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Digital Ghibah, Namimah, and Sukhriyah in Social Media Virality: Toward a Hadith-Based Ethics of Digital Communication

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Abstract	This article examines <i>ghibah</i> , <i>namimah</i> , and <i>sukhriyah</i> within the culture of social media virality from the perspective of hadith-based digital communication ethics. The study is motivated by the increasing prevalence of digital communication practices that turn personal faults, conflict, and humiliation into public consumption through posts, comments, memes, reaction videos, screenshots, and viral content. This research employs a library research method with a thematic hadith (<i>mawḍūʿī</i>) approach and conceptual-contextual analysis. The findings reveal that digital ghibah manifests in the practice of exposing or discussing others' faults; digital namimah is characterized by the dissemination of information that harms social relations; and digital sukhriyah is evident in mockery, degrading comments, and the culture of public shaming. This article argues that these three concepts can be contextualized as critical principles for developing hadith-based digital communication ethics, emphasizing <i>tabayyun</i> , the protection of human dignity, self-restraint in commenting, public benefit, and responsibility for digital traces.
Keywords	digital communication ethics; <i>ghibah</i> ; hadith; <i>namimah</i> ; <i>sukhriyah</i>
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Introduction

Social media has become one of the central spaces of communication in contemporary society. In Indonesia, this transformation is increasingly evident, as the number of internet users reached approximately 230 million by the end of 2025, with an internet penetration rate of 80.5 percent. Meanwhile, social media

user identities were recorded at around 180 million, representing 62.9 percent of the total population.¹ These figures indicate that social media is no longer merely a medium for entertainment, but has developed into an arena for social interaction, information production, opinion formation, identity expression, and moral as well as ethical contestation in communication. In this context, media ethics has become increasingly significant, since digital communication takes place rapidly, publicly, and often beyond the conventional forms of social control commonly found in face-to-face interaction.

One of the defining characteristics of social media is its capacity to accelerate the circulation of messages through sharing features, comment sections, algorithmic recommendations, and users' emotional engagement. Berger and Milkman's study demonstrates that content capable of evoking particular emotions tends to be more widely shared and is therefore more likely to become viral.² From the perspective of digital communication, virality is not merely associated with the speed of information dissemination, but also with a shift in communicative orientation. Messages are often evaluated not solely on the basis of truthfulness and public benefit, but also according to their attractiveness, sensational appeal, conflict potential, and capacity to generate public engagement. Nahon and Hemsley likewise emphasize that virality is shaped by network structures, the role of users as information intermediaries, and the dynamics of message distribution within digital spaces.³

In such a context, social media creates opportunities for the emergence of ethically problematic communication practices, including exposing the faults of others, circulating statements that may provoke conflict between individuals or groups, and degrading others through insinuations, memes, video clips, comments, or mocking posts. This phenomenon can be examined through three important ethical concepts in Islam: *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah*. *Ghibah* refers to mentioning something about another person that he or she would dislike, even if the statement is true. This definition is affirmed in a hadith narrated by Muslim, in which the Prophet explains that if what is said about someone is true, it constitutes *ghibah*; if it is not true, it becomes slander or false accusation.⁴ *Namimah* refers to carrying or spreading words in a manner that damages social relations; a hadith narrated by Muslim underscores the seriousness of this prohibition by stating that the one who practices *namimah* will not enter Paradise.⁵ Meanwhile, *sukhriyah* is associated with acts of belittling, insulting, or looking down upon others. A hadith narrated by Muslim states that it is sufficient

¹ Simon Kemp, *Digital 2026: Indonesia* (DataReportal, 2025), <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-indonesia>.

² Jonah Berger and Katherine L. Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?", *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2012), pp. 192–205.

³ Karine Nahon and Jeff Hemsley, *Going Viral* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), https://books.google.com/books/about/Going_Viral.html?id=rU3DEzlvlskC.

⁴ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "Sahih Muslim 2589: The Prohibition of Backbiting", *Sunnah.com* (2026), <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2589>.

⁵ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "Sahih Muslim 105a: The Tale-Bearer Shall Not Enter Paradise", *Sunnah.com* (2026), <https://sunnah.com/muslim:105a>.

evil for a person to despise his Muslim brother, and that the honor of a Muslim must not be violated.⁶

The problem is that, within the culture of virality on social media, the boundaries between criticism, humor, public information, and ethical violation often become blurred. Content that exposes a person's disgrace may be framed as "public education"; provocation between groups may be presented as "clarification"; while insults may be packaged as "entertainment" or "satire." This is where hadith studies become particularly relevant. Hadith does not merely contain normative prohibitions, but also provides an ethical framework for assessing the impact of communication on personal honor, social relations, and the moral well-being of society. Previous studies on social media ethics from the perspective of hadith have shown that hadith can be contextualized to evaluate digital communication behavior, particularly in relation to hoaxes, honesty, *tabayyun*, and caution in disseminating information.⁷ However, studies that specifically situate *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* within the context of social media virality remain limited and require further scholarly attention.

