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Constructing a Theology of Digital Ethics: A Mawḍū'ī Interpretation of the Verses on Hubūṭ al-A'māl Regarding Netizens' Behavior

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ABSTRACT: Social media activity in the digital age carries profound spiritual consequences alongside its social and psychological impacts. This study aims to analyze Quranic *v̄*erses regarding *hubūṭ* al-a'mal (the invalidation of righteous deeds) and reorient them as a foundational framework for social media ethics. Utilizing a qualitative thematic Quranic analysis method (al-manhaj al-mawdu'i), this research categorizes Quranic texts on deed invalidation and applies them to online behaviors across platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Findings reveal that Quranic factors invalidating deeds span theological violations (such as shirk, apostasy, and mocking religion) and moral/ethical infractions (such as ostentation/riya', backbiting, false accusation, and spiritual arrogance/ta'alli 'alallah). In social media, these manifest as religious mockery memes, ostentatious worship for engagement, cyberbullying, and arrogant spiritual condemnation. The study proposes a Quranic digital ethics framework centered on digital muraqabah, tabayyun (verification), sincerity of intention, and preserving human dignity.
KEYWORDS: *Hubūt al-A'mal, Social Media Ethics, Thematic Exegesis, Mockery of Faith, Digital Morality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Advances in information and communication technology in the digital age have fundamentally transformed the landscape of social interaction among people around the world, and Muslims are no exception. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), YouTube, and WhatsApp are no longer merely alternative spaces for exchanging information; rather, they have become the primary arena for shaping culture, ways of thinking, and the expression of religious identity.[1] The ease of access and relative anonymity in cyberspace provide users with nearly unlimited freedom of expression. However, despite its great potential as a means of spreading the message of Islam and promoting goodness, the reality is that social media often serves as a platform where the boundaries of Islamic law are disregarded.[2] Phenomena such as the spread of fake news (hoaxes), hate speech, showing off one's religious practices (digital riya'), sowing discord (*namimah*), and the mockery and abuse of religious values (*istihza' biddin*) have become a rampant daily occurrence in the online world.[3]

From the perspective of Islamic theology and ethics, this tendency to disregard social media ethics not only leads to a breakdown in interpersonal relationships (*habl min al-nās*), but also has fatal consequences for one's spiritual relationship with Allah Swt. (*habl min Allāh*).[4] The Qur'an introduces the concept of hubūṭ al-a'mal that is, the loss or nullification of the reward for a servant's righteous deeds as a result of certain sins that

[1] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor: 24 Tahun 2017 tentang Hukum dan Pedoman Bermuamalah Melalui Media Sosial* (Jakarta: MUI, 2017), hlm. 2–3.
[2] M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 11 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012), hlm. 158–160
[3] Fajrussalam et al., "Etika Bermedia Sosial dalam Islam: Panduan Sikap Muslim di Dunia Digital," *Journal of Islamic Communication*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2024), hlm. 14–18.
[4] Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Jilid 2 (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2009), hlm. 245.

undermine the validity and spiritual value of those deeds.[5] From a historical-normative perspective, the Qur'an warns that the rewards for good deeds accumulated by humans can vanish without a trace, like dust blown away by the wind (*habaʾan manṣūra*) not only due to shirk and major disbelief, but also due to verbal transgressions, spiritual arrogance, and ethical violations.[6] In the modern context, a spiritual paradox has emerged: a Muslim may actively perform prayers, give charity, and worship in the real world, yet at the same time, the rewards for their good deeds are eroded or undermined by the posts, comments, and content they share in the digital realm.[7]

This digital ethics crisis points to a gap between the theoretical understanding of religious doctrine and its application in the reality of social media. Most Muslim social media users are trapped in the belief that activities in cyberspace are virtual and free from legal consequences in the afterlife, even though every keystroke and post is precisely recorded by the guardian angels.[8] Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to re-examine the doctrine of hubūṭ al-a'mal in the Qur'an and connect it concretely to contemporary cyber dynamics. Based on this background, this study formulates three main research questions: First, regarding the various categorizations of Qur'anic verses on hubūṭ al-a'mal (factors that nullify righteous deeds); second, to identify the forms of violations that nullify these deeds as manifested in contemporary social media activities; and third, to analyze a reorientation of social media ethics based on the Qur'anic perspective.

