



Navigating Prophetic Leadership: Preserving Teachers' Moral Integrity and Agency in the Digital Education Ecosystem

Nadiatul Ngazijah¹, Siti Aimah¹

¹Universitas KH. Mukhtar Syafaat, Indonesia

✉ nadiaazizah275@gmail.com*

Article Information:

Received June 15, 2026

Revised July 26, 2026

Accepted August 29, 2026

Keywords: *Prophetic leadership, teacher agency, digital ecosystem*

Abstract

This study aims to explore and analyze the role of prophetic leadership as a strategic tool for teachers in navigating the challenges of moral integrity and professional agency within an increasingly complex digital education ecosystem. Using qualitative methods through a phenomenological approach, this study delves into educators' in-depth experiences in integrating leadership values based on exemplary conduct, honesty, and emotional intelligence with the technical demands of technological disruption. The results indicate that prophetic leadership serves as an ethical anchor that strengthens teachers' agency, ensuring they are not merely technical implementers of learning algorithms but remain moral agents with full authority to guide students' character development. The findings also suggest that integrating these values significantly minimizes the risk of dehumanization in virtual interactions. The contribution of this research lies in the development of a new theoretical framework on teacher professionalism that synergizes digital competencies with spiritual-ethical skills. Practically, this study provides recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions to design professional development models that focus not only on digital literacy but also on strengthening moral integrity as the primary foundation for educators in an era of institutional transformation toward Society 5.0.

INTRODUCTION

A phenomenon has emerged in which digital information sources are beginning to supplant the teacher's position as the sole holder of academic authority in the classroom. Unlimited access to data makes students more likely to validate knowledge through search engines rather than the teacher's explanations. Classroom interactions are often marked by students' skepticism toward conventional material if it is not accompanied by rapid updates to the data (Brookfield, 2015). This demands that teachers no longer merely act as conveyors of information but must transform into prophetic leaders who provide moral guidance and wisdom in filtering the massive flow of information (Ullah et al., 2025). Education today is often trapped in market logic, where digital efficiency is prioritized over the process of character development. Global standardization demands rapid and instant reporting of administrative data through various supervisory applications (Folgado et al., 2024).

How to cite:

Ngazijah, N., Aimah, S. (2026). Navigating Prophetic Leadership: Preserving Teachers' Moral Integrity and Agency in the Digital Education Ecosystem. *Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 5(2), 1329-1338.

E-ISSN:

2827-9573

Published by:

The Institute for Research and Community Service

Much of teachers' time is consumed by meeting digital workload demands rather than engaging in deep, personal dialogue with students.

This administrative pressure can erode teachers' agency if not balanced by leadership grounded in the value of service; thus, teachers need to reclaim their autonomy to preserve the moral integrity of the profession (Küçükuncular & Ertugan, 2025). There is a tendency for the emotional bond between teachers and students to weaken due to the use of transactional learning platforms. The limitations of digital technology in conveying empathetic expressions and exemplary values which are typically conveyed through physical presence cause relationships to become strained (Chamola et al., 2025). The high rates of student alienation and the decline in moral discipline during remote or hybrid learning underscore (Rakha et al., 2025) that prophetic leadership is crucial for filling the spiritual void in the digital space, ensuring that technology remains a tool rather than a substitute for the teacher's essential presence as a moral role model. The facts show a lag in educators' understanding of digital ethics compared to the pace of technology adoption itself (Singun, 2025).

Teacher training curricula often focus solely on technical skills related to operating hardware and software, while neglecting aspects of data integrity and cyber ethics (Rachmad, 2023). In educational settings, digital plagiarism and the irresponsible use of artificial intelligence are rampant among both teachers and students (Rai et al., 2026). Strengthening teachers' agency grounded in moral intelligence is necessary to bridge this ethical gap (Ogwueleka, 2025), so that technology can be used as a means to enhance human dignity.

There is a social movement among educators who are beginning to realize that algorithm-based standardization often reduces the uniqueness of each individual student. Teachers feel a conflict between the demands of a mechanistic system and their calling as educators who must value the diversity of potential (Johnson & Zhang, 2025). Communities of teachers have emerged that adopt holistic and humanistic approaches despite having to contend with rigid assessment systems. This demonstrates that prophetic leadership remains alive as an organic force that encourages teachers to retain autonomy over their pedagogical choices for the sake of the best interests of their students' character development (Rakha et al., 2025).

