands His creatures to always obey the Messenger and the Ulil Amri (those in authority), or leaders in power.

Therefore, good character is one of the primary outcomes of the Prophet's educational leadership (Rahman & Yusof, 2020). By emulating the Prophet's leadership, it is hoped that leaders will be able to carry out their duties fairly, responsibly, and prioritize the interests of the community.

Based on this description, this article discusses the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad and his relevance as a role model for modern leaders. This discussion is expected to provide an understanding of the importance of applying the Prophet's leadership values in contemporary life.

**METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach. Library research is a research method conducted by reviewing and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the research topic, such as books, scientific journal articles, theses, and other academic sources related to the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and its relevance to modern leadership.

The data in this study were obtained from various literature sources discussing the concept of leadership in Islam, the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the application of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values in modern life. These sources were then collected, classified, and analyzed systematically to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Data collection was carried out through documentation, namely by reviewing and examining various references related to the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and their implementation in modern leadership. Next, the data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, namely by describing, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from the various concepts and findings contained in the literature sources used.

Through this method, the research is expected to provide a clear picture of the leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad and his relevance as an example for modern leaders in building leadership that is just, trustworthy, and oriented towards the welfare of society.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Understanding Leadership in Islam

The concept of leadership in Islam has a very strong and solid foundation, built not only on Islamic values but also on practices practiced for centuries by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his Companions, and the Khulafa' al-Rasyidin (the caliphs). Sourced from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, it evolved dynamically due to the influence of social, political, and cultural conditions. While in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had a dual role, as head of government and judge, a manifestation of his role as a Messenger of Allah (SWT).

Leadership in Islam is often identified with the term caliph, which in the Qur'an means successor or deputy, leader, ruler, and administrator of the universe. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the term caliph was used to mean amir, the plural of which is umara, or ruler. Islamic Sharia became the basis of governance at that time, and the Islamic caliphate system was subsequently ruled by a caliph, including those known as the Khulafa al-Rasyidin. The Islamic caliphate ended with the collapse of the caliphate system, which was abolished by the Turkish National Assembly (1924 CE), which was then led by Kemal al-Tatürk. He had also previously established the Turkish Sultanate (1922 CE).

In the Islamic context, educational leadership is seen not only as a collection of administrative or organizational skills, but also as a process encompassing the development of character, ethics, and spirituality in students (Ahmadi, P.C.M., 2025). David Whitfield21 states that cultural competence is one of the requirements for a globally minded leader. A leader must understand not only their own cultural roots but also the cultural roots of others, understand relevant issues, and be able to collaborate with a variety of people from diverse cultures (Ahmadi, P.C.M., 2025).

Leadership in Islam is a mandate given to someone to organize, guide, and direct the community towards goodness in accordance with the teachings of Allah SWT and His Messenger. In Islam, a leader is not only responsible for worldly affairs but also has a moral and spiritual responsibility to the community they lead. Therefore, leadership in Islam must be grounded in the values of justice, honesty, responsibility, and concern for others.

Generally, leadership can be defined as a person's ability to influence and direct others toward achieving a common goal. However, in Islam, leadership has a broader meaning because it is related to the values of worship and trustworthiness. A leader is required to be a good example for the community, both in word and deed. Good leadership is measured not only by success in achieving goals, but also by how a leader carries out their duties in accordance with Islamic principles.

Islam places great emphasis on the importance of leadership with noble morals. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is an example of an ideal leader who practiced leadership based on the values of the Quran and the Sunnah. His leadership prioritized deliberation, justice, compassion, and service to the community. Thus, the concept of leadership in Islam is not oriented solely toward power, but rather toward efforts to create the benefit and welfare of society.

### Characteristics of the Leadership of the Prophet Muhammad SAW

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a prime example of Islamic leadership. His success in establishing an Islamic society in Medina demonstrates that leadership grounded in moral and spiritual values can create a harmonious and just life. The Prophet's leadership characteristics serve as essential guidelines for every leader in carrying out their mandate.

Siddiq (Honesty and Integrity) The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known as a figure of exceptional honesty, both in word and deed. He was nicknamed "Al-

Amin" (the Trustworthy) before receiving revelation, and his reputation for honesty was widely known among the Quraysh community. This honesty was not only a part of his personal character but also a central element of his leadership. The impact of the Prophet's honesty was significant; he was able to build strong trust among his followers, thus ensuring their sense of security and commitment to following his direction and decisions. By emulating this attitude, today's leaders can create a strong foundation of trust within the organizations they lead (Marjuni, 2021).