The significance of this study lies in its effort to provide Qur'anic-normative solutions in response to the moral crisis in the digital realm, which has the potential to undermine a Muslim's balance of good deeds. Through a thematic exegetical approach (al-manhaj al-mawdu'i), this study does not merely catalog the verses that nullify good deeds but also conducts a contextual and applied reading so that the revealed text can serve as an ethical guide for social media use. Thus, this study is expected to offer an epistemological and practical framework for Muslims to reorient their digital behavior, while also serving as a spiritual bulwark to ensure that the accumulation of rewards for righteous deeds is not compromised or lost in this era of digital disruption.[9]

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a qualitative library-based research project focusing on textual and contextual studies of the Qur'an.[10] The primary data for this study were collected from the text of the Qur'an and authoritative exegetical works, while the secondary data were sourced from books, scholarly journals, religious fatwas, and literature on the ethics of digital communication and social media phenomena.[11] A qualitative approach was used to produce an in-depth descriptive-analytical analysis of the theological significance of the concept of hubūṭ al-a'mal (the nullification of good deeds) and its application in the contemporary digital muamalah sphere.

The interpretive methodology applied in this study is the thematic exegesis method (al-manhaj al-mawdu'i), which involves compiling Qur'anic verses that share a common theme or topic of discussion for subsequent comprehensive analysis.[12] The thematic interpretation method was implemented in this study through the following three systematic steps:

1. Inventory and Classification of Verses (*al-Jam'u wa al-Tasni'f*): Compiling all verses of the Qur'an that contain terms related to hubūṭ (the loss or nullification of reward), itsbat (the establishment of reward), as well as verses that indicate the factors leading to the nullification of righteous deeds, both from the perspectives of faith and ethics.
2. Analysis of Classical and Contemporary Exegesis (*al-Taḥlīl al-Tafsīri*): Analyzing the explicit and implicit meanings of these verses by referring to the views of classical exegetes (such as Ibn Kathir, al-Qurtubi, and al-Tabari) to establish a foundation for textual-historical understanding, as well as contemporary exegetes

[5] Abu al-Fida' Ismail ibn 'Umar ibn Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, Jilid 1 (Riyadh: Dar Taybah, 1999), hlm. 562.

[6] Ibid., Jilid 6, hlm. 102.

[7] A. Rahman, M. Irawanda, dan Syukri, "Islamic Ethical Guidance in the Digital Age: A Study of MUI Fatwas on Social Media Use in Indonesia," *Parewa Saraq: Journal of Islamic Law and Fatwa Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2025), hlm. 45–50.

[8] N.A. Baiquni, I.A. Syawaqi, dan R.A. Azis, *Indeks Al-Qur'an: Cara Mencari Ayat Al-Qur'an* (Surabaya: Arkola, 1996), hlm. 14; Lihat juga QS. Qaf [50]: 18.

[9] Wiji Nurasih, Mhd. Rasidin, dan Doli Witro, "Islam dan Etika Bermedia Sosial Bagi Generasi Milenial: Telaah Surat Al-'Asr," *Jurnal Al Mishbah*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2020), hlm. 30–33.

[10] Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008), hlm. 3–5.

[11] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), hlm. 18–20.

[12] Abd. al-Hayy al-Farmawi, *al-Bidayah fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i: Dirasah Manhajiyyah Muqaranah* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Zahra', 1977), hlm. 45–48.

(such as M. Quraish Shihab and Wahbah al-Zuhaili) to grasp the contextual nuances of the Qur'an's message.[13]

3. Phenomenological Correlation/Applied Studies (*al-Tathbīq al-Mu'āsir*): Conducting an analytical correlation between the findings of the concept of hubūṭ al-a'mal and current cyber phenomena. This step maps the forms of violations of Sharia and ethics commonly found on various social media platforms (such as Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp) into the categories of acts that nullify good deeds according to the Qur'an.[14]

Through the integration of the three steps above, the categorized data was analyzed using content analysis and data reduction techniques. This approach allows researchers to draw theoretical and practical conclusions regarding the reorientation of social media ethics rooted in the norms of the Qur'an.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Categories of Verses in the Qur'an That Nullify Righteous Deeds