Current academic reviews indicate a significant shift in focus from traditional pedagogy toward the widespread integration of instructional technology, yet this often overlooks the dimension of educators' spirituality (Syukri & Rosyad, 2025). Much previous research has emphasized the effectiveness of using digital devices to improve students' cognitive achievements, while the aspect of teachers' moral integrity in virtual spaces has rarely been explored in depth (Zhao et al., 2024). Several studies have also highlighted the phenomenon of "identity disruption," in which teachers feel alienated from their original role as moral role models due to an excessive digital administrative burden. Technological literacy without a strong ethical foundation tends to result in mechanistic interactions and a loss of the spirit of education as a process of humanizing humanity (Stolpe & Hallström, 2024).

Recent literature has begun to explore the concept of teacher agency as the last line of defense against the automation of education; however, there remains a significant gap regarding how a leadership model rooted in prophetic values can be practically applied within a digital ecosystem (Röhl, 2025). Experts argue that prophetic leadership which encompasses the qualities of *sidiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* holds great potential to serve as an ethical compass for educators. However, most of the literature still places these values within the context of *pasantren* management or conventional schools; consequently, the application of this concept to navigate moral challenges in the era of artificial intelligence represents a critically

important yet under-explored discourse in reputable international journals.

The novelty of this research lies in its unique synthesis of the transcendental concept of prophetic leadership with the technical dynamics of the digital education ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on digital skills, this study positions prophetic leadership as an active navigational strategy to preserve teachers' agency and moral authority amid the onslaught of algorithms. This study offers a new perspective: that moral integrity is not an obstacle to technological innovation, but rather a key prerequisite for ensuring that digital transformation does not reduce the teacher's role to that of a mere technical operator, but instead preserves their role as a sovereign leader of civilization (Katyendo & de Souza, 2022).

This research is urgently needed, given that the accelerated adoption of artificial intelligence in education risks creating a crisis of professional identity and the dehumanization of learning. Without a strong ethical framework such as prophetic leadership teachers will lose their agency and integrity, thereby threatening to permanently undermine the very essence of education as a process of nation-building in this era of disruption. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the role of prophetic leadership as a strategic tool for teachers in navigating the challenges of moral integrity and professional agency within an increasingly complex digital educational ecosystem.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' prophetic leadership practices in maintaining moral integrity and professional agency amid the digital transformation of education (Hussain, 2025). This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by teachers as they navigate changes in technology-based learning systems. The research was conducted at SMA NU Genteng, an educational institution actively integrating digital technology into the learning process. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their involvement in implementing digital learning and educational policy-making (Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2024, 2025, 2026; Htay et al., 2025; Jaafar et al., 2025; Muhlasin et al., 2026; Nashrullah et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025). The informants consisted of the principal, the vice principal, senior teachers, subject teachers, and teachers actively involved in technology-based learning innovations.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Khan et al., 2025). Observations were conducted to directly observe digital learning practices, patterns of interaction between teachers and students, and the implementation of prophetic leadership values in daily educational activities (Uluma & Jamroji, 2026). In-depth interviews were used to explore teachers' experiences, perspectives, and strategies in upholding the values of *sidiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* amid the challenges of educational digitization (Ramdani et al., 2025). Meanwhile, documentation involved reviewing various school documents, educational policies, teacher professional development programs, and digital records relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher carried out the process of selecting, grouping, and simplifying data based on the themes of prophetic leadership and teacher agency (Wardana et al., 2023). The next stage involved presenting the data in the form of descriptive narratives, which facilitated the researcher's identification of patterns, relationships, and meanings emerging from the field. Furthermore, conclusions are drawn iteratively and

continuously verified throughout the research process (Hamilaturroyya & Hadi, 2025).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants, while methodological triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by reconfirming the results of data interpretation with the informants to ensure that the meanings were consistent with the experiences they described (Vella, 2024). Through these procedures, this study is expected to produce findings that are credible, valid, and scientifically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Digital Transformation Based on the Value of *Sidiq*: Maintaining Authenticity and Integrity in the Virtual Space

Teachers internalize the value of *sidiq* (integrity) as the foundation for using digital devices. Teachers' agency is manifested through their ability to verify the ethical soundness of content before presenting it to students (Januaripin et al., 2025). Teachers do not relinquish authority to algorithms entirely but actively curate content to ensure the accuracy of information (Mouta et al., 2025). Amid the disruption caused by AI, educators serve as "ethical filters" to ensure that knowledge transfer remains grounded in the value of truth (Solihutauafa, 2025). This practice demonstrates that technology actually strengthens the teacher's role as a moral guardian in cyberspace. As expressed in the interview with a subject teacher below.

"Technology may provide thousands of instant answers, but my job is to ensure that students uphold the value of Sidiq. I use apps not to spy on them, but to instill the awareness that honesty in the digital world is just as important as it is in the real world." (Subject teacher).

