

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Each generation needs a role *model* that can be used as a reference in the formation of character, morality, and direction of life. These psychological needs are understood not as individual preferences, but as fundamental social mechanisms that affect the formation of ethics and competence. The concept *of role models* was first introduced by Robert K. Merton (1950) who explained that attitudes, values, and behaviors are learned through observation of figures who are considered ideal and respected (Murden, 2020:12). The concept was then strengthened through *the social learning theory* put forward by Albert Bandura which emphasized that human behavior can be imitated (modeled) from what is observed, both positive and negative behavior. The learning process takes place through four cognitive processes that determine whether the observed behavior will be imitated, namely *attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation*. (Saul McLeod, 2025).



Figure 1. 1 Four Mediation Processes in Bandura Observational Learning

(Source: Simply Psychology. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html> on September 30, 2025)

Furthermore, this principle of exemplification is governed by the concept *of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism* put forward by Albert Bandura as a framework that rejects linear cause and effect. This concept shows that three main factors, namely personal factors, namely personal factors, *behavior*, and environment, affect each other in a reciprocal and sustainable manner. The interaction implies that individuals are not only shaped by the environment, but can also influence the environment. For example, the new media environment is known to affect an individual's beliefs and *personality*, which further leads to behavioral changes. This dynamic cycle shows that changing the media environment can be used as a strategy to shape *personal* and moral values in the younger generation.

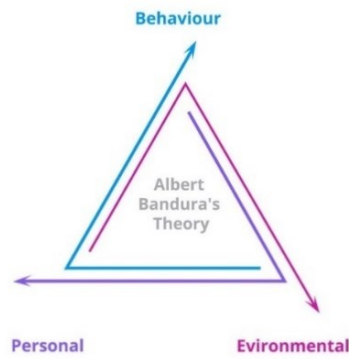


Figure 1. 2 Triadic Reciprocal Determinism in Bandura's Theory

(Source: Simply Psychology. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html> on September 30, 2025)

The involvement of these factors suggests that failure to exemplify, especially in the public sphere or the media (environmental factors), has the potential to undermine personal factors and ultimately lead behavior to deviance. When role models show integrity and good leadership, positive behavior tends to be imitated. On the contrary, the absence of credible role models has the potential to create deviant behavior and *role confusion* that is considered to endanger the mental stability of the next generation. The context of this study is centered on the psychosocial crisis experienced by young adults (Millennials and Gen Z). Within the framework of Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory, the phase is defined as the stage of *identity* versus *role confusion* which critically requires the presence of a stable and credible inspirational figure to direct the formation of identity and prevent role disorientation (Erikson, 1968).

The crisis of trust in leadership figures is reinforced by findings that show that the integrity of public officials as a representation of formal leadership has declined. This phenomenon is shown through the Anti-Corruption Behavior Index (IPAK) of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) which recorded a decrease, namely 3.93 in 2022, decreased to 3.92 in 2023 (BPS, 2023), and again fell to 3.85 in 2024 (BPS, 2024). Scores that are moving further away from the ideal number of 5 can be interpreted as an indication that unethical behavior is still allowed to take place and that social tolerance for corrupt practices is still found at alarming levels. This trend is reinforced by the findings that in 2024 the Corruption Eradication Commission noted that bribery and gratuities are still found in more than 90% of ministries/institutions (KPK, 2025), which shows that the moral and professional standards of institutions in Indonesia are still low. Academically, this condition is seen as producing an exemplary crisis in political leadership (Hamson, 2024), This condition can cause ethical

deterioration and increase the potential for national leadership crisis (Sapari, 2025). Leaders are also considered unable to carry out their mandates effectively due to the absence of integrity, commitment, and quality of communication (Biwilfa, 2023). The loss of interest of the younger generation in the field of leadership is driven by the perception that power is no longer associated with adequate integrity and morals, thus creating a void in leadership ethics that is seen as necessary in the formation of a moral national character (Aisyah & Fitriatin, 2025).



