

## **Hadith as a Source of Reference for Creative Thinking and Problem Solving among Muslim Students in Tertiary Education**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to highlight the relevance of Hadith in promoting creative thinking and problem solving among Muslim students at the tertiary level of education. This paper also emphasizes the importance of Hadith in providing guidance and examples to the future generation of Muslims in adopting creativity in thinking and in seeking appropriate solutions to life problems and issues. In addition, it seeks to address the importance of awareness among the young Muslim generation in making correct decisions relating to future endeavours in the challenging era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the impending era of Industrial Revolution 5.0. This paper is basically conceptual in nature. However, elements of quantitative data gathered by survey are included when addressing students' perception and outlook of Hadith and their application in the context of creative thinking and problem solving.*

**Keywords:** *Hadith. creative thinking, problem solving*

### **Introduction**

Hadith has been regarded as the foundation of Islamic civilization, and within Islam, the authority of hadith as a source for religious law and moral guidance ranks second only to that of the Quran. Its capacity in becoming a reference to human lives in general, is undeniable, In the field of creative thinking and problem solving, it provides enlightenment and pave the way for a more accurate and meaningful guidance to young Muslims in institutions of higher learning. This study explores the potentialities of Hadith as a reference for students in tertiary education employing creative thinking and problem solving.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the various ways in which Hadith can be utilized as a reference for creative thinking and problem solving among Muslim students in tertiary education. This study will contribute to the field of higher education studies by identifying the perception of students towards the significance of Hadith as a point of reference in their daily thinking and decision making activities. The data collected in this study will clarify the magnitude of possibilities for Hadith to be a reference in those activities.

### **Methodology**

A quantitative survey was utilized in this study. The researcher utilized an online Google form to gather data. The survey was sent to 66 respondents who studied Creative and Critical Thinking as a subject in the first degree programme at the Sultan Ahmad Shah Islamic College University, Kuantan, Pahang State, Malaysia. The survey design consisted of 5 statements and one that sought information on gender. The 5 statements are:

1. Islam encourages Muslims to be creative thinkers and problem solvers.
2. Muslims today lack creative thinking and problem solving skills.
3. The Quran mentions the importance of thinking.
4. Hadith / Sunnah provides many examples of creative thinking and problem solving.
5. Hadith / Sunnah is an important reference for Muslim students to become creative thinkers and problem solvers.

The respondents were asked to rank their responses based on a Likert Scale.

### **Literature review**

Thinking is a mental activity which comes naturally in all human beings. It helps to solve problems, find answers to questions, make decisions, and fulfill a need to understand something (Kandil, 2018). As such, thinking covers a wide area of our lives. We think about the important things in life as well as the little things in life. For students, their thinking would be more focused on understanding lectures and on their future career. On a lower level, they would be thinking about what they want to eat for breakfast, what shirt or dress to wear, and how to get to the campus on that day. Aiono (2012) highlighted that based on research done on the human brain, an average person thinks 70,000 thoughts on any single day. This shows that thinking occupies a huge amount of our time.

McWhorter (2008) identified six levels of thinking which are remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating. The first two levels encompass information-gathering skills and the next four levels relate to critical thinking skills. Remembering covers recalling and repeating information such as recalling names, dates, and memorizing definitions and events. Understanding involves comprehending ideas, rules, arrangements, following directions and explaining concepts. Applying consists of the application of knowledge and concepts to new realities and situations. Analyzing includes understanding relationships and breaking down complex information into simpler manageable pieces. Evaluating encompasses making judgements and assessing the value of information. Finally, creating, the highest level of thinking, refers to gathering ideas and information to create something in a unique way.

### **Creativity**

Creativity is a great asset to an individual. It is also regarded as a skill. Torrance (1990) stated that it is difficult and impossible to give a definition of creativity that is completely accurate because its characteristics are infinite and involve all five senses of a person. Davis (1992) believed that there is no consensus among researchers about what creativity is actually. De Bono (1967) regarded creativity as a skill that can be improved through skills training. Perkins (1984) suggested that creativity is a style or manner of how individuals organize abilities that they possess.

