

LEADERSHIP VALUES IN THE QURAN AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced the lives of younger generations, while simultaneously presenting serious challenges to character formation and moral leadership. The digital generation is confronted with information overload, value fragmentation, and identity instability, which demand a more comprehensive and value-based approach to character education. This article aims to explore leadership values embedded in the Qur'an and analyze their relevance as a foundation for transforming character education in the digital era. This study employs a qualitative conceptual approach based on library research, utilizing thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses on leadership as well as classical and contemporary literature in Islamic education and character education. The findings reveal that Qur'anic leadership values—such as tauhid, justice, trustworthiness (amanah), consultation (shura), honesty (shiddiq), wise communication (tabligh), and intelligence (fathanah)—constitute an integrated ethical framework that is highly relevant to addressing moral challenges in digital society. These values function not merely as normative ideals but also as practical moral orientations that guide responsible behavior, ethical awareness, and character development among digital natives. Therefore, Qur'anic leadership can be positioned as a strategic foundation for contextual and sustainable character education aimed at nurturing ethically grounded and transformative leaders in the digital era.

Keywords: Qur'anic Leadership, Character Education, Digital Generation.

Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam kehidupan generasi muda, namun sekaligus memunculkan tantangan serius dalam pembentukan karakter dan kepemimpinan moral. Generasi digital dihadapkan pada kompleksitas arus informasi, fragmentasi nilai, dan krisis identitas yang menuntut pendekatan pendidikan karakter yang lebih komprehensif dan berlandaskan nilai-nilai fundamental. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi nilai-nilai kepemimpinan dalam Al-Qur'an serta menganalisis relevansinya sebagai fondasi transformasi pendidikan karakter bagi generasi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian konseptual berbasis studi kepustakaan, melalui analisis tematik terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang kepemimpinan serta literatur klasik dan kontemporer dalam bidang pendidikan Islam dan pendidikan karakter. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai kepemimpinan Qur'ani, seperti tauhid, keadilan, amanah, musyawarah,

kejujuran, komunikasi yang bijaksana, dan kecerdasan, membentuk kerangka etis yang integratif dan relevan untuk menjawab tantangan moral di era digital. Nilai-nilai tersebut tidak hanya bersifat normatif, tetapi juga memiliki implikasi praktis dalam membentuk karakter generasi digital yang bertanggung jawab, berintegritas, dan memiliki kesadaran moral dalam penggunaan teknologi. Dengan demikian, kepemimpinan Qur'ani dapat diposisikan sebagai landasan strategis dalam pengembangan pendidikan karakter yang kontekstual, berkelanjutan, dan berorientasi pada pembentukan pemimpin transformatif di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Qur'ani, Pendidikan Karakter, Generasi Digital.*

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped the social, cognitive, and moral landscapes of contemporary education. Digital natives grow up in an environment where information is abundant, interaction is instantaneous, and boundaries between public and private life are increasingly blurred. While this condition offers opportunities for creativity and participation, it also raises serious concerns regarding character formation, particularly related to ethical judgment, self-control, and social responsibility. Scholars argue that digital culture tends to prioritize speed, visibility, and consumption, which may weaken reflective thinking and moral awareness among young learners (Jean Baudrillard, 2011; Prensky, n.d.; Tapscott, 2008).

In response to these challenges, character education has become a central concern within educational discourse. However, many contemporary approaches to character education remain fragmented and instrumental, focusing primarily on behavioral compliance rather than moral internalization. Studies on digital citizenship reveal that without a strong ethical framework, digital competence alone is insufficient to guide responsible behavior in online environments (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011; Ribble, 2015). Furthermore, educational practices often emphasize technical proficiency while overlooking deeper moral and spiritual dimensions that shape students' identities and value orientations (Lickona, 1992; Ratna Megawangi, 2016).