Etymologically, the Arabic word hubūṭ (حُبُوطًا – يَحْبَطُ – حَبَطَ) derives from a root originally used to describe the condition of livestock that had consumed poisonous plants or overeaten to the point that their stomachs swelled, leading to death or damage to their internal organs.[15] n the terminology of Islamic law and exegetes, hubūṭ al-a'mal is defined as the loss, erasure, or nullification of the reward for good deeds performed by a servant of God, such that those deeds become futile and yield no benefit whatsoever in the Hereafter.[16] The Qur'an uses derivatives of the word hūbut 16 times in various forms including verbs and verbal nouns to warn people of the threat of spiritual danger that could wipe out their store of good deeds.[17]

Scholars of kalam and exegetes differ in their views regarding the mechanism of hubūṭ al-a'mal. The Mu'tazilah school holds the view that a major sin automatically nullifies all the rewards of good deeds previously performed (at-tawahhud). However, the majority of scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah assert that the complete and total nullification of good deeds (hubut al-kulli) occurs only as a result of disbelief, apostasy, and polytheism. As for sins other than shirk, they may partially nullify the reward for a particular good deed (*al-hubūṭ al-juz'i*) or invalidate the full merit of that deed in the sight of Allah Swt.[18] Based on a thematic analysis of verses from the Qur'an, the factors that nullify righteous deeds can be categorized into two main domains: violations of faith and violations of moral conduct and social relations.

1. Violations in the Category of Faith (Major)

Violations in the realm of faith are the most serious nullifiers of good deeds and are utterly destructive, because faith is the foundation (asās) of the entire edifice of righteous deeds.

a. Shirk and Disbelief, Which Undermine the Foundations of Faith

Shirk that is, associating partners with Allah Swt. in His Lordship (rububiyah), Divinity (uluhiyah), or His Names and Attributes is the greatest nullifier of good deeds (al-mubṭil al-a'zam). The Qur'an emphasizes that no matter how great the quantity or quality of a person's good deeds may be, they will all vanish without a trace if tainted by shirk. This is explicitly stated in Surah al-Zumar [39]: 65:

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

" Indeed, it has been revealed to you and to those before you: "If you associate others with Allah, your deeds will surely be nullified, and you will surely be among the losers."[19]

Al-Qurtubi explains that the wording of this verse is directed at the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as a form of takhwīf (a stern warning) and a lesson for all his followers. If even the Prophet who is infallible is threatened with the nullification of his good deeds should he commit shirk, then ordinary people are far more vulnerable to that threat.[20] A similar statement is repeated in Surah Al-An'am [6]:88 after listing the 18

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[13] Nashruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), hlm. 151–153.

[14] Aksin Wijaya, *Arah Baru Studi Al-Qur'an: Memetakan Model-Model Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), hlm. 88–92

[15] Ibn Manzhur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, Jilid 7 (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1119), hlm. 825–827.

[16] Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Fayyumi, *Al-Mishbah al-Munir fi Gharib al-Syarh al-Kabir*, Jilid 1 (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan, 1987), hlm. 121.

[17] Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfazh al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Kairo: Dar al-Hadits, 1364 H), hlm. 228.

[18] Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Jilid 2 (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2009), hlm. 245–248.

[19] QS. Az-Zumar [39]: 65.

[20] Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, Jilid 15 (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Mishriyyah, 1964), hlm. 279–280.

prophets and messengers: "If they had associated others with Allah, their deeds would have been in vain."[21] Similarly, regarding the act of apostasy (leaving Islam) that persists until the end of one's life, the Qur'an states in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:217 that the deeds of an apostate will be nullified both in this world and in the Hereafter.[22]

b. *Istihza' biddin* (Mocking Religious Teachings, Verses, or Symbols)

Mocking or ridiculing (al-istihzā') Allah, His verses, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), or the symbols of Islamic law constitutes an explicit form of disbelief that nullifies all rewards for good deeds. The Qur'an records this event in Surah al-Taubah [9]: 65–66:

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۚ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ * لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ

" And if you ask them, they will surely reply, "We were only joking and playing around." Say, "Have you been mocking Allah, His verses, and His Messenger all along?" You need not ask for forgiveness, for you have disbelieved after having believed..."[23]

The reason for the revelation (asbāb an-nuzūl) of this verse relates to the behavior of some hypocrites during the battle of tabuk, who made fun of the Prophet and his companions who had memorized the Qur'an to relieve their boredom during the journey.[24] Al-Tabari emphasizes that the Qur'an rejects the excuse of "just joking" (khaudh wa lā'ib), because mocking sacred matters in religion indicates a loss of reverence (ta'zhīm) in the heart. Without reverence for Allah and His Sharia, faith is nullified and all the rewards of one's deeds are forfeited.[25]