Franken (1998) viewed creativity as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining

ourselves and others. A creative person is able to view things in new ways or from a different perspective. He has the ability to generate new possibilities or new alternatives. Creativity measures not only the number of alternatives that people can generate but the uniqueness of those alternatives.

Often times, the idea of creativity is associated with the “right” brain, with intuition and imagination. Picciotto (2004) mentioned that creativity in thinking is usually a product of the right hemisphere of the brain while the brain focuses on critical thinking. However, according to Roger W. Sperry (1959 - 1968) an American psychologist, to get the most out of creativity, most people need to utilize both sides of their brain, thus utilizing the analytical and logical part of the brain at the same time.

### **Creative Thinking**

Generally, creative thinking is the ability to consider something in a new way. Alhalabi (2021) defines creative thinking as the process of nurturing the imagination allowing one to “think out of the box”. He elaborated that being able to train the mind to think creatively helps to invent, problem-solve, create and communicate in fresh, new ways. Today, many employers value creative thinkers, and will usually take into serious consideration for employment, creative thinking skills on resumes and in interviews.

Creative thinking has become an important asset in communication. It has great relevance in decision making, solving problems, generating innovation, resolving conflicts, and developing leadership skills especially at the workplace (Tripathy, 2001). Applying creative thinking while facing such dilemmas can restrict generalizing situations and can improve skills to thoroughly evaluate such cases where the predetermined assumptions and fallacies are overruled and judgments of the situation are appropriately made. Managing conflicts require a high level of understanding of creative thinking and integrating it in solving conflicts. Generating innovative ideas come through thinking out of the box or reaching at a level of thinking where no others can reach.

Creative thinking can inspire employees to come up with unusual yet insightful ideas that can question the generalized assumptions and arise with ground-breaking solutions. Sensitive issues like ethical matters, sexual harassment, cultural conflicts, team hostility and problems of the same kind are required to be researched well and then come up with solutions as insufficient information can lead to faulty decisions and the problems can become stretchy without any solutions. Hence, creative thinking offers the solutions to many problems by viewing each problem differently and seeking to find the solutions differently again. Effective leaders are known for their imagination and innovation that inspires people that follow them through creative thinking ability. “Some leadership characteristics that are related to creativity include visualization, ability to withhold judgment, flexibility, resourcefulness, willingness to take risks and problem solving ability” (Parker and Begnaud, 2004).

## **Problem Solving**

Problem solving is a process whereby the problem solver seeks to devise a method for transforming a problem from its current state into a desired state when a solution is not immediately obvious to the problem solver (Kandil, 2018). This means that decision making is a tricky process as the information available is unclear and there might be some disagreements among those involved in the decision making process.

Problem solving has a lot to do with creative thinking. It inherently involves logic and analysis. So instead of putting aside the 'left' brain, full creativity needs them to work in unison. For example, when looking for new ideas, the 'left' brain will guide you to a place of focus, which is based on the objective behind the ideas one is searching for. The 'right' brain then guides to gather and explore based on the current focus. When one decides to try out these new ideas, the 'right' brain will give novel solutions outside of the ones already known. The 'left' brain then helps to evaluate and tune the solutions to work better in practice. So, logic and creativity actually work hand in hand, and not one at the expense of the other.

## **Hadith in Creative Thinking and Problem Solving**

Hadith has been regarded as the foundation of Islamic civilization, and within Islam, the authority of hadith as a source for religious law and moral guidance ranks second only to that of the Quran. As such, besides containing the words and wisdom of Prophet Muhammad pbuh, the Hadith provides guidelines and examples of creative thinking and problem solving from the Islamic perspective.