Within the context of Islamic education, this problem is further complicated by the persistent dichotomy between religious instruction and general education. Moral values are frequently confined to religious subjects, while other disciplines adopt a value-neutral or secular orientation. As a result, Islamic character education often fails to engage with real-life challenges faced by students in the digital era. Several scholars highlight that such separation weakens the transformative potential of Islamic education and limits its relevance in responding to modern societal changes (Ahmad Tafsir, 2015; Azyumardi Azra, 2019; Muhaimin, 2012).

The Qur'an provides a comprehensive worldview that integrates moral values, leadership principles, and social responsibility. Concepts such as khalifah (vicegerency), amanah (trust), 'adl (justice), and shura (consultation) reflect a holistic model of leadership that combines spiritual consciousness with ethical action. Classical and contemporary Islamic scholars emphasize that Qur'anic leadership is not merely political or administrative but

fundamentally moral and educational in nature (Abul A'la Maududi, 2015; Mawardi, 2020; Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, 2013). Nevertheless, existing studies tend to discuss these values normatively or textually, without reconstructing them as an integrated framework for character education in the digital context.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by positioning Qur'anic leadership values as a transformative foundation for character education in the digital era. Unlike previous research that treats leadership and character education as separate domains, this article offers a conceptual reconstruction that connects Qur'anic leadership principles with contemporary challenges faced by digital natives. By synthesizing classical Islamic thought and modern educational discourse, this study aims to contribute a coherent framework for character education that is spiritually grounded, ethically robust, and contextually relevant to the realities of digital society (Beekun, 2012; H. Abuddin Nata, 2016; Langgulung, 1987).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a conceptual and library-based approach. The research is grounded in normative-analytical inquiry, focusing on the exploration and reconstruction of Qur'anic leadership values as a foundation for character education in the digital era. Qualitative conceptual research is considered appropriate because the objective of this study is not to measure variables or test hypotheses statistically, but to develop a coherent theoretical framework through critical interpretation of authoritative texts and scholarly works. In Islamic educational research, such an approach is widely used to examine values, principles, and paradigms embedded in religious sources and educational thought.

The primary data sources consist of Qur'anic verses related to leadership, morality, and human responsibility, complemented by classical and contemporary Islamic commentaries (tafsir), including works by Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurṭubi, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab. Secondary data are drawn from scholarly books and academic articles on Islamic leadership, character education, and digital-era educational challenges. Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation and thematic classification of texts relevant to leadership values and character education. The analysis followed an interpretative and thematic content analysis, involving stages of data reduction, categorization, and conceptual synthesis. Through this process, Qur'anic leadership values were not merely described textually but reconstructed into an integrated conceptual framework that responds to the moral and educational challenges faced by the digital generation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Qur'an conceptualizes leadership not merely as a position of authority but as an inherent moral responsibility attached to human existence. The notion of khalifah reflects humanity's mandate to manage, cultivate, and sustain life on earth in accordance with divine guidance. This concept positions leadership as a universal responsibility rather

than a privileged status, emphasizing accountability before God and society. From this perspective, leadership becomes inseparable from ethical conduct and moral consciousness, as human actions are continuously evaluated within a transcendent moral framework (Abul A'la Maududi, 2015; Ibn Kathir, 2014; Shihab, 2012).

The Qur'anic use of the term imam further reinforces the ethical dimension of leadership by highlighting the role of exemplarity and guidance. Leaders are not only decision-makers but also moral references whose behavior shapes collective values and social norms. The Qur'an portrays prophetic leadership as a model that integrates spiritual devotion, moral integrity, and social responsibility. This emphasis on role modeling underscores that effective leadership operates through moral influence rather than coercive power, making ethical consistency a central criterion of legitimacy (Hamka, 2015; Mawardi, 2020; Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, 2013).

Among the foundational values of Qur'anic leadership, tauhid functions as the core epistemological and ethical principle. The recognition of God's absolute sovereignty fosters humility and prevents the abuse of power, as leaders perceive authority as a trust rather than personal ownership. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that spiritual consciousness is essential for disciplining desire and ambition, which often undermine ethical leadership. In educational terms, tauhid cultivates internal moral control that guides behavior even in the absence of external supervision (Faridah et al., 2024; Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, 2010; Sayyid Qutub, 2014).