The results of this study indicate that prophetic leadership through the value of *sidiq* serves as a bulwark of teachers' identity amid a flood of biased information. Teachers' professional agency is not diminished by artificial intelligence but is strengthened through their role as guardians of the authenticity of knowledge. Teachers have successfully demonstrated that moral integrity is the compass that prevents educational disorientation in the digital age, where truth is often distorted by the speed of unfiltered information. This aligns with (Biesta, 2023) argument that being a good teacher goes beyond mere technical competence; rather, it involves deep moral judgment in every pedagogical action (Biesta & Stengel, 2016).

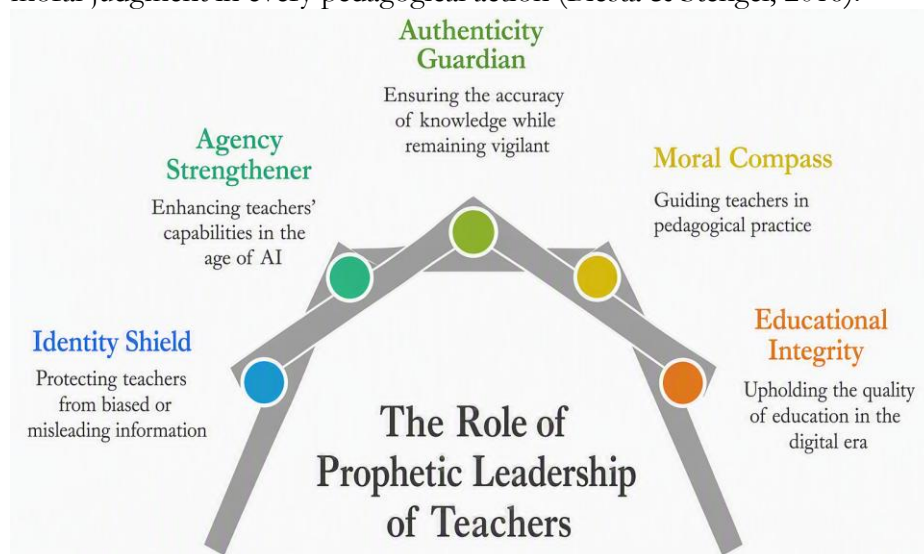


Fig 1. The Prophetic Role of Teachers

This infographic illustrates the five main pillars of the Prophetic Leadership Role of Teachers, arranged to form a protective arch in the digital and AI era. These five pillars Fortress of Identity (blue), Empowerment of Agency (light green), Guardian of Authenticity (dark green) at the apex of the structure, Moral Compass (yellow), and Educational Integrity (orange) are interconnected to filter out biased information, enhance teachers' competencies, and uphold the truth of knowledge and teaching ethics. Overall, this image underscores that no matter how advanced technology becomes, a teacher's moral character and spiritual leadership remain the primary foundation that can never be replaced by artificial intelligence.

Reconstructing Trust: Navigating Accountability and Agency in Digital Management

The value of *amanah* (responsibility) serves as a driving force for teachers to adopt digital administrative systems. Rather than viewing online reporting as a burden, teachers see it as a form of accountability to the public and to God (Akilah et al., 2026). Teachers' agency emerges through innovations that align technical efficiency with pedagogical depth; they use administrative automation to free up more time for direct character guidance (Dianto et al., 2025). This strategy transforms technology from a tool of surveillance into an instrument of empowerment that preserves the human touch in education. As expressed in an interview with Guru Progresi, below.

"Filling out digital reports is my duty to the system, but my moral responsibility to the students is far greater. I expedite administrative tasks in the app so I can have more time to directly guide the children's character development." (Progressive Teacher).

These findings suggest that prophetic leadership can transform teachers' perceptions of technology from a burden into a tool for empowerment. The value of trust provides teachers with internal motivation to go beyond rigid standard operating procedures in order to maintain their professional autonomy. By mastering technology, teachers regain control over their time and can return to the essence of their role as educators namely, educating people, rather than merely entering data. Teachers' agency is crucial for balancing institutional demands for digitalization with their individual identities as agents of social change who possess strong moral integrity.

Table 1. Empowered Teachers in the Age of Technology

Aspect	Interpretation	Implication
Technology Perception	From an administrative burden to a means of empowerment	Provides intrinsic motivation to go beyond rigid SOPs; teachers perceive technology as supportive rather than restrictive
Trustworthiness Value (Amanah)	Teachers maintain professional autonomy with integrity	Strengthens teachers' professional responsibility and integrity
Technology Mastery	Restores teachers' control over their time	Teachers can focus on the essence of educating individuals rather than merely entering data
Teacher Agency	Balances digital demands and individual identity	Teachers emerge as agents of social change with strong moral integrity

The table maps out a conceptual framework regarding the transformation of the teacher's role in the digital age through systematic relationships between its aspects, interpretations, and implications in the world of education. This framework explains that the shift in the perception of technology from an administrative burden to a means of empowerment leads to a sense of support among teachers, reinforced

by the value of trust as an internal motivation to maintain professional autonomy beyond rigid standard operating procedures (SOPs). Furthermore, technological proficiency is interpreted as a tool for reclaiming control over one's time so that teachers can focus on the essence of educating people rather than merely entering data, which ultimately strengthens teachers' agency as a counterbalance to digital demands and as agents of social change with strong moral integrity.