Amanah (Responsibility and Credibility) The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known as a highly responsible leader. He always ensured that all responsibilities entrusted to him were carried out properly. His governance of the people and state relied on his intelligence and commitment to his responsibilities. A concrete example of the Prophet's leadership is seen in his decision to always consult with his companions when making important decisions, demonstrating credibility and openness. This emphasizes the importance of a leader being trustworthy and possessing integrity in all their actions to effectively manage the responsibilities entrusted to them (Suaidy et al., 2023).

Fathanah (Intelligence and Wisdom) The Prophet Muhammad's intelligence and wisdom in decision-making were essential characteristics of his leadership. He was able to consider various perspectives before making decisions and was known for his wisdom in dealing with problems and conflicts. A concrete example of this intelligence is seen when he successfully united the various tribes in Medina through the Medina Charter, a document of social and political stability that supported inter-tribal harmony. This intelligence was also evident in his diplomacy and strategy when facing enemies, demonstrating that wisdom is crucial in leadership decisions (Ihsan et al., 2021).

Tabligh (Effective and Transparent Communication): The Prophet Muhammad conveyed Islamic revelations and teachings using a highly effective and transparent communication style. He always strived to establish good communication with his followers, ensuring that the teachings were easily understood and accepted. At every opportunity, the Prophet Muhammad explained each revelation in a simple and direct manner, prioritizing understanding among his followers. This open leadership played a crucial role in educating and motivating his followers to understand Islamic values and apply them in their daily lives (Yuniendel et al., 2019).

Fairness and Wisdom: Justice was a fundamental principle of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership. He treated everyone fairly, regardless of background, ethnicity, or social status. In every decision he made, the Prophet Muhammad ensured that justice was upheld, and this was reinforced through various legal practices within the Islamic government he implemented. This fair attitude not only creates respect among followers but also ensures social stability in society (Sugiarto et al., 2024).

Patience and Determination, the Prophet's patience in facing various challenges and tests was an important aspect of his leadership. He showed extraordinary courage when facing rejection, ridicule, and even violence from his enemies. This patience not only strengthened his resilience but also became an example for the people to remain firm in their beliefs. This mental and spiritual strength is very necessary in leadership, providing inspiration to followers not to easily give up in their struggle (Putri et al., 2022). Compassion and Empathy Rasulullah SAW showed extraordinary compassion and empathy towards all his followers, including children, women and the poor. He always respects each individual and always tries to understand their feelings. Leadership that is oriented towards the welfare of the people is one of the foundations that strengthens the relationship between leaders and followers. This attitude creates a harmonious and unified environment, where everyone feels cared for and appreciated (Hasmiza et al., 2023).

The values exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad in his leadership include fundamental principles that remain relevant today. According to Al-Ghazali (2015), justice was one of the main principles of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership, where he always

prioritized fairness in deciding various issues without discriminating between groups or social status. The principle of amanah, which refers to trust and responsibility, was also a core value in the Prophet Muhammad's leadership. This amanah can be seen in various situations, such as when he kept promises and the trust placed in him by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Shidiq, or honesty, was also an important value that the Prophet Muhammad always upheld. This honesty built a very strong foundation of trust between him and his followers, thus enabling the formation of a respected and revered leadership. According to Muhammad (2010), the principle of honesty in leadership is crucial for creating a healthy and productive environment, where everyone feels valued and treated fairly (Endar Evta Yuda Prayogi et al., 2024).

The leadership characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were not only relevant in his time but also have profound applications today. Emulating these traits in contemporary leadership can help build a better and more harmonious society by promoting the values of integrity, responsibility, intelligence, efficient communication, and justice.

**The Relevance of the Prophet Muhammad's Leadership for Modern Leaders**

The leadership values of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remain highly relevant for modern life. Amidst the changing times and technological advancements, society requires leaders who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess moral integrity and social awareness. The Prophet Muhammad's leadership can provide solutions to various leadership challenges facing us today.