This gap is important because studies on Islamic social media ethics often tend to emphasize the truth or falsity of information, especially in relation to hoaxes and slander, while communication practices that damage personal honor and social harmony are not always treated as central ethical concerns. In practice, however, viral content on social media does not always take the form of false information. Much of it may be factually accurate, yet circulated with the intention of humiliating, mocking, intensifying conflict, or exploiting another person's disgrace. Therefore, the issue of digital communication ethics cannot be limited to the validity of information alone. It must also be extended to the dimensions of intention, mode of delivery, context of dissemination, and the social consequences of published messages.

Based on this background, this article aims to examine *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* as ethical categories in hadith that are relevant for understanding the culture of virality on social media. This article employs a library research method with a thematic hadith or *mawdū'ī* approach, namely by collecting hadiths related to a specific theme, analyzing their meanings and interconnections, and contextualizing them in relation to contemporary issues. The thematic hadith approach is considered relevant because it enables researchers to understand hadith not in a fragmented manner, but conceptually and integratively according to the theme under investigation.⁸ Through a

⁶ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "Sahih Muslim 2564a: The Inviolability of a Muslim's Blood, Wealth, and Honor", *Sunnah.com* (2026), <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2564a>.

⁷ M. Zia Al-Ayyubi, "Etika Bermedia Sosial dalam Menyikapi Pemberitaan Bohong (Hoax) Perspektif Hadis", *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2018), pp. 148–66, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/alquran/article/view/1902-02>; A.R. Miftah Al Farouqy and M. Fahrur Ridla, "Etika Komunikasi Media Sosial Perspektif Hadis (Kajian Living Sunnah)", *Wardah*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2022), pp. 218–44, <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/warda/article/view/7536>.

⁸ Wan Khairul Aiman Wan Mokhtar, "Thematic Concept Research for Al-Hadith (Al-Hadith Al-Mawdu'iy)", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2017), pp. 513–9, https://kwpublications.com/papers_submitted/2667/thematic-concept-

conceptual-contextual analysis, this article is expected to formulate principles of digital communication ethics based on hadith, particularly in responding to a culture of virality that often normalizes the exposure of others' faults, social provocation, and symbolic humiliation on social media.

Research Method

This study employs a library research method within a qualitative approach. Library research is considered appropriate because the primary objects of this study consist of hadith texts, Islamic scholarly literature, studies on communication ethics, and academic works on social media and viral culture. In library research, data are collected through the systematic tracing, reading, selection, and analysis of written sources relevant to the focus of the study.⁹

The main approach used in this study is the thematic hadith approach (*al-ḥadīth al-mawḍūʿī*). This approach involves collecting hadiths related to a particular theme and then analyzing their meanings, interrelationships, and relevance to the issue under investigation. In this article, the central themes are *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* as ethical categories in Islamic communication. The thematic hadith approach is relevant because it does not examine hadiths in isolation, but rather connects a number of hadiths within a conceptual framework in order to explain contemporary issues more comprehensively.¹⁰

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are hadiths related to the prohibition of *ghibah*, *namimah*, insult, contempt, the protection of Muslim honor, and the ethics of speech and information dissemination. These hadiths are traced primarily from authoritative hadith collections, particularly Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwud, Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasāʿī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah, while prioritizing hadiths with strong authenticity as the basis for argumentation. The secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and previous studies that discuss Islamic communication ethics, thematic hadith studies, social media, virality, digital communication, and participatory culture in digital spaces.

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the study identified key terms related to the research theme, such as *ghibah*, *namimah*, *sukhriyah*, *istihzāʾ*, *ih̥tiqār*, *lisān*, *ḥurmah*, *tabayyun*, and other terms associated with communication ethics. Second, the study traced hadiths that have either direct or indirect relevance to these themes. Third, the collected hadiths were classified according to their ethical focus, namely the prohibition of exposing others' faults,

research-for-al-hadith-al-hadith-al-mawduiy.pdf; Mohd Nor Adzhar Ibrahim and Roshimah Shamsudin, "Konsep Hadith Mawdu'i Menurut Perspektif Pengkaji Hadith Kontemporari: Antara Dirasah Al-Mawdu'iyah min Al-Hadith dan Syarh Al-Mawdu'i li Al-Hadith", *Ma'ālim al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2020), pp. 15–34, <https://jmqqs.usim.edu.my/index.php/jmqqs/article/view/213>.