Figure 1. 3 Anti-Corruption Behavior Index (IPAK)

(Source: <https://www.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2024/07/15/2374/indeks-perilaku-anti-korupsi--ipak--indonesia-2024--sebesar-3-85--menurun-dibandingkan-ipak-2023-.html> on October 12, 2025)

The inspiration deficit that we see today requires a mature role model. This figure must not only be smart in the professional field, but must also have a strong moral foundation. Given that Indonesia is Muslim-majority, Islamic values should be the main compass for public figures and prospective leaders. The ideal role model must be able to reflect the value of these noble values, namely through solid spiritual integrity (*morals*). This is the essence of ideal Islamic leadership, a leader must be *the best exemplary uswatun hasanah* for the ummah (Mubarokah, 2024).

The deficits that are currently experienced by the younger generation are the deficit of leadership aspirations and the deficit of moral inspiration. A survey of students in East Java proved that respondents who chose to be ordinary members or were neutral towards leadership roles were much more numerous, reaching 76.4% of the total 102 respondents. This percentage far exceeds those who are interested, which is only 23.6%. This tendency to avoid the role of a leader is driven by a perception of high risk and lack of confidence (Author Survey, 2025).

This aspirational aversion is reinforced by a significant deficit of moral inspiration. As many as 93.3% of respondents expressed a high level of disappointment with public figures who commit corruption or dishonesty. This disappointment is triggered by the dominance of unethical news in the media, which is very often encountered by 87.2% of respondents. Therefore, it is not surprising that 78.4% of respondents stated that it is currently difficult to find a truly inspiring and relevant leadership role model (Author Survey, 2025). This gap between the expectations and reality of the leader figure logically destroys motivation, reinforces a reluctance to be a leader, and justifies their choice to avoid risk in leadership roles.

In addition to internal problems regarding the crisis of integrity and leadership skills, the mindset of the younger generation is also influenced by external influences in the form of shifting content preferences as a result of globalization and the entry of digital entertainment. This trend causes young people to be overexposed and dominated by digital media, social media, and foreign culture, which gradually erodes local moral and cultural roots (Claudia et al., 2025). This shift is reflected in the tendency of many young people to be more familiar with foreign fictional figures such as Marvel or DC Comics characters than local historical figures. This condition contributes to the increasingly limited knowledge of the younger generation of historical figures who actually have an important position in the journey of Indonesian culture and civilization (Siregar et al., 2024). In fact, in Indonesia itself, which is not the majority of Muslims, there are figures who display ideal leadership. The lack of knowledge about them makes relevant examples of leadership from local history rarely serve as examples.

This exemplary emptiness is the focus of the proposed solution in this study. The figure of Joko Samudro, more commonly known as Sunan Giri, is believed to be the most ideal historical role model to answer leadership crises. His main relevance lies in his extraordinary dual role as a scholar as well as a king (*pandhita queen*). This role, recorded in classical historical sources such as *Serat Walisana* and *Babad Tanah Jawi*, demonstrates Sunan Giri's unique ability to fuse spiritual authority with political power (Pigeaud & Graaf, 1976). In addition to political and religious leadership, he was also a visionary cultural leader. Sunan Giri uses an acculturative approach, even through children's toy songs (*Cublak-Cublak Suweng*), to instill the values of monotheism and morality (Sunyoto, 2017:216). Sunan Giri represents a leadership model that combines strategy, morals, and cultural prowess. Unfortunately, this exemplary figure has not appeared adequately in popular media accessed by digital audiences.

Despite having high potential for example, in reality, the average young generation is still unfamiliar with the stories of leaders such as Joko Samudro Samudro. A survey on young

people's understanding and interest in the figure of Wali Songo has been conducted by the author, which shows that 86.3% of respondents have heard of Joko Samudro but 85.3% only know at first glance without details (Writer's Survey, 2025). The alienation of the audience occurs due to the lack of contact of the younger generation with historical storytelling formats that are felt to be less relevant to their current digital lifestyles. This creates a media gap in transmitting relevant examples. The lack of exposure to the stories of moral local leaders makes it difficult for the younger generation to find role *models*. However, this gap can actually be used as an opportunity. By utilizing the right media, by trying to present character education that focuses on the example of Joko Samudro, so that it can foster ethical *personal* and strengthen the moral foundation of the nation's next generation.