The Prophet Muhammad's honesty and trustworthiness are crucial for modern leaders to build public trust. Many problems, such as corruption, abuse of power, and lack of transparency, arise from weak leadership integrity. By emulating the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a leader can carry out their duties responsibly and prioritize the common good.

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad's ability to communicate and deliberate is also relevant for modern organizations and governments. Leadership that is open to the opinions of others will create harmonious relationships and enhance cooperation in achieving common goals. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated that deliberation is an effective way to solve problems and make decisions.

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership is also relevant in the world of education. A teacher or educator's duty is not only to impart knowledge but also to serve as a role model for students. Values such as patience, justice, and compassion exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) can help create a positive and character-based educational environment.

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership is relevant to the modern context in many aspects, particularly in the application of ethical principles, communication strategies, and human resource management. The Prophet's leadership characteristics, characterized by Shidiq (honesty), Amanah (trustworthiness), Tabligh (delivery), and Fatanah (intelligence), should serve as a reference for today's leaders in various fields, including education, organizations, and government. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) successfully brought about significant change in Arab society, which previously lived in ignorance and division. By implementing inclusive and morally based leadership principles, the Prophet Muhammad demonstrated to future generations that successful leadership is determined not only by power but also by character and integrity (Febriana et al., 2024). As revealed in research by Kurniandini et al., modern leaders need to learn from the thoughts rooted in important individuals in history, such as the Prophet Muhammad SAW, to improve their functional qualities in today's diverse and complex society (Kurniandini et al., 2022).

In today's digital and globalized era, effective communication skills are crucial. Successful leadership includes the ability to convey messages and visions clearly so that

they are accepted by various groups. Tabligh, as one of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership attributes, reflects the importance of paying attention to how we communicate in leading and influencing others. Researchers from the journal Educational Innovation assert that by emulating the Prophet Muhammad's leadership style, today's leaders can adopt better communication techniques to foster closer relationships with their followers (Febriana et al., 2024).

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership also offers valuable lessons for leaders interested in sustainability. The concept of servant leadership emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad can be adapted to meet the growing demands of social engagement. Leaders who focus on serving and building communities will be more successful in influencing positive change for society (Febriana et al., 2024). In this regard, leaders who consistently implement the Prophet Muhammad's qualities can become impactful agents of change, both within organizations and communities.

Among human resource managers in organizations, the Prophet Muhammad's leadership characteristics can serve as a model to facilitate talent development and employee performance. Leaders who prioritize traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, and cooperation will not only implement the principles espoused by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but also create a strong and solid team ready to face the challenges of the era of global competition.

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership represents a model that all leaders today need to revitalize. By understanding and adapting his leadership characteristics and principles to the modern context, leaders will not only increase their leadership effectiveness but will also leave a broader impact on society as a whole. There is so much to learn from the Prophet Muhammad's leadership style, and it is time for today's leaders to recognize that justice, effective communication, honesty, and vision are the keys to successful leadership in this ever-changing world (Febriana et al., 2024).

Thus, the Prophet Muhammad's leadership characteristics can serve as a guide for modern leaders in developing leadership that is just, humanistic, and oriented toward the welfare of society.

**Challenges of Implementing the Prophet's Leadership in the Modern Era**

Implementing the leadership values of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the modern era faces various challenges. Technological developments, globalization, and social change have significantly influenced leadership patterns in society. Many leaders prioritize personal or group interests over the interests of the wider community.

One of the greatest challenges is the decline in moral values and integrity in leadership. Cases of corruption, abuse of office, and injustice still frequently occur in various areas of life. This situation indicates that the values of honesty and trustworthiness taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) have not been fully implemented by today's leaders.

Furthermore, the development of social media also presents a challenge. Leaders are required to maintain ethical communication amidst the rapid flow of information. Miscommunication can lead to conflict and misunderstanding in society. Therefore, good communication skills, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), are essential in facing the changing times.

Another challenge is the rise of individualism and a lack of social awareness in society. Many leaders focus more on personal achievement than on serving the community. Yet, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught that a leader must prioritize the interests of the people and be a servant of their community.

Despite facing various challenges, the leadership values of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remain relevant and important to implement in modern life. By instilling honesty, trustworthiness, justice, wisdom, and concern for the community, leaders are expected to be able to create a harmonious, just, and humanitarian life.