Harmonizing *Tabligh* and *Fathanah*: An Empathetic Communication Strategy in the Digital Pedagogical Space

The integration of the values of *tabligh* (conveying the truth) and *fathanah* (intelligence) is key to breaking through impersonal digital barriers (Wahib, 2025). Teachers are transforming into intelligent digital communicators who utilize social media to convey moral messages to Generation Z (Ainun et al., 2025). Teachers' agency is manifested through the courage to disrupt conventional methods with creative content without compromising ethical substance. Digital intelligence (*fathanah*) serves as a bridge to ensure that the vision of education remains relevant to the reality of students' current digital lives. As expressed in an interview with Religion Teacher, below.

"Carrying out the tabligh mission in this era demands fathanah's creativity. I can't just lecture through an online meeting app; I have to be able to tap into their way of thinking through visual and interactive content so that the moral message is conveyed in a way they value." (Religion Teacher).

The interview above underscores that prophetic leadership requires teachers to be astute and adaptive digital communicators. Successfully navigating the digital ecosystem depends heavily on teachers' agility in framing moral values in technological language that students can understand without losing their ethical substance. Teachers' agency here manifests as intellectual leadership capable of channeling the tide of disruption into a means of character building that emphasizes the importance of digital character education through an adaptive and connected approach, ensuring that technology serves as an accelerator of the educators' own humanistic values. The implementation of these findings is also supported by documentation of activities shown in the image below:



<https://share.google/Q5ChCcuFie446tVC3>



<https://jatim.times.co.id/news/berita/rRK1OFQ6U/SMA-Islam-NU-Pujon-Manfaatkan-AI-untuk-Branding-Sekolah>

Fig 2. AI-Based School Branding Innovations

Both images illustrate one form of digital technology implementation in an educational setting through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a medium for communication and for enhancing the image of educational institutions. This documentation demonstrates that digital transformation extends beyond learning to include institutional communication strategies aimed at fostering community engagement and strengthening the school's identity in the digital age. In the context of this study, the use of AI represents the implementation of the value of *fathanah* that is, the wisdom of teachers and educational institutions in selecting communication strategies that adapt to technological advancements. Meanwhile, the value of *tabligh* is reflected in the ability to convey educational messages creatively, communicatively, and in a way that is easily accepted by the public and students alike through digital media. Thus, technology is not positioned as an end in itself, but rather as an instrument to expand the reach of educational values without losing the moral substance that lies at the core of prophetic leadership. These visual findings reinforce the results of interviews with informants, which confirm that teachers must not only be proficient in technology but also be able to translate moral values into forms of digital communication that are relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z. Therefore, the harmonization of *tabligh* and *fathanah* serves as a crucial foundation for the development of pedagogical communication that is empathetic, innovative, and consistently focused on the character development of students.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that prophetic leadership plays a strategic role in maintaining moral integrity and strengthening teachers' professional agency amid the evolving digital education ecosystem. The value of *sidiq* serves as an ethical foundation that guides teachers in verifying, curating, and filtering information so that the learning process remains oriented toward truth and honesty. In this context, teachers are not merely users of technology but act as guardians of the authenticity of knowledge and moral role models for students. The value of *Amanah* has proven capable of reshaping teachers' perceptions of digital technology transforming it from a mere administrative requirement into a tool for professional empowerment. Effective use of technology enables teachers to manage administrative tasks more efficiently, thereby freeing up more time to carry out their pedagogical functions, foster character development, and provide more humanistic guidance to students. This situation strengthens teachers' agency as active agents who retain autonomy in determining the direction of education.

Furthermore, the harmonization of the values of *tabligh* and *fathanah* demonstrates that the success of digital education is determined not only by technological proficiency but also by teachers' ability to communicate moral values in a creative, adaptive, and relevant manner that aligns with the characteristics of the digital generation. Teachers are expected to become digital communicators capable of integrating technological skills with ethical intelligence so that technology serves as a medium for character building, rather than merely a tool for conveying information. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on prophetic leadership by positioning it as an ethical framework for navigating the challenges of digital education. Practically, the study's findings have implications for educational institutions and policymakers in developing programs to strengthen teacher competencies that focus not only on technological literacy but also on reinforcing moral and spiritual values as the foundation of educators' professionalism.

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Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education

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