Justice ('adl) emerges as a non-negotiable value within Qur'anic leadership, demanding impartiality and moral courage even when personal or collective interests are at stake. The Qur'anic call for justice transcends legal formalism and extends to ethical fairness in judgment, decision-making, and social interaction. Such a conception of justice provides a moral compass for leadership practices, particularly in pluralistic and digitally mediated societies where misinformation and bias easily distort truth. Justice, therefore, becomes both a moral principle and a practical guideline for ethical leadership (Abdurrahman bin Nashir as-Sa'di, 2017; Ibn Kathir, 2014; Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, 2013).

The principle of amanah reinforces the moral seriousness of leadership by framing authority as a trust that must be safeguarded. Qur'anic discourse consistently associates leadership with responsibility and warns against betrayal of trust, whether material, moral, or social. In educational contexts, amanah nurtures a sense of responsibility toward knowledge, authority, and social roles. This value is particularly relevant in the digital era, where access to information and power over digital platforms demand ethical restraint and accountability (Abdullah, 2017; Langgulung, 1987; Sayyid Qutub, 2014).

Consultation (shura) represents the participatory dimension of Qur'anic leadership, emphasizing collective wisdom and shared responsibility. Rather than undermining authority, shura strengthens leadership legitimacy by fostering inclusivity and mutual respect. In the context of education, this principle supports dialogical learning and collaborative decision-making, aligning with contemporary pedagogical approaches that

value learner participation. The Qur'anic endorsement of consultation thus anticipates modern democratic and collaborative practices while grounding them in ethical accountability (Mawardi, 2020; Muslich, 2022; Surowiecki, 2005).

Honesty (*shiddiq*), effective communication (*tabligh*), and intelligence (*fathanah*) complete the ethical profile of Qur'anic leadership. Honesty sustains trust and moral credibility, while effective communication ensures that values and visions are conveyed persuasively and wisely. Intelligence, in this framework, extends beyond technical competence to include moral discernment and strategic insight. These attributes collectively form a leadership ethic that is adaptable yet principled, enabling leaders to respond creatively to complex challenges without compromising moral integrity ('Aidh bin Abdullah Al-Qarni, 2012; Amahzun, 2006; Beekun, 2012).

The relevance of Qur'anic leadership values becomes particularly evident when examined in relation to the digital generation. Digital natives experience information overload, identity fragmentation, and ethical ambiguity due to constant exposure to diverse and often conflicting value systems. Qur'anic leadership values offer a moral anchor that helps individuals navigate digital spaces responsibly. *Tauhid* nurtures self-regulation, justice informs ethical digital interaction, and *amanah* reinforces responsible use of technology, contributing to the formation of morally grounded digital citizens (Faridah et al., 2024; Palfrey & Gasser, 2011; Ribble, 2015).

Transforming character education through Qur'anic leadership values requires an integrative and holistic strategy. Character formation cannot rely solely on cognitive transmission of values but must involve moral habituation, exemplarity, and contextual application. Integrating leadership values across curricula, modeling ethical behavior by educators, and utilizing digital media as a platform for moral learning are essential steps toward sustainable character education. Such transformation aligns classical Islamic moral philosophy with contemporary educational realities, ensuring relevance without sacrificing ethical depth (Berkowitz & Bier, n.d.; Gusmira et al., 2025; Ratna Megawangi, 2016).

Despite its transformative potential, the implementation of Qur'anic leadership-based character education faces structural and cultural challenges. The persistent separation between religious and general education limits value integration, while popular digital culture often promotes values incompatible with Islamic ethics. Additionally, educators' limited capacity to contextualize classical values within digital realities poses a practical constraint. Addressing these challenges requires paradigm shifts in educational policy, teacher training, and curriculum design to ensure coherence between moral ideals and lived experience (Ahmad Tafsir, 2015; Azyumardi Azra, 2019; Muhaimin, 2012).

