MAZAHIBUNA: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab
Volume 8 Number 1 April 2026; 75-91
P-ISSN: 2685-6905; E-ISSN: 2685-7812
DOI: 10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.64536
http://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/mjpm

Between *Ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* (the Protection of Dignity) and Algorithmic Visibility: A *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* Approach to Digital Modesty in the Age of Self-Commodification

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[Received: December 11, 2025] [Reviewed: January 16, 2026] [Revised: March 18, 2026] [Accepted: March 31, 2026] [Published: April 16, 2026]

How to Cite:
M. Ilham, Muh. Darwis, Munir, A., Sudirman, & Muhammad Irfan Hasanuddin. (2026). Between Ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ (the Protection of Dignity) and Algorithmic Visibility: A Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah Approach to Digital Modesty in the Age of Self-Commodification. *Mazahibuna: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab* 8 (1): 75–91. https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.64536

Abstract

This article investigates the ethical challenges posed by algorithmic visibility in contemporary digital platforms through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, with particular emphasis on the reconceptualization of *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* (the protection of dignity). While existing studies on digital ethics predominantly rely on secular frameworks, limited attention has been given to how Islamic legal-ethical principles respond to the commodification of the self in platform-mediated environments. This study aims to address this gap by examining how Qur'anic values of modesty (*ḥayāʾ*) and ethical regulation of self-disclosure (*sitr*) can be reformulated within algorithmic systems that incentivize exposure and self-disclosure. Employing qualitative library research, this study integrates Qur'anic exegesis, contextualist hermeneutics, and a *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* approach to develop a normative framework for digital conduct. The findings demonstrate that *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* must be expanded beyond its classical focus on physical morality to include the governance of digital visibility and self-representation, while also revealing a structural tension between the ethical imperative of dignity preservation and the economic logic of digital platforms that commodify personal identity. This article proposes the concept of digital modesty as an ethical framework rooted in *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, positioning it as a form of ethical resistance against self-commodification, while reaffirming the continued relevance of Islamic legal principles and offering a contextualized normative guide for navigating privacy, intimacy, and visibility in algorithm-driven environments.

Keywords: ***Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*; *Ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*; Digital Modesty; Algorithmic Visibility; Self-Commodification; Qur'anic Ethics; Islamic Law.**

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Abstract
Artikel ini mengkaji tantangan etis yang ditimbulkan oleh visibilitas algoritmik dalam platform digital kontemporer melalui perspektif *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, dengan penekanan pada rekontekstualisasi *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* (perlindungan kehormatan). Sementara kajian etika digital yang ada masih didominasi oleh kerangka sekuler, perhatian terhadap bagaimana prinsip etika-hukum Islam merespons komodifikasi diri dalam lingkungan berbasis platform masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menelaah bagaimana nilai-nilai Qur'ani tentang kesopanan (*ḥayāʾ*) dan pengendalian keterbukaan diri (*sitr*) dapat dirumuskan kembali dalam sistem algoritmik yang mendorong eksposur dan pengungkapan diri. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan tafsir Al-Qur'an, hermeneutika kontekstual, dan pendekatan maqāṣid al-sharīʿah untuk membangun kerangka normatif perilaku digital. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* perlu diperluas dari fokus klasik pada moralitas fisik menuju pengelolaan visibilitas digital dan representasi diri, sekaligus mengungkap adanya ketegangan struktural antara imperatif etis perlindungan martabat manusia dan logika ekonomi platform digital yang mengomodifikasi identitas personal. Artikel ini mengajukan konsep kesopanan digital sebagai kerangka etis yang berakar pada *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, serta memposisikannya sebagai bentuk resistensi etis terhadap komodifikasi diri. Pada saat yang sama, artikel ini menegaskan relevansi berkelanjutan prinsip-prinsip hukum Islam serta menawarkan panduan normatif kontekstual bagi umat Islam dalam merespons isu privasi, keintiman, dan visibilitas di dalam ekosistem digital yang dikendalikan oleh algoritma.
Keywords: ***Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*; *Ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* (Perlindungan Kehormatan); Kesopanan Digital; Visibilitas Algoritmik; Komodifikasi Diri; Etika Qur'ani; Hukum Islam.**