The application of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values to Islamic education in the digital age presents quite complex challenges, including the digital divide, the need for leadership training based on Islamic values and technology, and the potential for conflict between technological culture and traditional values. Each of these challenges impacts the effectiveness of leadership in implementing the vision of Islamic education that aligns with religious principles while also responding to the demands of the digital age. The digital divide is the first challenge to implementing the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values in Islamic education. This gap refers to the differences in access to and ability to use technology that are still felt by various Islamic educational institutions. Many institutions lack adequate digital resources or infrastructure, while technology has become a key component of modern learning. According to research by Abu Bakar et al. (2020),

This digital divide impacts not only students' access to knowledge but also the ability of educational leaders to adopt and implement technology effectively. Without equitable access, it becomes difficult to optimize the implementation of the Prophet's leadership values, which are based on the principles of trustworthiness and responsibility in educational management. Leaders with limited access to technology will face obstacles in conveying information openly and responsively, which should be part of the principles of trustworthy and tabligh leadership. The need for leadership training that integrates Islamic values and technology is also a major challenge.

In the digital era, Islamic educational leaders are required not only to have a deep understanding of Islamic principles but also adequate technological skills. Leadership training based on Islamic values integrated with digital skills is essential to bridge this need. This training enables leaders to better understand how to utilize technology without violating fundamental Islamic principles, such as honesty (shidiq), trustworthiness (amanah), and intelligent decision-making (fathanah). Ali (2021) stated that effective leadership in Islamic educational institutions requires mastery of technological skills grounded in Islamic values to create adaptive strategies for institutional management and decision-making. However, such training remains scarce, and not all institutions have sufficient access to such programs.

Another equally significant challenge is the conflict between technological culture and traditional Islamic values. Technological culture in the digital age tends to promote speed, efficiency, and open access to information, while Islamic values often emphasize caution, wisdom, and harmony in interactions. This difference has the potential to create a dilemma for Islamic educational leaders in implementing values such as amanah (trustworthiness) and shidiq (truthfulness) in institutional management. For example, while technology allows for easy access to information and rapid communication, this information must be managed wisely to avoid violating Islamic principles. As leaders, the demand to adapt to technological dynamics often conflicts with the principle of caution in disseminating information, a key element of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values (Salleh, 2018).

Therefore, Islamic educational leaders require wisdom to manage this conflict between technological culture and Islamic values to prevent it from disrupting stability and harmony in the educational environment. Overall, the challenges of implementing the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values in this digital era require Islamic educational leaders to possess complex skills, including wise management of digital resources, technological skills training, and a deep understanding of how to integrate technological culture with Islamic principles. According to Yusof and Hamzah (2021), one way to address these challenges is by adopting an adaptive Islamic leadership model, in which leaders are able to combine traditional values with the use of digital technology. Thus, leaders are expected to create an educational environment that supports student character development and the success of technology-based learning processes. These challenges emphasize the importance of support from all parties to strengthen the foundations of

Islamic education so that it can adapt to the demands of digitalization, without neglecting the Islamic values that underlie leadership. The role of leaders as role models in implementing amanah (trust), shidiq (honor), fathanah (faith), and tabligh (prophetic) is crucial in creating Islamic educational institutions that are highly competitive, yet remain rooted in the noble values of Islam.

## CONCLUSION

Character education is an important effort in shaping students who not only possess intellectual abilities, but also possess good attitudes, moral values, and behavior in accordance with religious teachings and social norms. The implementation of character education can be carried out through various approaches, such as the Tadzkirah, Istiqomah, and Iqra-Fikir-Zikir models that emphasize role models, habituation, motivation, and the development of students' potential as a whole. In addition, a holistic educational approach through the process of knowing the good, feeling the good, and acting the good is an important step so that students not only understand the values of goodness, but also are able to internalize and apply them in everyday life. However, in practice, the implementation of character education still faces various challenges, such as the influence of technological developments, the social environment, and less than optimal support from the family and community environment. In facing these challenges, the role of teachers as role models is a crucial factor in determining the success of character education in schools. Teachers' exemplary behavior in attitudes, behavior, and daily actions can provide concrete examples for students in instilling positive character values. Therefore, character education needs to be implemented in an integrated manner through the learning process, school culture, and cooperation between schools, families, and the community so that the goal of forming students' character can be achieved optimally.

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