2. Violations in the Categories of Ethics and Social Conduct

In addition to violations of faith that completely nullify good deeds, the Qur'an also warns of ethical and social transgressions that can erode, undermine, or transfer the rewards of righteous deeds to others, leaving the perpetrator with not even a shred of good.

a. *Riya'* dan *Sum'ah* (Seeking Praise and Popularity)

Riyā' (performing acts of worship to be seen by others) and sum'ah (performing acts of worship to be heard by others) are forms of minor shirk (ash-shirk al-ashghar) that undermine the value of sincerity. The Qur'an describes the analogy of deeds being rendered void due to riyā' and mentions the trait of showing off in charitable giving in Surah al-Baqarah [2]: 264:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا

"O you who believe! Do not nullify your charity by boasting about it and hurting (the feelings of the recipients), like one who spends his wealth to show off to people and does not believe in Allah and the Hereafter. "Their example is like a smooth rock covered with dust; when a heavy rain falls on it, the rock is left smooth again..."[26]

Ibn Kathir explains that this verse compares the deeds of those who practice riya' to a thin layer of dust on a smooth rock. When a heavy rain falls, that dust is washed away completely, leaving not a trace behind. Likewise, on the Day of Judgment, those who practice riya' will find no reward whatsoever for their deeds, because their underlying intention was to seek the praise of others, not the pleasure of Allah Swt.[27] A similar warning is stated in Surah al-Ma'un [107]: 4–6 for those who pray but are negligent and perform their prayers for show (alladzīna hum yurā'ūn).[28]

b. Verbal Behavior that Harms Others: *Ghībah*, *Namīmah*, and *Qadhf*

Verbal violations of muamalah are one of the main causes of a servant's reward being transferred to another person.

[21] QS. Al-An'am [6]: 88.

[22] QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 217; Abu al-Fida' Ismail ibn 'Umar ibn Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, Jilid 1 (Riyadh: Dar Taybah, 1999), hlm. 561–563

[23] QS. At-Tawbah [9]: 65-66

[24] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ayy al-Qur'an*, Jilid 14 (Beirut: Mu'assasath al-Risalah, 2000), hlm. 333–336.

[25] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir / Mafatih al-Ghaib*, Jilid 16 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1420 H), hlm. 95–97.

[26] QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 264.

[27] Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, Jilid 1, hlm. 701–703.

[28] QS. Al-Ma'un [107]: 4-6.

1. Ghībah (Backbiting/Speaking Ill of Others)**:** The Qur'an prohibits ghībah in Surah al-Hujurat [49]:12 by using a deeply repulsive metaphor that of eating the flesh of one's own dead brother (ayuhibbu ahadukum an ya'kula lahma akhīhi mayitan).[29]
2. Namimah (Sowing Discord) and Qadhf (False Accusation): In Surah al-Nur [24]: 11–23, the Qur'an strongly condemns those who spread false rumors (al-ifk) and make vile accusations without evidence (*qadhf*). Those who defame others are threatened with condemnation in this world and the hereafter, as well as severe punishment.[30]

Theologically, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized in an authentic hadith the concept of al-muflīs (one who is bankrupt on the Day of Judgment). This is a person who comes bearing the rewards of prayer, fasting, and zakat, yet also bears the sins of slandering, accusing, embezzling, and shedding the blood of others. Thus, the rewards for his good deeds are taken and given to his victims; if the rewards for his good deeds are exhausted before they can cover his wrongdoings, the sins of his victims are transferred to him, and he is then cast into Hell.[31]

c. *Ta'alli 'alallāh* (an Arrogant and Judgmental Attitude Toward Other's Status in Heaven or Hell)

Ta'alli 'alallāh is when a person oversteps their bounds by swearing or asserting, in the name of Allah, regarding the fate of others in the Hereafter such as claiming with certainty that they themselves will enter Paradise, or asserting that others will certainly enter Hell and will not be forgiven by Allah. The Qur'an forbids claims of self-righteousness in Surah al-Najm [53]:32: "So do not consider yourself pure. He knows best who is righteous."[32]

This is related in an authentic hadith narrated by Imam Muslim from Jundub bin Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, in which the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَدَّثَ أَنَّ رَجُلاً قَالَ: وَاللَّهِ لاَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لِفُلاَنٍ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى قَالَ: مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَتَأَلَّى عَلَيَّ أَنْ لاَ أَغْفِرَ لِفُلاَنٍ، فَإِنِّي قَدْ غَفَرْتُ لِفُلاَنٍ وَأَحْبَطْتُ عَمَلَكَ