⁹ Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2004); Mary W. George, *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED539567>.

¹⁰ Wan Mokhtar, "Thematic Concept Research for Al-Hadith (Al-Hadith Al-Mawduiy)"; Ibrahim and Shamsudin, "Konsep Hadith Mawdu'i Menurut Perspektif Pengkaji Hadith Kontemporari: Antara Dirasah Al-Mawdu'iyah min Al-Hadith dan Syarh Al-Mawdu'i li Al-Hadith".

the prohibition of spreading conflict, the prohibition of degrading human dignity, and the principle of preserving honor and social welfare. Fourth, the study selected secondary literature that could help explain the context of digital communication, particularly the culture of virality on social media.

The data were analyzed using a conceptual-contextual analysis. Conceptual analysis was used to explain the basic meanings of *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* based on hadith and Islamic scholarly literature. This analysis was directed toward identifying the ethical dimensions of these concepts, including the content of the message, the intention of the communicator, the mode of delivery, and the social consequences produced. Contextual analysis, meanwhile, was used to relate these concepts to digital communication phenomena, such as the viral dissemination of personal faults, provocative comments, video clips that humiliate individuals, insulting memes, and the practice of sharing information that may damage personal honor or social relationships.

The analytical process was carried out in five steps. First, the study identified and mapped hadiths relevant to the themes of *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah*. Second, it examined the meanings of these hadiths thematically by considering the relationship between one hadith and another. Third, it analyzed the ethical dimensions contained in the hadiths, particularly those related to human dignity, responsibility in speech, caution in disseminating information, and the prohibition of damaging social relations. Fourth, it related these hadith-based values to the characteristics of social media communication, which is rapid, open, participatory, and easily subject to virality. Fifth, it formulated principles of digital communication ethics based on hadith as the conceptual contribution of this article.

With this methodological design, the study does not aim to conduct an empirical measurement of social media users' behavior. Rather, it seeks to construct a conceptual framework for digital communication ethics based on hadith. Therefore, the strength of this study lies in its thematic reading of hadith and its contextualization within contemporary problems of digital communication. Through this approach, *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* are understood not merely as individual moral prohibitions, but also as ethical categories that are relevant for evaluating communication practices within the culture of virality on social media.

A. Digital Ghibah: Exposing Faults in the Public Sphere of Social Media

From the perspective of hadith, *ghibah* is not merely understood as making false statements about others. Rather, it includes mentioning another person's shortcomings even when such statements are true. A hadith narrated by Muslim explains that *ghibah* is to mention something about one's brother that he would dislike. If what is mentioned is true, it constitutes *ghibah*; if it is false, it becomes slander or false accusation.¹¹ (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2589). Thus, the ethical standard established in hadith is not limited to the truth or falsity of a message, but also concerns the dignity of the person being

¹¹ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2589: The Prohibition of Backbiting", *Sunnah.com*, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2589>.

discussed, the purpose of communication, and the social consequences of such discourse.

In the context of social media, *ghibah* has expanded in terms of both medium and form. In classical settings, *ghibah* is often imagined as oral conversation within a limited social space. In digital spaces, however, it may appear in the form of posts, comments, captions, threads, podcasts, reaction videos, screenshots of private conversations, digital gossip, and “spill” narratives that expose someone’s faults before the public. Social media transforms the discussion of another person’s shortcomings from a limited interpersonal exchange into a documented, shareable, commentable, and widely consumable form of public communication. In this sense, digital *ghibah* has a more complex impact, since the message is not only spoken but also recorded, archived, redistributed, and potentially revived through digital traces.¹²

The nature of digital communication also allows *ghibah* to appear indirectly. A post may not explicitly mention someone’s name, yet it may use hints, initials, fragments of an event, or a particular context that enables the public to identify the person being referred to. From the perspective of hadith ethics, this remains problematic because the substance of the communication is the exposure of another person’s shortcomings and the invitation for an audience to participate in discussing them. Marwick and boyd describe social media as producing *context collapse*, namely the collapse of boundaries between different audiences within a single digital communication space.¹³ As a result, something initially perceived as a limited comment may become public consumption, thereby increasing the potential violation of a person’s dignity.