Nevertheless, significant opportunities remain for advancing Qur'anic leadership-based character education. Growing public concern over moral degradation, combined with the pedagogical potential of digital platforms, creates favorable conditions for ethical innovation. When presented through contextual and participatory approaches, Qur'anic

leadership values resonate with the openness and creativity of the digital generation. This convergence positions Qur'anic leadership not as a relic of the past but as a dynamic moral framework capable of shaping future-oriented, ethically responsible leaders (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2009; Zubaedi, 2015).

Recent discourse on Islamic education emphasizes that character formation in the digital era cannot rely on fragmented moral instruction. (Abrori et al., 2024) argue that sustainable transformation in Islamic education requires the internalization of Islamic culture as a lived ethical system rather than a symbolic or ritualistic framework. This perspective resonates with the Qur'anic conception of leadership, which frames moral responsibility as an intrinsic element of human existence. In digitally mediated environments, where ethical boundaries are often fluid, Qur'anic leadership values provide a stable moral structure that guides behavior beyond formal regulation.

The integration of Qur'anic values into character education is further strengthened by prophetic narratives and historical exemplars. Drawing on the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad, (Luthfi et al., 2024) highlight that character education becomes more effective when moral values are embodied through exemplary leadership rather than conveyed abstractly. This approach aligns with the Qur'anic concept of imam, which emphasizes leadership through moral modeling. By contextualizing leadership values within lived narratives, Islamic education fosters emotional engagement and moral identification among students.

In the context of educational leadership, Qur'anic values have demonstrated transformative potential when aligned with technological innovation. (Rachman, 2025) shows that Islamic leadership grounded in ethical vision can enhance the quality of technology-based learning media by prioritizing pedagogical integrity over technical sophistication alone. This finding supports the argument that leadership values such as amanah and fathanah are essential for ensuring that digital tools serve educational and moral purposes rather than merely functional efficiency.

Family-based education remains a critical foundation for character formation, particularly for Generation Z and Generation Alpha. According to (Gusmira et al., 2025), the internalization of Qur'anic morals within the family environment significantly shapes children's ethical orientation in digital interactions. This underscores that character education rooted in the Qur'an operates across educational ecosystems, where school, family, and community collectively reinforce moral values. Such synergy reflects the holistic nature of Qur'anic leadership, which transcends institutional boundaries.

Islamic educational thought has long emphasized the Qur'an as the primary source of character education. The ideas of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, as analyzed by (Setiyani & Tentiasih, 2025), demonstrate that Qur'an-based education prioritizes moral awakening and social responsibility. When applied in the digital era, this paradigm encourages students to view technological engagement as a moral activity governed by ethical accountability, rather than a neutral or value-free domain.

Affective dimensions of learning play a decisive role in addressing moral crises among digital generations. (Wartinah & Maemonah, 2025) emphasize that internalizing Qur'anic values requires affective approaches that engage emotions, conscience, and moral sensitivity. This insight reinforces the Qur'anic leadership principle that ethical transformation begins within the individual, aligning with the concept of tauhid as the foundation of moral consciousness. In digital contexts, affective internalization helps students regulate behavior in spaces where external supervision is limited.

Empirical studies further confirm that digital technology can function as a medium for character education when guided by Islamic values. In their case study, (Anggraini et al., 2025) demonstrate that digital platforms support moral reflection and ethical discussion when integrated intentionally into character education programs. This finding challenges deterministic views of technology as morally corrosive and instead positions leadership-driven ethical frameworks as the determining factor in digital character formation.

