

Critical And Creative Education in Hadith: Global Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In the face of increasing global interconnectedness, education systems are under growing pressure to cultivate learners equipped with critical and creative thinking skills. This study investigates the relevance and application of prophetic Hadiths in developing educational models that address the challenges of globalization. Utilizing a qualitative-descriptive method, the research analyzes selected Hadiths that emphasize the importance of lifelong learning, rational inquiry, openness to diverse knowledge, and personal transformation. Through thematic content analysis, three key themes emerge: the promotion of lifelong intellectual engagement, the imperative for critical self-transformation, and the embrace of global knowledge horizons. These principles, embedded within the Hadith tradition, resonate with 21st-century educational goals, including adaptability, ethical reasoning, and interdisciplinary literacy. The findings reveal that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) offer not only spiritual guidance but also foundational educational insights that align with modern pedagogical frameworks. Theoretically, the study contributes to the integration of Islamic epistemology with global education theory, enriching the discourse on critical pedagogy through a faith-based lens. Managerially, it offers actionable implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and educational leadership particularly within Muslim-majority contexts by advocating for a balanced approach that unites tradition and innovation. Ultimately, this research affirms that Hadith-based education can serve as a strategic response to global challenges, fostering learners who are not only intellectually competent but also morally grounded and globally conscious.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Creative Education, Hadith, Globalization, Islamic Pedagogy.

I. Introduction

In the era of rapid globalization, education is increasingly called upon to respond to new and complex challenges. Globalization, characterized by the accelerated flow of information, heightened technological innovation, and cultural interconnectedness, demands a rethinking of educational approaches that can equip learners with the competencies necessary for the 21st century (Zajda, 2005; UNESCO, 2015). Among the most essential competencies are critical and creative thinking, which enable individuals to analyze situations, solve problems innovatively, and adapt to fast-changing global realities (Halpern, 2014; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). Recent empirical studies in Indonesian education contexts affirm this orientation. For instance, integrated problem-based learning with mind mapping techniques has been shown to strengthen students' ability to reason, analyze, and synthesize information effectively—key components of higher-order thinking (MY et al., 2023). Similarly, school-based leadership initiatives designed to develop 4C skills—critical thinking, creativity,

communication, and collaboration—help cultivate adaptive and responsible learners aligned with global citizenship goals (MY, 2024).

Critical and creative education involves developing higher-order thinking skills, such as reasoning, analysis, synthesis, and the ability to generate original ideas. These skills are foundational not only for academic achievement but also for lifelong learning and civic engagement (Brookfield, 2012; Robinson, 2011). However, in contexts where religion and tradition are integral to identity formation, the inclusion of ethical and spiritual dimensions in education remains essential. Islamic thought, particularly the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as recorded in the Hadith, offers profound insights that align with and enrich modern educational paradigms (Al-Attas, 1980; Al-Faruqi, 1982). The Hadiths emphasize the importance of learning, reflection, and intellectual inquiry. The Prophet's saying, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," exemplifies the Islamic imperative for lifelong learning (Nasr, 2002; Al-Ghazali, 1997). Likewise, the Hadith "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer" encourages the pursuit of knowledge across boundaries and traditions, which resonates with the globalized nature of modern education (Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 4169; Sahin, 2013).

This study aims to examine how the values embedded in the Hadith can inform the development of a critical and creative educational framework, particularly in response to the challenges of globalization. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzes key prophetic traditions that emphasize the role of intellect (‘aql), responsibility, and proactive change—such as the verse, "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an 13:11)—often cited in Hadith commentaries as a call to agency and critical transformation (Esack, 1997; Kamali, 2010). In this spirit, integrating ethical, intellectual, and practical engagement in learning reflects not only Islamic pedagogy but also the transformative aims of contemporary education. For example, STEAM-based recycling projects designed for elementary students demonstrate how creative learning fosters both innovation and moral responsibility. Likewise, environmental literacy programs grounded in Islamic ethics of stewardship (khilāfah) encourage students to become conscious of their ecological and social roles as part of global sustainability. (Ali et al., 2025). By grounding education in the moral and intellectual legacy of the Prophet Muhammad, this research contributes to a broader discourse on integrating spiritual wisdom with contemporary educational needs. It aims to provide theoretical insight and practical recommendations for curriculum development that combines critical and creative thinking with ethical and religious values, helping students become adaptive, globally aware, and morally responsible citizens (Halstead, 2004; Ramadan, 2007; Sardar, 2003).