"There was a man who said, 'By Allah, Allah will not forgive So-and-so.' Then Allah, the Exalted, said, 'Who is it who swore by My name that I would not forgive So-and-so? Indeed, I have forgiven So-and-so, and I have erased your deeds.' [33]

An-Nawawi explains that the attitude of ta'alli stems from spiritual arrogance ('ujub) and the pride of feeling superior to other servants of Allah. As a consequence of this presumptuous act of usurping Allah's prerogative to determine mercy and punishment, Allah nullifies all the rewards for the righteous deeds of such a proud person.[34]

B. Examples of Violations that Invalidate Charitable Acts on Social Media Platform

Advances in digital technology and modern social media architecture have profoundly transformed patterns of communication and social interaction. The fast-paced, open, hyper-connected nature of social media driven by algorithms based on user engagement has created the "online disinhibition effect." This psychological effect causes individuals to tend to relax their ethical and spiritual self-control when interacting behind the screen of their devices.[35] As a result, violations of Sharia law which the Qur'an describes as nullifying good deeds have now taken the form of digital actions on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X (Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

1. Mocking Religious Theachings (*Istihza'*): Parodies, Memes, and Dark Humor

The phenomenon of istihzā' biddīn in the contemporary cyberspace is often disguised as entertainment, memes, stand-up comedy, and parody content in order to gain popularity and algorithmic engagement.

Memes and Parodies of Religious Symbols: The creation of video or image content that uses verses from the Quran, prayer recitations, Muslim women's attire (hijab/niqab), or religious rituals as material for lighthearted jokes on TikTok or Instagram Reels.

[29] QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 12; M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 13 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012), hlm. 260–265

[30] QS. An-Nur [24]: 11–23.

[31] Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Naisaburi, *Shahih Muslim*, Jilid 4 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), No. Hadits 2581, hlm. 1997.

[32] QS. An-Najm [53]: 32

[33] Muslim, *Shahih Muslim*, Jilid 4, No. Hadits 2621, hlm. 2026.

[34] Yahya ibn Syaraf an-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj Syarh Shahih Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj*, Jilid 16 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1392 H), hlm. 174–175.

[35] John Suler, "The Online Disinhibition Effect," *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2004), hlm. 321–326.

Dark Humor: The use of the shahada, the takbir, or teachings about heaven and hell as sarcastic jokes on X or YouTube podcasts to provoke an emotional response from the public and generate traffic.

From a Qur'anic-theological perspective, the creators, performers, and those who intentionally disseminate and find such religiously offensive content amusing fall into the category of khaudh wa lā'ib (mocking the verses of Allah), as stated in Surah At-Tawbah [9]: 65–66.[36] Sacrificing the sanctity of sacred values for the sake of likes and views risks undermining one's faith and erasing all the good deeds one has ever accumulated.

2. The Commercialization of Worship and Digital Riya': the Exhibitionism of Piety

Social media architecture is designed to stimulate a thirst for public recognition (validation-seeking behavior). This situation has given rise to the phenomenon of digital ostentation and the commercialization of worship.

Worship Vlogs and Showing Off Charity: The practice of recording and live-streaming acts of worship that are supposed to be private such as night prayers (tahajud), crying while praying in front of the Ka'bah for the sake of a thumbnail, or giving charity to the poor while highlighting the recipient's face to garner public sympathy and monetize on YouTube.

Projecting Piety (Personal Branding): Posting selfies in religious attire accompanied by captions featuring hadith quotes or religious wisdom, but with the underlying intention of gaining praise for piety, followers, or admiration from the opposite sex.

This phenomenon shifts the sincerity of intention from lillāhi ta'āla to lillāhi al-algorithm. Just as the parable of dust on a smooth rock in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:264 illustrates, acts of worship that appear magnificent on the screen risk being empty of any reward in the Hereafter because they have been eroded by the motivations of *riyā' and sum'ah.*[37]

3. Hate Speech and Defamation (*Ghibah* & *Qadhf* Digital)

Comment sections, repost features, and the anonymity of social media accounts are often used as outlets for destructive verbal behavior.