The effectiveness of the delivery of character education teachings can be realized by the use of media that is widely consumed by the younger generation, considering that the high duration of time they spend on the platform indicates the significance of media in their lives (Santrock, 2017:391). Based on an online survey conducted from October 5 to December 3, 2025 on 102 young adult respondents in East Java, data shows that there is a dominance of gadget use outside of academic or work interests. As many as 86.3% of respondents spent four hours or more per day, even 41.2% of them used devices for more than eight hours per day for non-academic purposes. Accessing social media is the most frequently enjoyed activity (83.3%), followed by watching youtube videos and listening to music/podcasts (69.6%).

Although social media and *streaming* are the platforms with the highest frequency of consumption, this dominance tends to be supported by short-form content that is inadequate for instilling moral values and character in depth. To transmit complex leadership values, a medium with a long-form narrative is needed. In this context, *online* comics are a strategic choice, because short formats (such as videos on social media) have duration limitations that limit the development of nuanced narratives and the delivery of complex value propositions (Manic, 2024). Therefore, although online comic reading activities are in the fourth position with significant relevance for 51% of respondents, this medium is the most effective. Online comics are able to accommodate the in-depth storytelling needed to instill moral values, while also being able to utilize promotion through short content on the most dominant platform, namely social media (83.3%), as an audience guide to the *long-form* narrative (Author Survey, 2025).

Basically, comics are defined as a series of images or symbols that are arranged in a planned manner to create a sequence of events to convey information and attract the attention of readers (McCloud, 2022:9). In the context of communication in the cultivation of values,

comics have a crucial role as a medium for conveying narratives and a strong medium to reflect on human experience, delving into themes such as morality, courage, and personal growth. Thus, comics are able to explore in depth how personal growth and moral decision-making are intertwined (Trie et al., 2025), making them a very effective tool for transmitting leadership values.

In line with the development of globalization and technology since the era of personal computers in the 1990s, the form of comics has transformed from a print format to a digital form such as digital comics (*webcomics*) with the concept of *Infinite Canvas* (McCloud, 2022:213). This digitalization is an inevitable consequence of advances in art technology, offering new alternatives that are more accessible to readers to enjoy digital comic content. The accessibility of digital comics is currently supported by a variety of digital platforms, including *Line Webtoon*, Manga Plus, Mangatoon, and Komikomi. Among these platforms, *Line Webtoon* occupies a dominant position as the most popular on the Google Play Store, characterized by a download number that exceeds 100 million times and has an excellent reputation with a rating of 4.7/5.

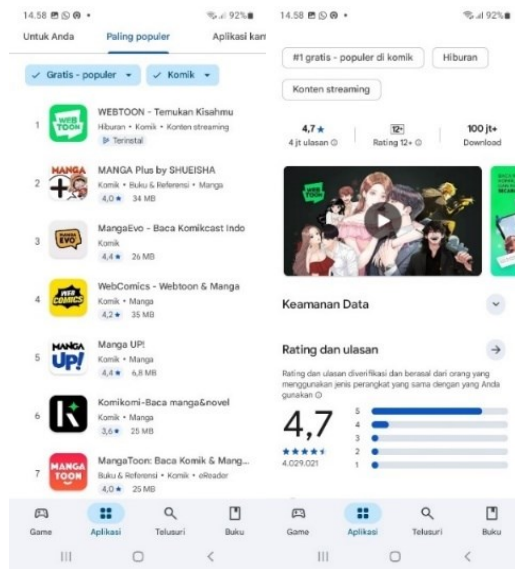


Figure 1. 4 The most popular comic apps on Google *Playstore* and ratings  
(Source: Source: Google Playstore on October 12, 2025)