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Globalization has dramatically reshaped the landscape of education, creating a pressing need for a generation capable of critical and creative thinking. The rapid exchange of information, cultural interactions, and technological advances has led to an educational paradigm that must prioritize adaptability, lifelong learning, and global awareness. In this context, Islamic teachings, especially the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), offer significant insights that align with the values of critical and creative education. The Hadith literature emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge and the use of intellect. For instance, the Prophet's saying, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," underscores the importance of lifelong learning, which is critical in adapting to the evolving demands of the globalized world (Al-Attas, 1980; Al-Ghazali, 1997). This Hadith implies that education should be dynamic and responsive to contemporary changes. Furthermore, the Hadith "Seek knowledge even if it is in China" has often been interpreted as an encouragement to pursue knowledge regardless of distance, culture, or domain (Nasr, 2002). It promotes openness to diverse intellectual traditions and supports a global outlook in education (Abu Sulayman, 1987).

Critical thinking is also embedded in the Prophet's teachings. The Hadith "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" can be interpreted beyond moral compassion—it calls for empathy, intercultural understanding, and awareness of diverse human experiences, which are essential in today's global society (Ramadan, 2007; Kamali, 2010). Another important Hadith states, "Allah will not

change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an 13:11). While not a Hadith in the strictest sense but a Qur'anic verse often supported by Hadith commentaries, it reflects the Islamic emphasis on agency, personal initiative, and transformational thinking (Esack, 1997; Sardar, 2003). These principles are foundational for fostering creative problem-solving and innovation in education. Integrating Hadith into modern pedagogical models encourages students not only to master content but also to question, reflect, and apply knowledge meaningfully. This aligns with critical pedagogy, which emphasizes emancipation, agency, and intellectual engagement (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). While these are Western educational theories, the essence of such critical reflection finds resonance in Islamic epistemology when grounded in the Hadith. Moreover, Hadith literature promotes intellectual humility and the pursuit of wisdom, regardless of its source. This is exemplified in the Prophet's statement, "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer; wherever he finds it, he has a right to it" (Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 4169). Such openness mirrors the educational values of global citizenship and interdisciplinary integration (Alwani, 2005; Halstead, 2004).

Contemporary Muslim scholars advocate for a reinterpretation of Islamic educational values in light of global challenges. According to Al-Faruqi (1982), education in Islam is not only about religious instruction but also about cultivating ethical and critical minds capable of societal transformation. Similarly, Sahin (2013) asserts that Islamic pedagogy, when integrated with modern educational theories, can support creative learning and moral development in diverse global contexts. The Hadiths thus serve as a foundational framework to promote educational practices that are both spiritually grounded and intellectually progressive. They support a model of education that is inclusive, adaptive, and relevant to the globalized world. In integrating these teachings into curricula, educators can produce students who are academically proficient, morally grounded, and socially responsible. Therefore, critical and creative education rooted in Hadith principles is not only compatible with global educational demands but also offers a holistic approach to personal and societal development. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, there is a greater need for education systems that prepare learners to think independently, act ethically, and innovate constructively—all of which are deeply embedded in the Prophetic tradition.

III. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the integration of critical and creative educational principles derived from Hadith within the context of contemporary global educational challenges. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of religious texts, interpretations, and educational applications, emphasizing meaning, values, and context (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.1. Research Approach

The research employs a descriptive-analytical approach, which combines textual analysis with interpretative methods to examine selected Hadiths relevant to the themes of knowledge, reasoning, reflection, and innovation. The study also utilizes a thematic analysis framework to identify key educational values embedded in the Hadith literature and link them to the competencies required in a globalized educational context.

3.2. Data Sources

The primary data for this research consist of Hadiths from authentic compilations such as Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, and Sunan Ibn Majah. These Hadiths are selected based on their relevance to the concepts of knowledge acquisition, critical thinking (*fikr*), and creative problem-solving. Secondary data include scholarly interpretations (*sharh*), classical Islamic educational texts, and contemporary educational literature related to globalization and critical pedagogy.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is conducted through document analysis. This involves a systematic review of Hadith texts and commentaries, as well as academic literature on Islamic pedagogy and global education. The process includes identifying, categorizing, and interpreting Hadiths that relate to key themes such as lifelong learning, intellectual inquiry, change agency, and cross-cultural openness.