Prophet Muhammad saw will always be our guiding light throughout our lives, and in our journey towards akhirat. The Prophet saw was regarded as a creative leader and problem solver. Furthermore, the Prophet Mohammad's pbuh role was also creative. He was able to create and build a Muslim society from nothing to greatness. He transformed people from worshipping idols to worshipping one God and from fighting one another to building a strong solidarity and brotherhood among all. The Prophet pbuh was the door through which a completely new system of behaviour for human beings was displayed. The first Islamic society established by the Prophet was creative in nature in the sense of newness and uniqueness, and that small society was to be the base of the great Islamic civilization to follow.

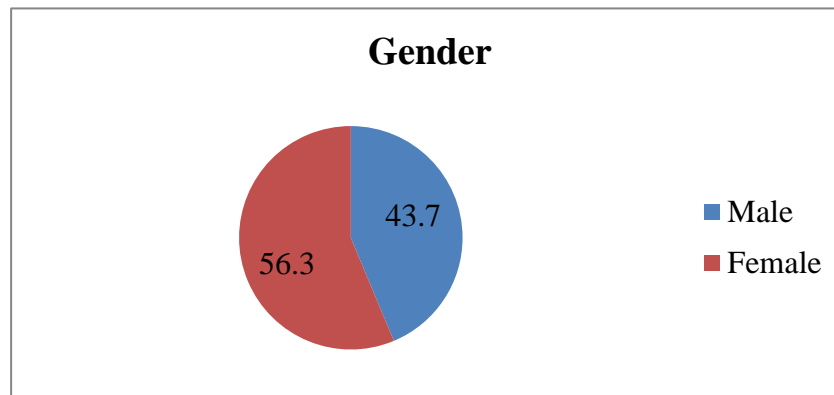
Based on the Hadith (Sunnah), examples of the use of creative thinking by the Prophet saw and the companions which results in effective problem solving have been documented. Problems faced by the Muslim community was often brought to the consultation of the Muslim leadership known as Shura. Shura was the tradition of Prophet Muhammad pbuh whereby decisions to be made which would affect the Muslim community are discussed and deliberated with consultation of the others. This was, in fact, commanded by Allah swt upon His Prophet saw in Surah Al-Shura verse 38.

There are numerous examples of Prophet Muhammad saw taking counsel from his companions and abiding by their opinions. Before going into battle, he held many counsels. In defending

Medina, the Shura decided on fighting the enemies in the city but they lost. Then, in the next battle, upon the advice of the companions, they built a huge trench in Medina to protect the Muslims and as a strategy to confront the enemies with a stronger position. This time, they won. Prophet Muhammad pbuh used consultation and consensus in all aspects of his leadership and followed the decisions made as long as they did not go against the tenets of Islam. Shura tradition continued during the time of the four Caliphs and to the later generations with reference to consensus (ijmak) as well as ijtihad.

## Results

A brief survey of the perception of students towards the status of Hadith as a reference for Creative Thinking and Problem Solving was carried out. It involved 66 students' responses to 5 related statements.