Cyberbullying dan Doxxing: Exposing the shame, past mistakes, or physical imperfections of fellow users (body shaming) in comment sections or WhatsApp groups. The act of "spilling the tea"or revealing others' faults without permission is a clear form of digital backbiting, which is prohibited in Surah al-Hujurat [49]: 12

Slander and Unsubstantiated Accusations (Digital *Qadhf*): Spreading false narratives (hoaxes) and accusing someone of adultery, corruption, or heresy without valid evidence in the public cyberspace.

In the digital age, the impact of backbiting and slander has expanded exponentially. Whereas in the real world backbiting is heard only by a few people in a single gathering, on social media a slanderous narrative or a post containing insults can be read, shared, and saved by millions of users in a matter of seconds. Based on the logic of the hadith al-muflis, perpetrators of digital backbiting and slander risk suffering a massive bankruptcy of good deeds, in which their accumulated rewards will be continuously transferred to the millions of victims whose reputations have been tarnished in the virtual world.[38]

4. An Attitude Spiritual Arrogance (*Ta'alli 'alallāh* Digital)

The phenomenon of instant religious expertise and group militancy on social media has fueled the rise of "judgmental piety".

Digital Condemnations to Hell and Takfir: The tendency of some social media users to readily level accusations of being an infidel, a hypocrite, or a heretic, and to declare with certainty that an individual or group will surely end up in hell in the comments section.

Feeling Most Entitled to God's Mercy: Blaspheming sinners who are suffering misfortune by claiming that the misfortune is "certain punishment from God" and closing the door to repentance and forgiveness for others.

This behavior falls under the category of ta'alli 'alallah in the digital world. Social media users trapped in an attitude of arrogance feel as if they hold the keys to heaven and hell. As the stern warning in the hadith narrated by Muslim states, the presumptuous act of judging and limiting Allah's mercy toward His servants has

[36] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor: 24 Tahun 2017 tentang Hukum dan Pedoman Bermuamalah Melalui Media Sosial* (Jakarta: MUI, 2017), hlm. 7–9.

[37] Fajrussalam et al., "Etika Bermedia Sosial dalam Islam: Panduan Sikap Muslim di Dunia Digital," *Journal of Islamic Communication*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2024), hlm. 20–23.

[38] A. Rahman, M. Irawanda, dan Syukri, "Islamic Ethical Guidance in the Digital Age: A Study of MUI Fatwas on Social Media Use in Indonesia," *Parewa Saraq: Journal of Islamic Law and Fatwa Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2025), hlm. 51–54.

fatal consequences: Allah actually forgives the person who is reviled and erases all the good deeds of the one who considers himself the holiest.[39]

C. A Reorientation of Social Media Ethics from a Quranic Perspective

To mitigate the risks associated with hubūṭ al-a'mal and stem the tide of ethical crises in the digital age, the Qur'an provides a methodological and ethical foundation that can be transformed into practical guidelines for social media use. This Qur'an-based reorientation of digital ethics encompasses four main principles:

1. The Principle of Digital Muraqabah

The principle of digital murāqabah is a deep spiritual awareness that all online activities from typing comments, sharing posts, and creating content to giving "likes" and one's search history are never beyond the watchful eye of Allah Swt. or the record-keeping of the angels Raqib and 'Atid. The Qur'an affirms this in Surah Qaf [50]: 18:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"There is no word he utters but that there is a guardian angel by his side who is always ready (to record it)."[40]
This principle is reinforced by Surah Al-Infitar [82]: 10–12, which reminds us of the existence of the noble recording angels who know everything humans do. In the context of social media, digital murāqabah requires every Muslim to treat the screen of their device just as they would a real public space, where the digital footprint left in this world will become a record (sijill) for which they will be held precisely accountable before Allah Swt. on the Day of Judgment.[41]

2. The Principles of Tabayyun and Qaulan Syadida

To prevent the spread of slander, backbiting, and false accusations (*qadhf*) which can erode the rewards of good deeds the Qur'an prescribes a mechanism for verifying information through the principle of tabayyun. This is stated in Surah al-Hujurat [49]: 6:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فعلتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

"O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you bearing news, verify it carefully, lest you bring misfortune upon a people without knowing the truth of the matter, causing you to regret your actions."[42]

The implementation of digital tabayyun requires social media users to fact-check information before believing, sharing, or commenting on content circulating in cyberspace. Furthermore, narratives constructed on social media must adhere to the principle of qaulan syadīda (truthful, honest, and on-point speech) as commanded in Surah al-Ahzab [33]: 70, so that the digital space remains free from disinformation, provocation, and public deception.[43]