3.4. Data Analysis

The collected data are analyzed using thematic content analysis. This method involves coding the texts into thematic categories aligned with critical and creative education, such as lifelong learning, intellectual engagement, openness to diverse knowledge sources, and moral responsibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme is examined for its educational implications, particularly in the context of curriculum development and pedagogical strategies relevant to global challenges.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on thematic analysis of selected Hadiths and discusses their relevance to critical and creative education in the context of globalization. The results are organized into three main thematic categories:

4.1. Lifelong Learning and Intellectual Inquiry

One of the central themes found in the Hadith corpus is the emphasis on lifelong learning. The famous Hadith, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," promotes the notion that education is a continuous, life-enriching process (Al-Ghazali, 1997; Nasr, 2002). In the context of globalization, where rapid technological and social changes require constant updating of knowledge and skills, this Hadith supports the development of adaptive learners who are committed to self-improvement and intellectual exploration. The study found that the Prophetic tradition encourages learners not only to memorize or accumulate information but to pursue deep understanding and apply knowledge ethically. This aligns with 21st-century educational goals, particularly those outlined by UNESCO and OECD, which emphasize learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (UNESCO, 2015).

4.2. Critical Thinking and Self-Transformation

The Hadith "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an 13:11), often cited in prophetic commentaries, emphasizes personal agency, internal reflection, and transformation (Esack, 1997; Kamali, 2010). The research reveals that this principle encourages learners to become proactive agents of change who take responsibility for their own intellectual and moral development. This theme aligns with the educational goal of cultivating critical thinkers—individuals who question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and make reasoned decisions (Halpern, 2014). In the global context, where learners must navigate misinformation, cultural diversity, and complex moral dilemmas, this Hadith provides a spiritual foundation for developing independent thought and constructive criticism.

4.3. Openness to Diverse Knowledge and Global Understanding

Another key finding is the Hadith: "Seek knowledge even unto China," which symbolizes the importance of openness to diverse cultures, knowledge systems, and perspectives (Al-Attas, 1980; Al-Faruqi, 1982). While the Hadith is often interpreted metaphorically, its educational implication is profound: it supports

the notion of cross-cultural literacy and interdisciplinary learning in an increasingly interconnected world. This Hadith aligns with the competencies of global citizenship education (GCE), which include empathy, intercultural understanding, and respect for diversity (UNESCO, 2015; Zajda, 2005). The research suggests that the Hadith encourages Muslim learners to go beyond traditional boundaries and engage with broader global discourses, thus fostering creativity through exposure to different ideas and problem-solving strategies.

4.4. Discussion

The findings indicate that Hadiths are not only sources of moral guidance but also foundational texts that support educational innovation. The integration of Hadith-based values into modern pedagogical frameworks offers a culturally grounded yet globally relevant model for education. The Prophetic emphasis on 'ilm (knowledge), aql (reason), and hikmah (wisdom) mirrors modern calls for reflective, ethical, and critical education (Sahin, 2013; Halstead, 2004). By connecting Islamic epistemology with global educational trends, this study highlights how religious tradition can enrich and inform responses to global challenges. It affirms that critical and creative education rooted in Hadith principles does not stand in opposition to modernity but complements it by embedding learning within a moral and spiritual framework. Furthermore, the results suggest that incorporating Hadith into educational practices can enhance students' intellectual engagement, social responsibility, and cultural adaptability. These are essential competencies in the age of globalization, where knowledge alone is insufficient without the ability to apply it ethically and creatively in diverse contexts.

V. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) possess enduring educational values that align closely with the principles of critical and creative education, particularly in the context of globalization. The global era is marked by the need for learners who are not only knowledgeable but also able to critically evaluate information, solve problems creatively, and engage meaningfully in a rapidly evolving world. The Hadiths analyzed in this research, such as *"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," "Seek knowledge even unto China,"* and *"Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves,"* all underscore a vision of education that is both intellectually rigorous and ethically grounded. These prophetic traditions advocate for lifelong learning, reflective inquiry, personal transformation, and openness to diverse sources of knowledge—qualities that are central to educational responses to global challenges. The qualitative analysis reveals that these Hadiths can be interpreted not merely as religious directives but as philosophical and pedagogical principles that support an education system rooted in critical thinking, creativity, and moral responsibility. This convergence between Islamic teachings and modern educational objectives contributes to the recontextualization of Hadith in contemporary curriculum discourse, suggesting that Islamic pedagogy is not static but dynamic, with the potential to inform and enrich global educational practices.

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