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has fundamentally altered how individuals construct identity, express emotions, and negotiate intimacy. Social media platforms, Instagram, TikTok, and X, have evolved into socio-technical infrastructures that incentivize a culture of mediated self-disclosure, where the boundaries between private and public life are continuously renegotiated (Abidin, 2018; Lim, 2025). Within this platform society, algorithmic systems do not merely facilitate interaction but rather actively shape the circulation of personal narratives by privileging emotionally engaging and intimate content (Del Nido, 2024; Keskin, 2018; Szulc, 2019). This structural dynamic creates an algorithmic self, a digital persona driven to perform intimacy and expose private spheres to comply with the platform's demand for visibility and engagement (Chen et al., 2025; Cotter, 2019).

In Muslim societies, the growing culture of digital exposure generates deep normative tensions. Traditional Islamic ethics, grounded in modesty (*ḥayā'*) and ethical regulation of self-disclosure (*sitr*), are increasingly challenged by the economization of visibility, in which personal experiences become tradable digital capital. While prior scholarship has examined religiosity in cyber-Islamic environments (Bunt, 2018; Mcclure, 2019; Aljadi et al., 2025) the virtualization of shari'ah norms (Sisler, 2011), and the broader evolution of digital religion in which the boundaries between online and offline religious

spaces increasingly dissolve (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021), these studies have not sufficiently addressed how such transformations reshape the conceptual and normative foundations of *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* (protection of dignity). Recent studies in Islamic digital ethics (Lokman et al., 2026; Nasrullah, 2025; Saifuddin et al., 2025; Shodiqoh, 2024) as well as *maqāṣid*-oriented fiqh approaches (Soehardin Abdullah et al., 2025) further underscores the urgency of developing a more integrated theoretical framework capable of addressing this lacuna.

In classical jurisprudence, *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* was often interpreted through a physical and legalistic lens. However, the age of algorithmic visibility marked by what Hallaq (2014) describes as the moral vacuum of modern technical structures, demands a sophisticated, non-physical reconceptualization of human dignity in the networked public.

At the normative level, the Qur'anic ethical framework, particularly verses 24:30–31 and 33:59, provides the basis for regulating social interaction through self-restraint. While classical exegesis focused on external moral order (Al-Qurthubi, 2006; Ibn Katsir, 1997), contemporary scholars such as (Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2006) argue for a contextualist interpretation that prioritizes universal moral values over rigid prescriptions. By applying Rahman's double movement theory, this study moves beyond a literalist reading of modesty toward a value-oriented framework centered on human dignity (*karāmah*). As (Abou El Fadl, 2006) underscores, the protection of dignity is the ethical core of the shari'ah. Furthermore, by engaging with Moosa's concept of the liminality of tradition (Moosa, 2006), this study views the digital space as a site where traditional norms must be poetically renegotiated to preserve the sanctity of the self.

Despite the growing literature on digital Islam, studies often fluctuate between a restrictive halal/haram binary or a descriptive sociology that lacks sufficient normative depth. Consequently, the ethical implications of algorithmically conditioned intimacy remain insufficiently theorized within the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* framework, even when employing modern systems approaches (Auda, 2008; Moosa, 2006). This study addresses this critical gap by asking: How can the Qur'anic ethical principles of modesty and dignity be reconceptualized into a framework of digital modesty to protect *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* against the pressures of algorithmic visibility?