3. Purification of intentions (Tazkiyatun Nafs & Ikhlas)

A reorientation of social media ethics requires continuous self-reflection and purification of intentions (tazkiyatun nafs) before publishing content on digital platforms. Every Muslim should look deep within their conscience and ask themselves this reflective question: *Is this content being posted purely to spread goodness for the sake of Allah, or is it merely to satisfy a thirst for exhibitionism, image-building, and popularity?*

The Qur'an teaches that sincerity is an absolute requirement for deeds to be accepted (Surah al-Bayyinah [98]: 5).[44] To preserve the sincerity of one's intentions in an era dominated by social media, religious scholars emphasize the importance of cultivating "secret acts of worship" (a'māl as-sirr) that is, righteous deeds in the real world that are kept strictly hidden from the reach of cameras and social media. These secret acts of worship serve as a spiritual fortress, preventing the heart from being easily swayed by the allure of praise, the number of followers, or the commercialization of online engagement.[45]

4. Protecting the Dignity of Others (Hifz al-'Ird)

[39] An-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj Syarh Shahih Muslim*, Jilid 16, hlm. 175.
[40] QS. Qaf [50]: 18.
[41] Wiji Nurasih, Mhd. Rasidin, dan Doli Witro, "Islam dan Etika Bermedia Sosial Bagi Generasi Milenial: Telaah Surat Al-'Asr," *Jurnal Al Mishbah*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2020), hlm. 35–38.
[42] QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6.
[43] M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, Vol. 11, hlm. 312–315; QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 70.
[44] QS. Al-Bayyinah [98]: 5.
[45] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Jilid 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), hlm. 295–298.

The fourth principle is to uphold the honor, dignity, and respect of fellow human beings (hifz al-'ird) in the digital public sphere. Islam places a Muslim's honor on par with the sanctity of their blood and property.[46] When interacting on social media, debates and the expression of criticism must be conducted in strict adherence to the ethics of Qur'anic da'wah, as set forth in Surah al-Nahl [16]:125:

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

"Call (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best..."[47]

Social media should be used as a means to promote good deeds (amr ma'ruf), strengthen bonds of friendship, and expand knowledge not as a platform for insults, cyberbullying, and mob justice. By upholding the dignity of others, a Muslim not only protects his or her fellow believers from cybercrime but also safeguards the rewards of his or her good deeds so that they are not lost in the hereafter.[48]

5. Summary of the Synthesis of the Matrix of Interpretation and Digital Manifestation

To clarify the relationship between Quranic verses, types of violations, forms of manifestation on social media, and the corresponding ethical principles for addressing them, please refer to the following synthesis matrix:

Categories of violations	Biblical Basis From The Qur'an	Manifestation on social media	Spiritual Impact (hubūṭ)	The Principle of Ethical Reorientation
Shirk & Disbelief	QS. al-Zumar [39]: 65; QS. al-An'am [6]: 88	An excessive worship of material things and technology to the point of neglecting fundamental religious principles.	Complete cancellation of charity (*hubūṭ Kulli*).	**Digital Muraqabah & Pure Tauhid:** Making Sharia the primary benchmark for social media use.
Istihza' biddin	QS. al-Tawbah [9]: 65-66	Parody memes about sharia law, jokes that sacralize religion for the sake of engagement.	It nullifies faith and voids good deeds.	**Veneration of Religious Symbols (Ta'zhim):** Avoid parody content that demeans the sacred values of Islam.
Riya' & Sum'ah	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 264; QS. al-Ma'un [107]: 4-6	Showing off one's worship, live-streaming worship for views, self-branding.	Good deeds are in vain, like dust swept away by a heavy rain.	**Purifying Intentions & Sincerity:** Controlling the motivation behind one's posts and nurturing one's private acts of worship.
Ghibah, Namimah, Qadhf	QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 12; QS. al-Nur [24]: 11-23	Cyberbullying, spreading slander, and making false accusations in groups or comment sections.	The reward is transferred to the victim (al-muflis / the bankrupt person).	***Tabayyun & Preserving One's Honor (Hifz al-'Ird):*** Verifying information and refraining from exposing others' faults.
Ta'alli 'alallāh	QS. al-Najm [53]: 32; HR.	Judging others' fate in heaven or	The reward was revoked, and the	***Qaulan Sadida & Spiritual Humility:***

[46] Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Jilid 1 (Beirut: Dar Thawq al-Najah, 1422 H), No. Hadits 67, hlm. 24.

