Empowering Framework Sunnah Values: An Ethical Framework for Research in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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ABSTRACT

The era of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought profound transformations to the landscape of modern research by driving productivity, innovation, and the generation of new knowledge. AI has been widely applied across various domains, including healthcare, education, information technology, and the social sciences. However, these advancements also raise serious ethical concerns, such as the risks of plagiarism, data manipulation, algorithmic bias, and privacy intrusion. In this regard, the present study aims to develop an ethical research framework grounded in the values of the Sunnah to guide researchers in addressing the challenges of scholarly inquiry in the age of AI. This study employs a qualitative approach through document analysis, drawing on two primary sources: religious texts, such as the Prophetic traditions (hadith) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) concerning honesty, trustworthiness, itqan (diligence), ihsan (excellence), and tabayyun (verification) as well as academic writings that examine Islamic ethics and research integrity. The data were thematically analyzed to identify how the values of the Sunnah can be applied as ethical guidelines in AI-driven research. The findings indicate that the incorporation of Sunnah-based values such as transparency, verification (tabayyun), diligence (itqan), and ihsan plays a pivotal role in maintaining academic integrity, enhancing research quality, and preventing the misuse of AI technologies. This study underscores that an ethical framework informed by the Sunnah is not only relevant in regulating research practices but also vital in ensuring that AI development serves the benefit of the ummah and aligns with the principles of universal well-being.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Research Ethics, Sunnah Values, Transparency, Verification, Diligence, Ihsan

INTRODUCTION

The era of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has ushered in significant transformations within the landscape of modern research, spanning the social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, education, and information technology. The ability of AI to mimic human cognitive functions such as learning, problem-solving, and pattern recognition makes it a powerful tool for processing large-scale and complex datasets (Dong et al., 2020). In the healthcare domain, for instance, AI has been deployed for disease diagnosis, treatment outcome prediction, health record management, and clinical decision support (Wang, 2017). Such applications enhance the efficiency of healthcare delivery, reduce costs, and accelerate treatment processes (Wang, 2017). In education, AI functions as a virtual tutor that adapts to individual learning styles and needs, offering continuous access without time limitations while reducing students' fear or hesitation to ask questions (Hemachandran, 2022). Within research contexts, AI technologies expedite data analysis, improve data accuracy, and open new avenues of discovery across multiple

disciplines (Nawi et al, 2021). Moreover, AI contributes to increased productivity and innovation among researchers while simultaneously expanding the accessibility of knowledge (Nawi et al, 2021).

Nevertheless, these advancements are not without risks. In the healthcare sector, Wang (2017) highlights the potential dangers of uncontrolled AI applications, including privacy violations and data breaches. Within education, the integration of AI can limit emotional interaction between teachers and students, thereby impeding the development of human values (Hemachandran, 2022). This phenomenon may deprive students of essential experiences such as socialization and character formation (Hemachandran, 2022). Dwivedi et al (2021) further explain that while AI promises productivity and innovation, it also raises concerns regarding workforce displacement, global inequality, and broader socio-cultural implications. In addition, AI introduces various ethical dilemmas in research, including data misuse, excessive dependency, and the generation of fabricated content. The capacity of AI to provide information indiscriminately, without filtering between beneficial and harmful knowledge, heightens the risk of misuse (Hemachandran, 2022). Compounding this issue, the emergence of AI-generated content challenges conventional plagiarism detection methods, which struggle to identify complex paraphrasing and machine-generated texts (Ogwueleka, 2025).

According to al-Attas (1980), the ultimate purpose of knowledge is to cultivate *adab* a state in which a person acknowledges Allah SWT as Lord (*al-Rabb*), rather than merely fulfilling material needs or academic pursuits. In line with this view, knowledge derived from research should not only aim at producing new insights but must also uphold moral values rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Husin (n.d.) emphasizes that knowledge acquisition through Islamic research principles does not separate Islamic values from everyday life. Accordingly, values introduced by the Sunnah such as integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, and God-consciousness (*taqwa*) constitute foundational principles emphasized by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These values remain profoundly relevant for guiding researchers in the digital age. Hence, this study focuses on Sunnah-based values as the foundation for constructing an ethical research framework that can assist researchers in navigating the challenges of the AI era.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach in the form of document analysis. Data were collected from two primary sources: religious texts, specifically the Prophetic traditions (hadith) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that emphasize values such as transparency, verification (*tabayyun*), diligence (*itqan*), and excellence (*ihsan*), as well as academic writings related to Islamic ethics, academic integrity, and the application of Islamic values in research. The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to examine how Sunnah-based values can be applied in addressing the challenges of research in the AI era. These values were subsequently synthesized into a framework of research ethics designed to serve as a guiding principle for researchers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ethical Challenges of Research in the AI Era

The rapid advancement of AI has increasingly shaped the academic research landscape, yet it simultaneously raises serious concerns regarding research integrity (Arar et al, 2025; Adarkwah et al, 2023). According to Adarkwah et al (2023), there is growing apprehension over the inaccuracy or unreliability of AI-generated responses. Furthermore, its uncontrolled use may lead to plagiarism and compromise academic integrity, thereby necessitating the establishment of clear ethical guidelines (Adarkwah et al, 2023). Similarly, Zou & Schiebinger (2018) highlight the substantial risks posed by AI, particularly in relation to data and algorithmic bias, unconscious manipulation of data, and the lack of adequate checks and balances all of which may result in more severe forms of discrimination. While AI accelerates the generation of knowledge, it simultaneously heightens risks such as plagiarism, data manipulation, and insufficient oversight (Zou & Schiebinger, 2018). Moreover, moral accountability becomes increasingly ambiguous when AI systems generate false or misleading information (Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019). Hence, the need for robust ethical frameworks to regulate AI's role in research has become critical. In this regard, Elmahjub (2023) emphasizes that Islamic ethics are essential in providing guidance for the formulation of policies and regulations governing the use of AI.