This article makes three original contributions. First, it redefines *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* as a dynamic principle capable of regulating the algorithmic self in a hyper-visible environment (Hallaq, 2014; Sachedina, 2024). Second, it develops digital modesty as a relational ethics of visibility, shifting the focus from physical concealment to the ethical calibration of digital exposure (Abdel-Fadil, 2019; Khamis, 2024). Finally, by integrating textual *bayānī* methods with contextualist hermeneutics, this study advances a *maqāṣidī* approach to navigate the

challenges of algorithmic power (Bucher, 2018; Floridi & Luciano, 2013) while maintaining foundational normative integrity in an increasingly networked world.

Methods

This study employs qualitative library research to examine the ethical implications of intimate self-disclosure within the socio-technical landscape of social media. The study applies the *bayānī* approach to Qur'anic interpretation, emphasizing rigorous linguistic and textual analysis to derive foundational ethical meanings (Al-Jabiri, 2009; Hussin, 2010). The primary data consist of verses related to modesty and moral boundaries (Q. 24:30–31; 33:59), as interpreted through the classical exegetical works of Ibn Katsir and Al-Qurthuby (Al-Qurthubi, 2006; Ibn Katsir, 1997). This textual foundation serves as the starting point for understanding the classical parameters of *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*.

To bridge the gap between the historical text and contemporary digital reality, this analysis is operationalized through the double movement theory of Fazlur Rahman (Rahman, 1982) and the contextualist hermeneutics of Abdullah Saeed (Saeed, 2006). These frameworks allow the research to extract universal socio-moral objectives (*maqāṣid*) from the historical context of revelation and apply them to the complexities of the platform society (Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2013). This methodological movement is further enriched by Jasser Auda's (2008) systems approach to *maqāṣid*, which facilitates a multidimensional analysis of how digital structures impact traditional legal and ethical categories.

Furthermore, the study engages in a critical dialogue between Islamic ethical thought and contemporary digital culture scholarship. This involves synthesizing the ethical frameworks of Khaled Abou El Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2006) and the liminality of tradition from Ebrahim Moosa (Moosa, 2006) with empirical observations on algorithmic visibility, cyber-Islamic environments, and the shifting traits of digital religion (Abdel-Fadil, 2019; Bunt, 2018; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Sisler, 2011). By utilizing this interdisciplinary approach, the study examines how platform logics (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019) actively reshape the algorithmic self and challenge the preservation of dignity.

The analysis proceeds by synthesizing these diverse perspectives into a contemporary framework of digital modesty. This study does not aim to produce rigid legal rulings (aḥkām), but rather to construct an ethical orientation (akhlāqī framework) capable of addressing the circulation of intimate content in social media environments while reclaiming the human subject from algorithmic commodification (Floridi & Luciano, 2013; Hallaq, 2014).

Result and Discussion

Deciphering *Ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*: From Physical Veiling to Algorithmic Restraint

An analysis of Q.S. al-Nūr [24]: 30–31 and al-Aḥzāb [33]: 59 reveals that the Qur'anic concept of modesty (ḥayā') cannot be reduced to the mere regulation of the physical body or visual appearance. Instead, it constitutes a holistic ethical framework oriented toward the protection of human dignity (*karāmah*) and the preservation of social integrity. Within Islamic jurisprudence, these values are articulated as a fundamental principle of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, specifically *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* (the protection of dignity and Honor). A *bayānī* approach to key expressions such as *ghadd al-baṣar* (lowering the gaze) and *ḥifẓ al-furūj* (guarding one's chastity) reflects imperative forms that indicate a continuous moral discipline rather than a momentary prohibition (Al-Jabiri, 2009; Hussin, 2010). Classical exegetical traditions, represented by Ibn Katsir and Al-Qurthubi, situate these verses within a framework aimed at preventing moral corruption (*fasād*) in physical spaces to maintain a harmonious social order (Al-Qurthubi, 2006; Ibn Katsir, 1997). However, in the contemporary digital era, the locus of the gaze and privacy has undergone a radical transformation from physical public squares to virtual environments mediated by complex algorithmic architectures (Bunt, 2018; Sisler, 2011).