Similarly, (Dalimunthe et al., 2025) assert that Islamic character education must respond directly to the realities of digital life. Their findings indicate that students develop stronger moral awareness when religious education addresses concrete digital dilemmas rather than remaining at a theoretical level. This reinforces the argument that Qur'anic leadership values function as practical ethical tools that guide real-life decision-making in digital environments. The effectiveness of Islamic character education also depends on its capacity to integrate values holistically across curricula. (Eryandi, 2023) emphasizes that isolated moral instruction fails to produce lasting character change. Instead, Qur'anic values must permeate learning objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment practices. This integrative approach reflects the Qur'anic vision of leadership as a comprehensive ethical system shaping all dimensions of human activity.

Character education grounded in the Qur'an also addresses moral development at early stages. (Fariati & Anwar, 2025) highlight that Qur'anic character values provide children with ethical reference points that guide digital behavior from an early age. By cultivating virtues such as honesty and responsibility, Qur'an-based education equips learners to navigate digital spaces with moral clarity. Curriculum development plays a strategic role in translating Qur'anic values into educational practice. According to (Kurniasih et al., 2025), integrating Qur'anic values and tafsir into Islamic education curricula supports the formation of morally grounded and future-oriented generations. This curriculum model positions Qur'anic leadership values not as supplementary content but as foundational principles shaping educational vision and outcomes.

The urgency of Qur'an-based character education becomes more evident when examining generational change. (Munawir et al., 2024) argue that Generation Alpha requires moral frameworks capable of counterbalancing digital overstimulation. Qur'anic leadership values offer such a framework by fostering resilience, self-regulation, and ethical consistency amid technological acceleration. Educational transformation in the digital era also demands teacher readiness. (Nurrahma et al., 2024) emphasize that educators must

combine digital competence with ethical literacy to effectively convey Qur'anic values. Teachers who embody leadership values such as *tabligh* and *shiddiq* become living examples of ethical engagement with technology, enhancing the credibility of character education.

From a theoretical standpoint, (Parpatih, 2025) affirms that Qur'anic character education provides a normative and practical foundation for building morally upright generations. By grounding character education in divine revelation, Islamic education establishes ethical standards that transcend temporal trends and technological shifts. At the institutional level, leadership informed by prophetic and Qur'anic values shapes educational culture. A systematic review by (Syafei et al., 2025) shows that value-driven leadership fosters trust, participation, and ethical consistency within Islamic educational institutions. This reinforces the argument that character education is inseparable from leadership practice. Finally, the societal dimension of Qur'anic character education highlights its broader civilizational role. (Zain et al., 2024) argue that Islamic education grounded in Qur'anic and prophetic values contributes to the moral formation of communities, enabling ethical participation in digital public spaces. This positions Qur'anic leadership values as a moral infrastructure essential for sustaining ethical societies in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that leadership values embedded in the Qur'an constitute a coherent and relevant foundation for transforming character education in the digital era. The analysis confirms that Qur'anic leadership—conceptualized through the notions of *khalifah* and *imam*—frames leadership as a moral responsibility grounded in spiritual accountability, ethical integrity, and social responsibility. These principles align with the objective of this research, which seeks to identify and reconstruct Qur'anic leadership values as a response to contemporary challenges in character education. The findings indicate that core Qur'anic leadership values, including *tauhid*, justice, trustworthiness (*amanah*), consultation (*shura*), honesty (*shiddiq*), effective communication (*tabligh*), and intelligence (*fathanah*), provide an integrated ethical framework capable of guiding character formation among the digital generation. Rather than functioning merely as normative ideals, these values offer practical moral orientations that address issues such as ethical ambiguity, moral fragmentation, and identity instability in digitally mediated environments. Therefore, Qur'anic leadership values can be understood as a strategic conceptual basis for character education that is both spiritually grounded and contextually responsive.

Based on the findings of this study, future research is recommended to further develop empirical investigations that examine the implementation of Qur'anic leadership-based character education in formal and non-formal educational institutions. Subsequent studies may employ qualitative field research or mixed-method approaches to explore how these values are internalized by students and educators within digital learning environments.

Additionally, further research could focus on developing instructional models or curriculum designs that operationalize Qur'anic leadership values in character education, particularly in relation to digital literacy, citizenship, and ethical technology use.

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