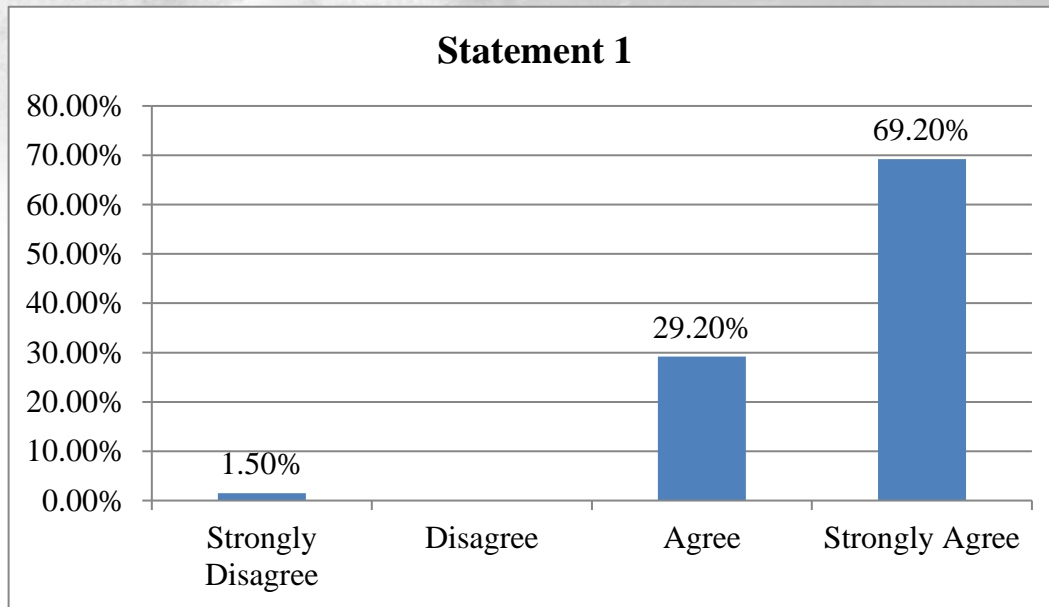


**Population of Respondents: 43.7% MALES      56.3% FEMALES**

This survey has a small sample size. The respondents were required to respond to five (5) statements on the status of Hadith (Sunnah) as a reference for creative thinking and problem solving. All responses were based on a 4-point Likert scale.

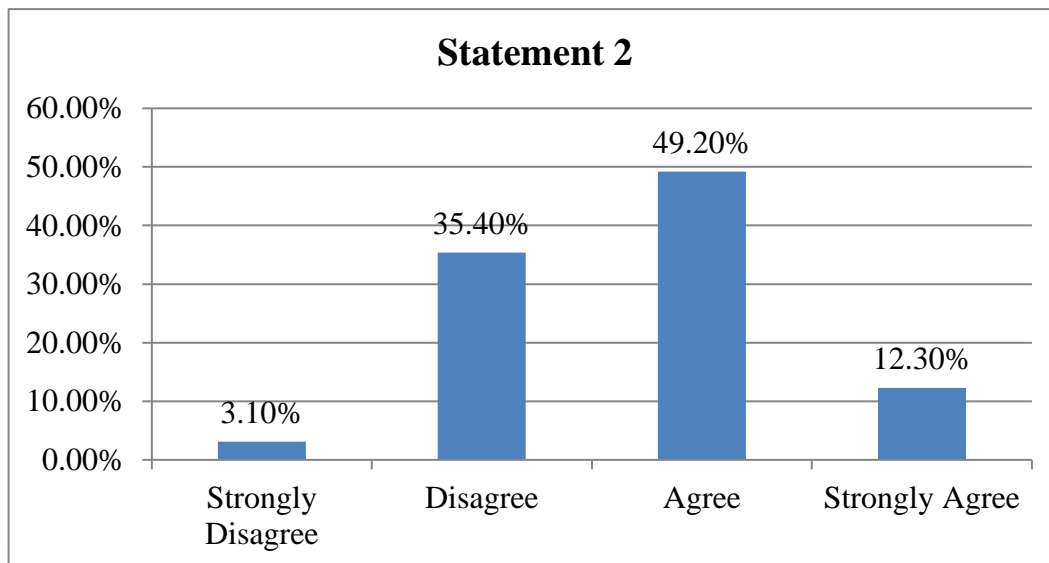
### STATEMENT 1

Islam encourages Muslims to be creative thinkers and problem solvers.