What is at stake in this transformation is not merely the extension of classical norms into new domains, but a fundamental reconfiguration of how dignity itself is threatened and preserved. In pre-digital societies, the violation of dignity was largely spatial and corporeal, occurring within identifiable social interactions (Foucaul, 1977; Guimarães, 2023). In contrast, digital environments dissembled the self from fixed spatial boundaries, exposing it to continuous and borderless visibility (Giddens, 1991; Oeldorf-Hirsch et al., 2025; Thompson, 1995). This transformation necessitates a shift from a jurisprudence of physical concealment toward an ethics of informational and representational restraint.

In this regard, algorithmic systems function not only as passive mediators but as active agents that reshape moral experience. They curate what is seen, amplify what is exposed, and normalize what is repeated (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Tsamados et al., 2022). Consequently, the gaze (*baṣar*) is no longer exclusively human; it becomes infrastructural, embedded within systems that observe, record, and redistribute personal expression at scale. To "lower the gaze" in such a context cannot be confined to interpersonal ethics but must extend to a critical awareness of how one becomes visible within these systems (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018).

Thus, *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* in the digital age entails a form of ethical self-governance that resists the reduction of the self into data, particularly in contexts where personal identity

can be algorithmically manipulated and reproduced beyond individual control (Uriawan et al., 2025). It calls for an intentional limitation of visibility, not as withdrawal, but as a conscious refusal to participate in regimes of exposure that commodify intimacy. This repositioning transforms modesty from a reactive posture into a proactive ethical stance—one that safeguards the integrity of the self against the subtle coercions of algorithmic life (Assayouti & Ogunwolu, 2026). In this sense, digital modesty is not simply an adaptation of tradition, but a necessary re-articulation of dignity under conditions where visibility itself has become a site of moral risk

This ontological shift in the nature of visibility demands a re-reading of Qur'anic ethics beyond its original spatial context. Utilizing Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory (Rahman, 1982), this study extracts universal socio-moral objectives from the historical context of these revelations. Rahman asserts that the Qur'an's ethical message must be understood through a dialectical process: comprehending the original situational context of the text, then abstracting its universal values to be applied to modern conditions. In this light, the essence of *ghadd al-baṣar* is not merely about biological ocular movement but about subjective autonomy over one's visibility and self-control. In the past, threats to personal dignity arose from unregulated physical interactions. Today, these threats manifest as algorithmic visibility. Social media algorithms are not neutral. They operate as socio-technical infrastructures that systematically nudge and structurally condition individuals to disclose private spheres to gain digital amplification and validation (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019). Consequently, *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* in the digital age demands a more sophisticated reconceptualization of protecting dignity, which is no longer just about covering the body in a physical marketplace, but about exercising ethical resistance against platform impulses that exploit personal intimacy for the metrics of the attention economy (Floridi & Luciano, 2013; Hallaq, 2014).

Furthermore, Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach enables *ḥayāʾ* to be understood as a relational ethical principle governing how individuals negotiate liminal spaces within a globally interconnected society (Saeed, 2006, 2013). In the platform society, individuals often lose control over their self-image due to platform logics that prioritize provocative, emotional, and hyper-personal content (Del Nido, 2024; Szulc, 2019). This is where the concept of the algorithmic self becomes both relevant and concerning. When a Muslim engages in excessive self-disclosure, such as exploiting domestic conflicts, vulgarly broadcasting emotional vulnerabilities, or digitizing private intimacies to chase virality, they unconsciously reduce their own dignity to mere content for algorithmic consumption (Abdel-Fadil, 2019; Khamis, 2024). This creates an anomaly in the principle of *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*. Human dignity, which should be transcendent, is commodified

into a digital asset traded for likes and shares. Recent studies corroborate this tension, demonstrating the ethical risks of algorithmically driven self-exposure in Muslim digital contexts (Saifuddin et al., 2025; Shodiqoh, 2024) and highlighting how contemporary fiqh scholarship proposes maqāṣid-oriented frameworks to mitigate these digital ethical challenges (Soehardin Abdullah et al., 2025). As Khaled Abou El Fadl emphasizes, the core of Islamic ethics is the protection of human dignity from all forms of degradation and exploitation (Abou El Fadl, 2006), including that perpetrated by technological systems (Sachedina, 2024).