The survey conducted on 102 young adult respondents in East Java (October 5 to December 3, 2025) aimed to identify their preference for *webcomics* as an entertainment medium. The survey results show a high level of acceptance of this format, where 92.2% of respondents expressed interest in reading digital comics. Specifically, *the LINE Webtoon platform* dominated the preferences by being chosen by 81.4% of respondents, outperforming

the other six platforms. This popularity is due to its ease of access, wide variety of genres, and the (free) cost factor. This data is in line with the global industry demographic trend (2025) which reports that nearly 70% of *Webtoon* users are from the age range of 18 to 34 years old (Generation Z and Early Millennials), confirming that this platform is a highly effective communication channel to reach the target audience.

This design focuses on the appointment of the story of Joko Samudro, who represents *a leadership role model*, through digital comic media. It is intended as a contribution to overcoming the decline in morality in the younger generation in the midst of globalization challenges. The novelty of the research lies in the specific focus of his leadership values, which are presented in a webtoon digital comic format that suits the media preferences of current audiences.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

1. High disillusionment with formal leadership figures, as evidenced by the downward trend of BPS IPAK, has led to a Leadership Crisis and Moral Exemplary Deficit, as a result, the young adult generation (aged 18-25 years) experiences a lack of inspiration and is less motivated to become leaders with integrity.
2. This inspiration deficit is exacerbated by the Local Media and Knowledge Gap, where local role models who are ideal to fill the moral void, such as Joko Samudro, are isolated and poorly known (85.3% of respondents are unfamiliar). This happened because his story was not presented through a media format that was relevant to the digital lifestyle of Generation Z and Millennials.
3. Therefore, there is an Urgency for the Strategic Utilization of Digital Mediums: although webcomics have proven to be a very dominant entertainment medium among the target audience (81.4% chose *LINE Webtoon*), the potential of *this platform* as a character education medium based on local leadership values to overcome this moral deficit has not been strategically utilized.

## **1.3 Problem Formulation**

How to design *the "Joko Samudro" Webtoon* as a medium to instill the values of example and leadership for Muslim Youth Aged 18-25 Years?

#### **1.4 Problem Limitations**

1. The Design Focus only focuses on the main media, namely Digital Comics (vertical scroll format), as well as essential promotional supporting assets (trailers or key visuals).
2. The Target Audience of the Design is focused on Muslim Youth (ages 18–25, Emerging Adulthood), who are psychologically in the Identity vs. Role Confusion phase and make up the majority of Digital Comic readers.
3. The Digital Comic Narrative material is based on the story of Joko Samudro in his youth. The emphasis of the story is focused on the implementation of leadership values in Islam, especially on the aspects of character building, self-discipline, and perseverance. The story does not cover the entire biography until Sunan Giri became Sunan Giri, but focuses on the internal process of the character in leading himself as the initial foundation of a leader.

#### **1.5 Purpose of Planning**

Designed *the "Joko Samudro" Webtoon* as a medium to instill the values of exemplary and leadership for Muslim Youth Aged 18-25 Years.

#### **1.6 Benefits of Planning**

1. Presenting the narrative of Joko Samudro's youth with an emphasis on the basic values of leadership in Islam as a medium of inspiration for Muslim youth aged 18-25 years in building character (morals) and self-integrity.
2. Providing visual concepts and storytelling strategies in adapting historical-religious figures into modern *Webtoon* styles that are relevant to the tastes of young adult audiences without losing the essence of their spiritual value.
3. This design uses *Webtoons* as a new medium that is relevant to the daily lives of the younger generation, making it an easily accessible and popular source of information. Therefore, this design provides benefits, both for content creators and young audiences, namely by facilitating the development of narratives that are full of noble values and providing effective access for audiences to enjoy exemplary stories through the digital platforms they use