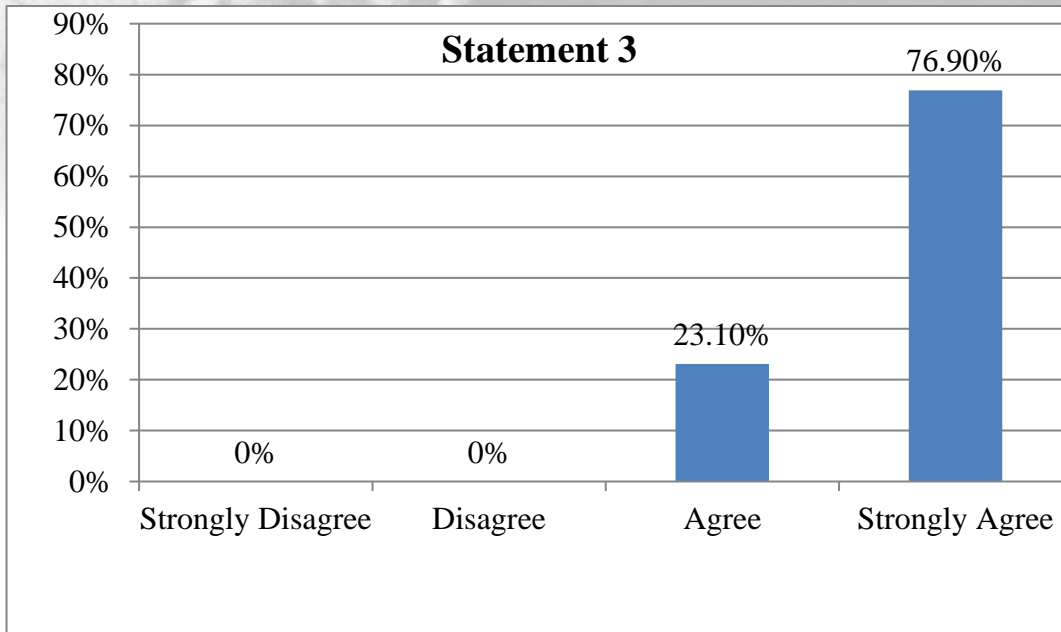
### STATEMENT 2

Muslims today lack creative thinking and problem solving skills.



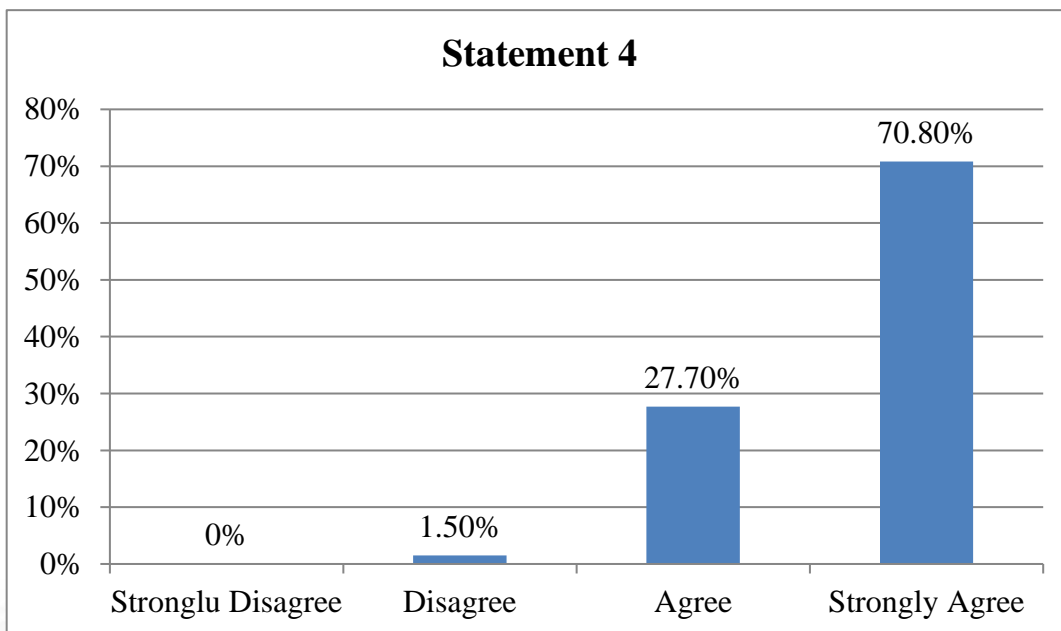
### STATEMENT 3

The Quran mentions the importance of thinking.