Thus, this study positions digital modesty as a contemporary manifestation of *ghadd al-baṣar* within digitally mediated environments. If classical restraint meant distancing oneself from destructive visual temptations, in the digital age, it signifies maintaining ethical autonomy from the manipulation of algorithmic visibility. This includes the moral capacity to limit what should remain unseen on the public screen. Human dignity (*karāmah*) is not determined by the extent to which one is seen or consumed on social media, but by the ability to maintain the boundaries between the private and the public amidst technological pressures demanding total transparency. Integrating the *maqāṣid* perspective shifts the orientation of this discourse. Digital modesty is no longer a rigid, legalistic boundary but a strategic self-discipline to safeguard the integrity of the soul from the colonization of algorithmic logic, which seeks to reduce humans to mere data nodes within digital capitalism (Auda, 2008; Floridi & Luciano, 2013). Protecting honor in the digital space is, ultimately, a political and ethical act of reclaiming humanity in the face of predatory machines (Bucher, 2018; Hallaq, 2014).

Ethical Tension: Qur'anic Norms and the Culture of Digital Exposure

The encounter between Qur'anic ethical norms and the culture of digital exposure reveals a profound tension that is not merely behavioral, but fundamentally epistemological and ethical. On the one hand, the Qur'anic framework emphasizes self-restraint, dignity (*karāmah*), and the protection of moral boundaries as essential to sustaining ethical social relations. This orientation resonates with classical and contemporary exegetical traditions that situate modesty (*ḥayā'*) within a holistic moral universe rather than a set of discrete prescriptive rules (Al-Qurthubi, 2006; Ibn Katsir, 1997; Kamali, 2003). On the other hand, digital platforms normalize and incentivize self-exposure and continuous disclosure as key mechanisms for participation in networked publics, creating a clash between an ethics of restraint and an ethics of visibility (Bucher, 2018; Dijck, 2013).

This tension reflects a competition between two competing moral logics. The Qur'anic injunctions to lower the gaze (*ghadd al baṣar*) and guard modesty (*ḥifẓ al furūj*) are not simply regulatory commands, but ethical orientations that cultivate disciplined subjectivity and relational responsibility (Hallaq, 2014; Hussin, 2010; Saeed, 2006). As argued by Fazlur Rahman, Qur'anic norms must be understood at the level of moral principles rather than literal prescriptions, pointing toward a broader ethical vision centered on human dignity and social harmony (Rahman, 1982). Within this framework, ethical restraint is a formative practice that shapes the moral subject in relation to others, not merely a boundary to be obeyed (Moosa, 2006)

However, within digital environments, visibility is not neutral; it operates as a form of digital capital in which personal exposure is directly linked to recognition, influence, and symbolic value (Cotter, 2019; Dijck, 2013; Keskin, 2018). This produces a normative shift in which to be visible is to exist, and conversely, to remain private risks social marginalization. In such a context, modesty is no longer simply a moral choice but becomes structurally disincentivized. The ethical challenge, therefore, lies in the structural reconfiguration of ethical subjectivity itself. As Abdullah Saeed and Jasser Audah emphasize, contemporary Islamic thought must engage with changing socio-cultural contexts to preserve core values while recognizing new realities, insisting on an interpretation that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to evolving conditions (Auda, 2008; Saeed, 2013).