[47] QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125.

[48] Aksin Wijaya, *Arah Baru Studi Al-Qur'an: Memetakan Model-Model Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), hlm. 105–108

Muslim No. 2621	hell, digital "takfir," moral arrogance.	person who was reviled was actually forgiven.	Avoiding the judgment of hell and practicing humility (tawadhu').

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the thematic analysis and the discussion presented above, this study concludes the following key points:

First, the Qur'an issues a very stern warning that the reward for a Muslim's righteous deeds can be erased or nullified (hubūṭ al-a'mal). This nullification of reward is not only triggered by major sins committed physically or violations of faith such as shirk, apostasy, and istihza' biddin (mocking religion), but is also caused by ethical violations, mental attitudes, and verbal offenses such as riya' (showing off for others' approval), ghibah (backbiting), namimah (sowing discord), qadhf (false accusation), and ta'alli 'alallah (arrogance in judging others' status in the Hereafter).

Second, in the contemporary digital age, social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become highly vulnerable arenas for the occurrence of hubu't al-a'mal. The nullification of rewards in the virtual world manifests itself in the creation of parody content about Islamic law for the sake of engagement, the commercialization of worship (digital riya'), cyberbullying, the spreading of slander in comment sections, and even the reckless pronouncement of hellfire in digital public spaces. This phenomenon is accelerated by the effects of cyber disinhibition, a loss of self-control, and the still-low level of Islamic ethical literacy regarding the use of information technology.

Third, every Muslim social media user must urgently internalize a reorientation of social media ethics based on the perspective of the Qur'an. This reorientation demands a fundamental transformation from a consumerist, popularity-driven mindset (lillahi al-algorithm) toward a steadfast spiritual awareness. This Qur'an-based framework for digital ethics is supported by four main pillars:

1. The Principle of Digital Muraqabah: Being fully aware of Allah SWT's supervision and the angels' recording of every online activity.
2. The Principles of Tabayyun and Qaulan Sadida: Verifying information and presenting an honest and responsible narrative before sharing information.
3. Purification of Intentions (Tazkiyatun Nafs & Ikhlas): Maintaining the purity of one's intentions in doing good deeds and preserving one's secret acts of worship in the real world.
4. Protecting the Dignity of Others (Hifz al-'Ird): Using social media as a means of promoting virtue without belittling, insulting, or undermining the dignity of others.

Through the application of these Qur'anic ethical principles, activities in the digital realm not only become safe and socially enriching, but can also safeguard and preserve a Muslim's accumulated rewards for the Hereafter.

Research Rationale: The rationale for this research lies in the urgent need for an Islamic digital ethics framework derived directly from the Qur'an to address the moral and ethical crises in today's cyberspace. Until now, the understanding of the doctrine of hubūṭ al-a'mal (the nullification of the reward for righteous deeds) has tended to be confined to the realm of classical theology and focused solely on physical sins, whereas the shift in interaction patterns toward the digital realm has created a significant gap in which a Muslim may be diligent in worship in the real world yet massively erode their rewards through posts, comments, and content on social media. By integrating a thematic interpretation of the Qur'an with an applied analysis of social media phenomena, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions toward redefining the boundaries of Sharia in the era of information disruption, while also safeguarding the Muslim community from the threat of spiritual bankruptcy (al-muflis) resulting from the loss of ethical control behind the screens of their devices.

Recommendation: Based on the research findings, it is recommended that academics and Islamic educational institutions expand interdisciplinary studies that integrate the science of Tafsir with cyber sociology and communication studies in order to formulate a comprehensive curriculum on Islamic digital ethics literacy. For preachers, da'is, and religious institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the results of this study should serve as a foundation for promoting educational da'wah regarding social media etiquette one that not only focuses on the fiqh of digital transactions but also emphasizes the dimension of spiritual purification (tazkiyatun nafs). Finally, for social media users in general, it is recommended to consistently practice the principles of digital muraqabah, tabayyun, and hifz al-'ird (preserving the dignity of others), so that networking activities in the digital space do not merely become a venue for chasing algorithmic popularity but are transformed into a field of ongoing charitable deeds whose sincerity is preserved until the Hereafter.

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