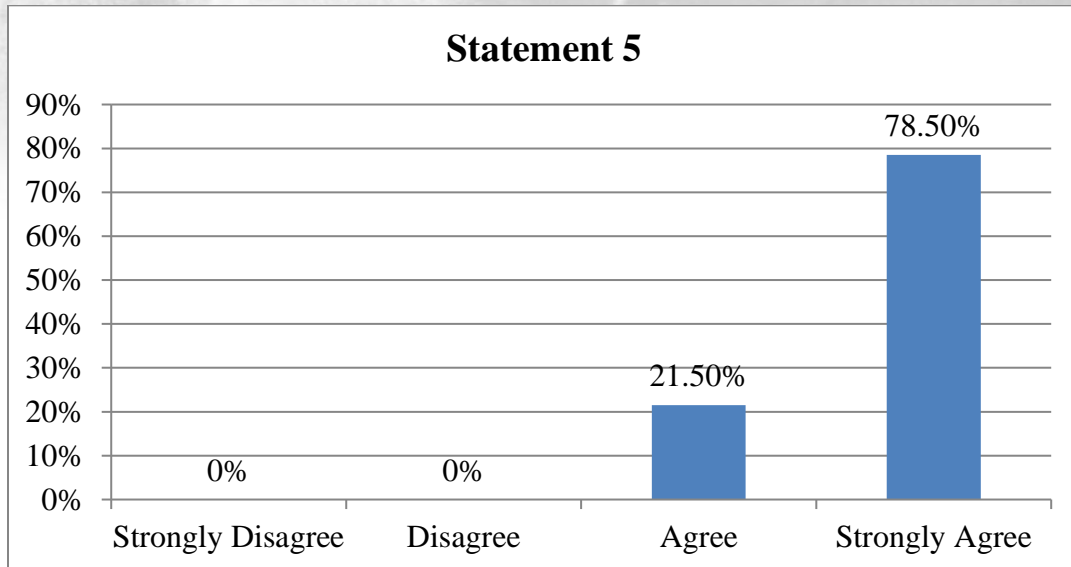
### STATEMENT 4

Hadith / Sunnah provides many examples of creative thinking and problem solving.



## STATEMENT 5

Hadith / Sunnah is an important reference for Muslim students to become creative thinkers and problem solvers.



## Discussion Of Results

This survey has a small sample size. The respondents were required to respond to five (5) statements on the status of Hadith (Sunnah) as a reference for creative thinking and problem solving. All responses were based on a 4-point Likert scale.

Statement 1: Islam encourages Muslims to be creative thinkers and problem solvers.

Almost 70% Strongly Agree and 30% Agree with this statement. This indicates that most of the students believe that the religion of Islam encourages them to be creative thinkers and problem solvers. This positive response shows their understanding of Islam as being dynamic and innovative. Generally, most Muslims view Islam as a complete system of life. It covers all aspects of human activities from the specific ibadah like Solat and Fasting to management of business and family parenting. The area of creative thinking and innovation is also included from the Islamic perspective and it is beginning to get more attention as Muslims try to find solutions to problems faced in the modern world.

Statement 2: Muslims today lack creative thinking and problem solving skills.

Interestingly, 49.2% Agree and 12.3% Strongly Agree with this statement. On the other hand, 35.4% Disagree and 3.1 Strongly Disagree. Perhaps, the respondents are not certain of the status of Muslims relating to whether they lack these skills or otherwise. Looking at the multitude of problems faced by some Muslims and some Muslim countries, it is difficult to really assess them on this. However, knowing the success of rich Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and



Kuwait in terms of advancements in technology and infrastructure, more than half of the respondents had a positive outlook that Muslims do possess the potential to be competitive and innovative.

Statement 3: The Quran mentions the importance of thinking.