From this perspective, the work of Khaled Abou El Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2010; Sultan, 2017) becomes particularly significant. His emphasis on the moral imperative of preserving human dignity (*karāmah*) provides a critical lens through which digital self-exposure can be evaluated based on its ethical consequences for the self and others. If digital practices reduce individuals to objects of consumption, attention, or spectacle, they stand in tension with the Qur'anic vision of human dignity as inherently inviolable (Abou El Fadl, 2006; Sachedina, 2024). This study argues that the central ethical problem of digital intimacy lies in its tendency to transform the self into an object of continuous visibility, thereby undermining the principle of dignity-preserving restraint.

This tension between restraint and exposure must be understood not merely as a moral contradiction, but as a deeper transformation in the ontology of the self. Within the Qur'anic ethical vision, the self is constituted through discipline, relational responsibility, and moral intentionality. By contrast, within digital culture, the self increasingly emerges through visibility, performance, and algorithmic recognition (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2020). What is at stake, therefore, is a shift from an *akhlāq*-centered subjectivity to a metrics-driven subjectivity.

This transformation produces what may be described as a crisis of ethical interiority. When value is externally validated through engagement metrics, such as likes, shares, and views, the locus of ethical judgment subtly shifts from inward moral conscience to outward recognition(Floridi & Luciano, 2013; Hepp, 2019; Zuboff, 2023). In such a condition, modesty is no longer simply difficult to maintain; it becomes structurally irrational within the logic of platform participation. To remain unseen is to risk social and symbolic irrelevance.

Yet, it is precisely within this tension that the critical relevance of Qur'anic ethics emerges. Rather than opposing visibility per se, the Qur'anic framework reorients the purpose of visibility. It asks not whether one is seen, but how and for what moral purpose one becomes visible. This distinction is crucial. Visibility guided by ethical intentionality differs fundamentally from visibility driven by algorithmic compulsion (Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

Moreover, this tension produces a paradox: while digital platforms promise empowerment through self-expression, they simultaneously subject individuals to new forms of vulnerability and commodification. As scholars in digital ethics have noted, increased visibility often correlates with increased exposure to judgment, objectification, and loss of control over personal narratives (Floridi & Luciano, 2013; Kyrre Berg Friis, 2016). Accordingly, this article advances the argument that a Qur'anic ethical framework, when understood as a dynamic moral system, offers critical resources for resisting the excesses of digital exposure. Modesty (*ḥayā'*) should be reinterpreted as an ethical discipline of self-limitation in contexts where exposure is structurally encouraged (Bunt, 2018; Kamali, 2003). This reconfiguration allows Qur'anic ethics to function not as a constraint on modern life, but as a critical framework for navigating its complexities.

Digital Intimacy and the Logic of Platform Visibility

In contemporary digital environments, the practice of intimate self-disclosure is not merely an individual choice but is structurally driven by the logic of platform-mediated communication. Social media platforms operate as socio-technical infrastructures that prioritize engagement metrics, whereby algorithmic systems amplify content characterized by high emotional resonance and personal vulnerability (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Keskin, 2018; Lehto & Mannevuo, 2023; Syatar et al., 2024). This dynamic produces what this study terms algorithmically conditioned intimacy, a process in which the algorithmic self is systematically nudged toward the disclosure of private spheres in order to sustain social relevance and digital visibility (Chen et al., 2025; Szulc, 2019; Wiehn, 2023). Within cyber-Islamic environments, this pressure reconfigures how Muslim users

negotiate the boundaries of the self (Bunt, 2018). This often leads to a tension between the religious mandate of *sitr* (ethical regulation of self-disclosure) and the platform's demand for total transparency (Azizah et al., 2025; Khamis, 2024; Papacharissi, 2015; Sisler, 2011).