Sunnah Values in Research Ethics

Al-Kubaisi (2024) argues that much of the current discourse on AI ethics is dominated by Western paradigms. Consequently, there is a need for multicultural approaches, including perspectives from Islam, to address the ethical challenges of AI. In this regard, al-Aidaros et al (2013) contend that Western ethical frameworks possess several limitations, particularly in determining what is right or wrong, and are therefore not comprehensive. Islamic ethics must therefore be offered to complement these shortcomings, thereby establishing a more robust, balanced, and contextually relevant framework for contemporary application (al-Aidaros et al, 2013). Mufid (2024) further emphasizes that the Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*) may serve as a moral foundation for AI development, particularly in addressing ethical challenges and human AI interactions. Within the realm of research, Al-Kubaisi (2024) underscores that research ethics and AI development must be grounded in the Sunnah as a legitimate framework. Moreover, *Sunnah*-based ethics should be integrated into AI research to ensure that moral values such as justice, trustworthiness, honesty, compassion, and human dignity are embedded in the design and use of AI technologies (Mufid, 2024). This study highlights four key *Sunnah* values that should be emphasized within the context of research in the AI era; transparency, verification (*tabayyun*), diligence (*itqan*), and *ihsan* (excellence in conduct).

Transparency

Transparency, which may also be understood as honesty and trustworthiness, is a fundamental principle in AI-assisted research. This value obliges researchers to remain accountable, truthful, and to refrain from plagiarism (Mustapha & Haron, 2025). The principle aligns with the Prophetic tradition that stresses honesty as a path to goodness, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: *"You must be honest, for honesty leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise"* (al-Bukhari & Muslim). In a broader sense, transparency is critically relevant when AI is used to manage personal data, as breaches of privacy and the exploitation of personal information carry serious implications not only ethical and security-related, but also legal (Veluru, 2024).

Verification (*Tabayyun*)

Verification refers to the act of investigating and ensuring the truth of information or claims. In research, verifying the authenticity and validity of data is paramount. Veluru (2024) highlights the role of explainable AI *(XAI)* in ensuring that AI driven decisions are interpretable and verifiable, thereby avoiding bias and misinterpretation. Cornelio et al (2025) also emphasize that verification is central to the credibility of AI-based research, ensuring that findings remain testable and trustworthy. More importantly, verification preserves both research integrity and public trust (Cornelio et al, 2025). This value resonates with the Prophetic tradition: *"It is enough of a lie for a person to narrate everything he hears"* (Muslim). Accordingly, data obtained through AI must be subjected to thorough verification to prevent inaccuracies and the dissemination of false information.

Diligence (Itqan)

The principle of *itqan* emphasizes meticulousness, systematic inquiry, and high-quality research. While AI can significantly facilitate research processes, all data and outputs must be carefully examined by researchers. Le Dinh et al (2025) assert that human researchers must review and validate AI-generated content to ensure that academic standards are met without introducing bias. This approach positions AI as an auxiliary tool rather than a replacement for researchers (Le Dinh et al, 2025). The principle reflects the Prophetic teaching: *"Indeed, Allah loves that when any one of you does a job, he does it with proficiency and excellence"* (Abu Ya'la & al-Tabarani).

Ihsan (Excellence in Conduct)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) described *ihsan* as: *"...to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (know that) Allah sees you"* (Muslim). *Ihsan* cultivates self-awareness and consciousness that Allah is ever-watchful, even in the absence of human scrutiny. This value prevents researchers from misusing AI technologies for personal gain, encouraging responsibility and moral excellence. Ahmad and Khadim (2025) highlight that *ihsan* motivates a Muslim not merely to fulfill obligations,

but to strive for the highest standards of moral conduct. Bukhari (2025) further explains that implementing *ihsan* within AI frameworks can actively contribute to individual and societal well-being. In research contexts, *ihsan* safeguards academic integrity, methodological rigor, and the orientation toward beneficial outcomes. Thus, research becomes not only a technical pursuit but also a morally grounded endeavor within the ethical framework of the *Sunnah*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents immense opportunities to advance innovation and research efficiency, yet it simultaneously generates ethical challenges that necessitate a robust framework grounded in Islamic values. The integration of *Sunnah* based principles namely transparency, verification (*tabayyun*), diligence (*itqan*) and *ihsan* constitutes a vital foundation for ensuring that AI-driven research is conducted with integrity, accountability, and moral consciousness. These values not only safeguard researchers against the misuse of technology, plagiarism, and data manipulation but also ensure that research outcomes contribute positively to the *ummah* while preserving human dignity and fundamental rights. Hence, embedding a Sunnah-based ethical framework does not merely guide researchers in producing valid and high-quality knowledge, it also ensures that the development of AI aligns with the principles of *maslahah* (public good) and universal well-being.

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