As expected, all the respondents agreed to the above statement. This is indicated by 76.9% Strongly Agree and 23.1% Agree. Respondents are aware of the fact that the Quran has highlighted the importance of thinking in many verses. As Muslims, we are encouraged to think. This has been stressed in the Qur'an since the very beginning of the emergence of Islam. The first surah revealed to Prophet Muhammad pbuh was al-'Alaq, a surah that encourages the Prophet to read (al-'Alaq, 96: 1-5)

Statement 4: Hadith / Sunnah provides many examples of creative thinking and problem solving.

Generally, respondents agree that Hadith provides these examples. The results show that 70.8% Strongly Agree and 27.7% Agree. This positivity bodes well for the future of the Muslim generation. Prophet Muhammad pbuh will always be the guiding light throughout our lives, and in our journey towards akhirat. His words and his examples are universal in nature. He was regarded as a creative leader and problem solver. No doubt, the younger generation needs to study the Hadith closely as a guide for them in life.

Statement 5: Hadith / Sunnah is an important reference for Muslim students to become creative thinkers and problem solvers.

The results, 78.5% Strongly Agree and 21.5% Agree, indicate that the majority of the respondents support the statement. They believe that to become creative thinkers and problem solvers who follow the Prophet's way, the Hadith has to be understood and referred to constantly. As an important reference, Hadith provides guidance on how the Prophet pbuh led the ummah on the right path towards Allah's blessings.

Throughout the researcher's interaction with the students during class hours and outside of the class hours, it was observed that there was an increasing amount of interest and curiosity among these students to look at Creative Thinking and Problem Solving from the Muslim perspective rather than the Western or non-Muslim perspective.

As such, besides making sure the students obtain adequate understanding of the course content, making sure they are happy learning the subject, and making sure that they pass the subject, the researcher has made it a point to bring deep awareness to them of the essence of the teachings of the beloved Prophet Muhammad pbuh as being a strong reference for them in relation to adopting creative thinking and problem solving in their daily lives.

## **Conclusion:**

This study covers just a tiny portion of the features of Hadith as a reference for Creative Thinking and Problem Solving. It is just like touching the tip of the iceberg. Many more systematic studies are needed to identify the key elements of creativity and problem solving from the Muslim perspective.

Below is a list of recommendations for further related studies and actions:

1. Elements of creativity and problem solving based on the Islamic approach should be incorporated into the curriculum at schools and at institutions of higher learning. More courses should adopt a teaching approach and assessments which emphasize the ability of students to use creativity and problem solving skills, instead of just mere memorization of facts. Case studies and Creative Innovative group projects would be suitable.
2. More training of knowledge and skills in teaching courses on creativity and problem solving should be implemented in training colleges for future educators and teachers to acquire adequate capabilities to teach students to acquire the ability to think creatively and to seek solutions to life problems effectively. This will make future graduates more marketable as today employers prefer to employ graduates with good thinking and communication skills as well as the ability to generate new ideas and solve problems at the workplace.
3. Muslim scholars need to play a more meaningful and effective role in providing a better understanding of Islamic creativity to the Muslim community. They need to do research, write books on the concepts of creativity in Islam so that they can propagate the idea of the importance of understanding Islam in a more progressive and dynamic way.
4. Muslim political and community leaders should practice the Islamic way of creativity and problem solving in their management and dealings with the people under their leadership. They should be sincere and trustworthy and regard their work as contributions solely for the sake of Allah. They should be excellent role models for others especially the younger generation and avoid corruption and greed for power and wealth. They should live the life as shown by Prophet Muhammad pbuh.
5. Muslim countries should be governed by competent and capable leaders who encourage creativity and innovation to flourish among the people. Ministries and government agencies should make available more grants and funds for projects prioritizing creativity and innovation. Laws and policies should go towards encouraging people to develop and practise creativity and problem solving.

In conclusion, a more concerted and persistent effort has to be taken to instil an awareness among educators, parents, political and community leaders and those with authority to encourage the future generation of Muslims to embrace creative thinking and effective problem solving in accordance to the teachings of Islam and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad pbuh. This is the

only way, Muslims can bring back the glory days of Islamic civilization and pave the way for modernization of humanity in the way Allah swt has commanded us.

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