This dynamic indicates that digital self-disclosure does not occur in a neutral space, but within an environment already structured by platform logics that privilege visibility, emotional intensity, and personal immediacy (Bucher, 2018). As a result, what appears as voluntary expression is often shaped by algorithmic conditions that reward certain forms of content while marginalizing others (Cotter, 2019; Keskin, 2018). In this context, intimacy is gradually reconfigured from a relational and ethical domain into a mediated form of visibility, where personal disclosure becomes intertwined with the pursuit of recognition and engagement. This process creates a subtle but persistent pressure toward increased exposure, as users adapt their self-presentation to align with the expectations of platform circulation.

This systematic expansion of the public into the private realm represents a significant challenge to the *maqāṣidī* principle of *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*. From the perspective of Hallaq, these digital platforms function as a manifestation of modern technical sovereignty that operates within a moral vacuum, where the human subject is increasingly subjected to non-human, systemic control. Hallaq's critique suggests that the modern drive for visibility erodes the traditional moral autonomy of the individual (Hallaq, 2014), transforming the sacredness of human dignity into a quantifiable data point (Mateus, 2024; Sachedina, 2024). When a Muslim user digitizes their private life, ranging from domestic intimacy to emotional vulnerability, to satisfy algorithmic appetites, they participate in an economization of visibility that reduces *karāmah* (dignity) to a tradable digital asset (Abou El Fadl, 2006; Floridi & Luciano, 2013).

The affective nature of this disclosure is further complicated by the politics of affect inherent in platform design. As Mona Abdel-Fadil (Abdel-Fadil, 2019) observes, the digital self is curated through emotional performances that cater to the platform's desire for shareable moments. This performance often necessitates a staged intimacy that contradicts the ethical depth of *ḥayā'* (modesty), which historically emphasized internal restraint over external spectacle (Khamis, 2024). This study argues that the normalization of such exposure constitutes a form of self-commodification that undermines the ethical integrity of the soul. By viewing these practices through Jasser Auda's systems approach, we can identify a systemic malfunction in digital social interactions: technologies designed to connect individuals simultaneously incentivize the degradation of their private honor (*ʿirḍ*) for the sake of network expansion (Auda, 2008; Moosa, 2006).

To reclaim the human subject from algorithmic colonization, this study draws on Ebrahim Moosa's concept of the liminality of tradition, which frames Islamic ethics as a dynamic negotiation between text and context (Moosa, 2006). In the digital age, the preservation of *ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ* requires a strategic refusal to be fully visible, an assertion of ethical agency that prioritizes dignity over virality. This involves maintaining a conscious boundary between what is shareable and what must remain protected, reaffirming that not all aspects of the self are meant for public consumption.

Ultimately, the clash between Qur'anic norms and digital exposure constitutes an epistemological conflict between an ethics of restraint and an ethics of visibility. While platforms reward the unveiling of the self, the *maqāṣidī* framework demands the protection of the subject's narrative autonomy. This study concludes that digital modesty in the twenty-first century is not about total withdrawal from technology but about exercising a critical presence. By synthesizing the critiques of Wael Hallaq and Ebrahim Moosa with the sociological insights of Gary Bunt and Mona Abdel-Fadil, it becomes clear that protecting honor in a networked world is an act of ethical resistance, a refusal to allow the most sacred aspects of human existence to be reduced to mere fuel for the attention economy.

Digital Modesty: Reframing Qur'anic Ethics in the Age of Algorithmic Visibility

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the challenge of digital intimacy requires more than a reactive or legalistic response; it demands a proactive re-articulation of Islamic ethics. This study proposes the framework of digital modesty as a contemporary manifestation of *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ*. Unlike traditional interpretations that focus on physical concealment, this framework conceptualizes modesty as a form of narrative and visual autonomy against the predatory logic of platform capitalism, which aligns with contemporary research in Islamic digital ethics (Lokman et al., 2026). By integrating Jasser Auda's (2008) systems-approach to *Maqāṣid*, digital modesty is understood as a multidimensional discipline that aims to preserve the sanctity of the human subject within complex socio-technical networks (Moosa, 2006).