## 1.7 Design Framework

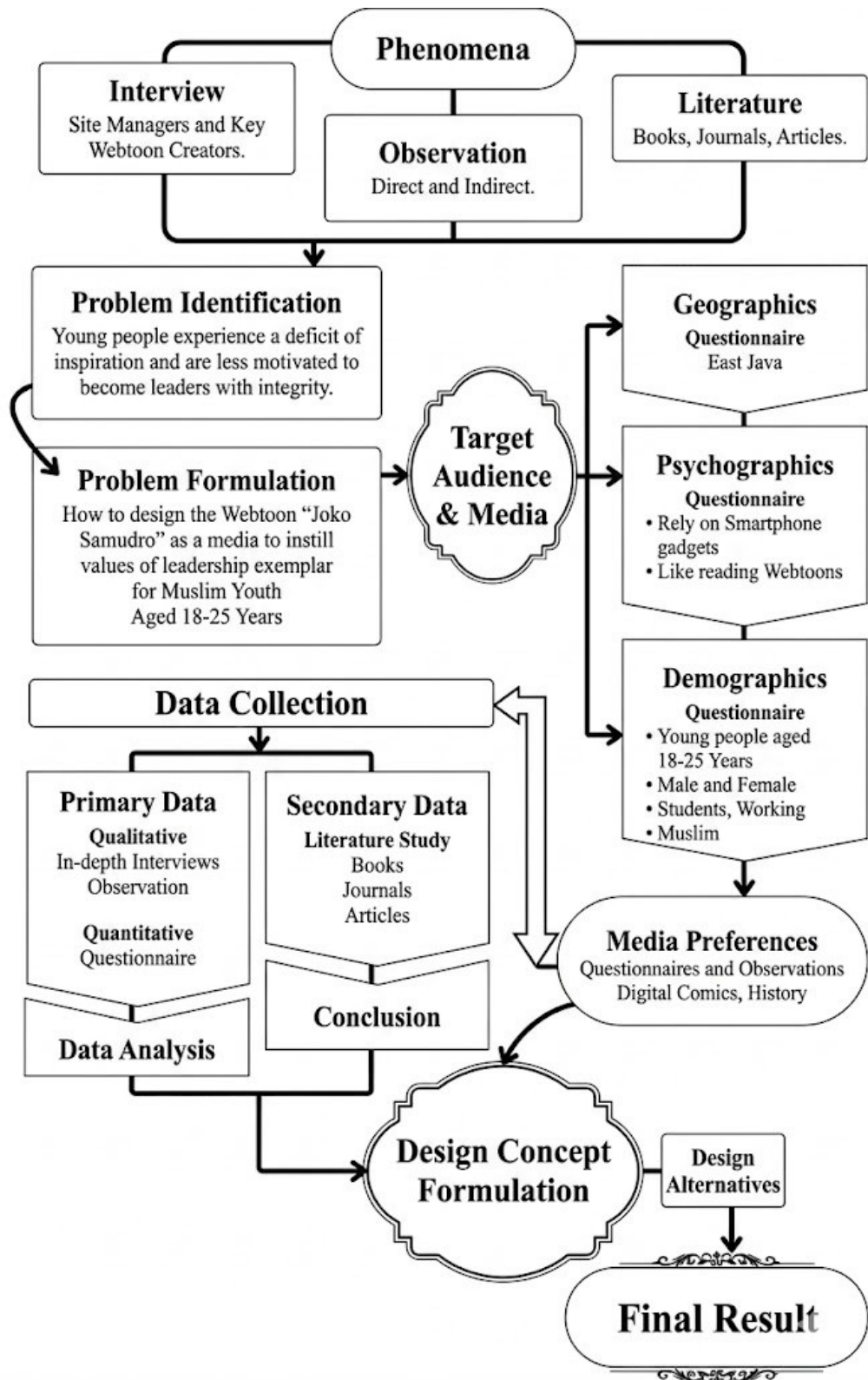


Figure 1. 5 Design framework  
(Source: Personal documentation)