The first pillar of this framework is the reclamation of moral agency from algorithmic nudging. As Wael Hallaq (2014) critically observes, the modern technical domain often strips the individual of their character-building capacity (*akhlāq*), reducing them to predictable consumers. Digital modesty, therefore, acts as a strategic refusal to be fully quantified. It is an exercise of *ghadd al-baṣar* in the sense of limiting one's visibility and accessibility on the public screen. This aligns with Fazlur Rahman's emphasis on the moral purposiveness of the Qur'an (Rahman, 1982). The goal of modesty is not to hide the

self, but to ensure that the self is only revealed in contexts that uphold human dignity (*karāmah*) and social integrity (Abou El Fadl, 2006; Rahman, 1982; Slocum Arslan, 2018).

Secondly, this framework emphasizes affective restraint as a countermeasure to the politics of affect prevalent on social media. Drawing on the sociological insights of Mona Abdel-Fadil and Gary Bunt (Abdel-Fadil, 2019; Bunt, 2018), digital modesty entails a deliberate distancing from the performance of vulnerability, incentivized by platform-driven engagement logics. By applying Ebrahim Moosa's concept of the liminality of tradition (Moosa, 2006), Muslim users can navigate the digital space as ethical migrants who reside within the technology but remain anchored in a tradition of internal restraint. This involves recognizing that not every intimate emotion or domestic moment is content. Some aspects of human existence must remain *ḥarām* (sacrosanct/protected) from the gaze of the marketplace (Sachedina, 2024).

Furthermore, the *maqāṣidī* framework for the algorithmic self-shifts the focus from individual sin to systemic responsibility. Protecting honor (*'irḍ*) in the 21st century involves a critical engagement with the architecture of the platforms themselves. It calls for an ethics of design that respects the user's right to remain unseen, resonating with Luciano Floridi's digital ethics (Floridi & Luciano, 2013) and Khaled Abou El Fadl's search for beauty and justice (Abou El Fadl, 2006). In this light, digital modesty becomes a form of data-asceticism, a deliberate choice to withhold personal data as an act of piety and a defense of the soul's privacy against algorithmic commodification (Floridi & Luciano, 2013; Sultan, 2017).

Accordingly, this study argues that the *akhlāqī* orientation of digital modesty provides a robust alternative to the current culture of exposure. It transforms the classical injunctions of modesty into a sophisticated tool for subjective resistance. By maintaining a boundary between the datafied self and the moral self, individuals can participate in digital publics without sacrificing their inherent dignity. Ultimately, *ḥifẓ al-ʿIrḍ* in the digital age is achieved not through total isolation, but through a disciplined presence that prioritizes the transcendent value of the human person over the fleeting metrics of the attention economy (Auda, 2008; Hallaq, 2014). This framework offers a way for the Muslim subject to reclaim their humanity from the predatory machines of visibility, ensuring that the digital future remains grounded in the timeless ethics of the Qur'an.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Qur'anic ethics offers a coherent normative framework for critically engaging digital self-disclosure in contemporary social media environments. By employing Rahman's double movement hermeneutic and Auda's

systems approach, it reinterprets *ḥayāʾ* as a dynamic ethical orientation that safeguards human dignity (*karāmah*) beyond static legal formulations.

The findings indicate that platform-driven logics of algorithmic visibility produce forms of algorithmically conditioned intimacy that destabilize traditional boundaries between the private and public spheres, thereby intensifying tensions between Qur'anic ethics of restraint and contemporary regimes of self-visibility. In response, digital modesty is proposed as an *akhlāqī* framework that integrates narrative autonomy, affective restraint, and systemic responsibility, enabling ethical participation in digital spaces without the loss of moral agency.

Although this study is conceptual in scope, it highlights the importance of further empirical research into lived practices of digital modesty within Muslim communities, as well as comparative studies across diverse ethical traditions. Ultimately, digital modesty represents an ethical orientation for reclaiming human dignity within the extractive logics of the attention economy.

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