Within the culture of virality, digital *ghibah* is often justified in the name of criticism, education, public warning, or entertainment. Certainly, not every discussion of another person’s wrongdoing can automatically be categorized as *ghibah*. In the Islamic tradition, there is room for giving advice, reporting injustice, offering testimony, or warning the public against certain harms. However, the ethical distinction lies in intention, necessity, manner of expression, the proportion of information disclosed, and the public benefit intended. When a piece of content primarily functions to humiliate, exploit personal faults, invite ridicule, or attract public attention, it is closer to digital *ghibah* than to responsible criticism.

Thus, digital *ghibah* may be understood as a communication practice that turns the weaknesses, mistakes, or faults of others into material for public discussion in digital spaces. The perspective of hadith requires communication to be evaluated not only on the basis of informational accuracy, but also on its consequences for human dignity. In this regard, the hadith on *ghibah* offers an important ethical correction to the culture of social media, which often assumes

¹² Idrus, H., Aderus, A., & Ibrahim, S. (2024). The Spiritual Dimension in Islamic Da’wah and Building Social Piety among Gorontalo Muslims. *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial*, 7(2), 217-227.

¹³ Alice E. Marwick and danah boyd, “I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience”, *New Media & Society*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2011), pp. 114–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>.

that anything true may be disseminated without considering propriety, privacy, and social benefit.

B. Digital Namimah: The Dissemination of Information that Damages Social Relations

In hadith, *namimah* refers to the act of carrying, transferring, or spreading speech in a way that damages social relations. A hadith narrated by Muslim states that the one who practices *namimah* will not enter Paradise, a formulation that indicates the seriousness of its moral implications.¹⁴ Unlike *ghibah*, which focuses on speaking about another person's faults or shortcomings, *namimah* emphasizes the dissemination of information that generates hostility, suspicion, conflict, or the breakdown of social relationships.

In digital spaces, *namimah* may appear through the circulation of fragments of conversations, screenshots, voice recordings, video clips, or statements detached from their original context. Such practices are often carried out to provoke emotional reactions, worsen relationships, or pit individuals and groups against one another. In many cases, the information being circulated is not necessarily false. However, it is selected, edited, and framed in such a way that it produces anger, hatred, or prejudice. This is where digital *namimah* is closely connected to the logic of social media communication: messages are not merely conveyed, but packaged to produce particular social effects.

The phenomenon of digital *namimah* can also be seen in content deliberately designed to set two parties against each other. For example, excerpts from the statements of religious figures, academics, public officials, celebrities, or social groups may be reposted with provocative titles in order to trigger attacks from opposing groups. Such content operates through the logic of conflict: the stronger the public reaction, the greater the possibility that the content will receive comments, be shared, and become viral. In digital communication studies, virality cannot be separated from network structures and the role of users in accelerating the distribution of messages.¹⁵ Therefore, social media users are not merely recipients of information; they are also actors who may intensify the effects of conflict through sharing, commenting, or adding provocative narratives.

From the perspective of hadith, the main problem of digital *namimah* is not simply the movement of information from one party to another, but the relational damage it produces. The hadith prohibiting *namimah* situates communication as a moral act with social consequences. Information that appears simple may become an instrument of division when disseminated without ethical consideration. Thus, in a conceptual-contextual analysis, digital *namimah* can be understood as the dissemination of messages that transform information into an instrument of conflict.

In the context of a digital society prone to polarization, the prohibition of *namimah* is highly relevant. Social polarization does not arise merely from differences of opinion, but also from the repeated production and circulation of information that emphasizes opposition. When social media users share content

¹⁴ al-Hajjaj, "Sahih Muslim 105a: The Tale-Bearer Shall Not Enter Paradise".

¹⁵ Nahon and Hemsley, *Going Viral*.

that pits people against one another, amplifies prejudice, or intensifies conflict, they are not merely participating in digital communication; they are also contributing to the deterioration of social relations. Accordingly, the hadith on *namimah* provides an ethical basis for evaluating whether the act of sharing information produces benefit or instead expands hostility.

C. Digital Sukhriyah: Mockery, Memes, Degrading Comments, and the Culture of Public Shaming

Sukhriyah refers to the act of mocking, ridiculing, or turning others into objects of derision. In the perspective of hadith, the prohibition of degrading others is closely related to the principle of protecting human dignity. A hadith narrated by Muslim affirms that a Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he must not wrong him, abandon him, or despise him. The same hadith also states that it is sufficient evil for a person to look down upon his Muslim brother, and that the blood, property, and honor of a Muslim are inviolable.¹⁶ This principle indicates that honor is not a secondary matter in Islamic ethics, but part of the moral protection that must be preserved in social relations.

On social media, *sukhriyah* appears in various forms, such as sarcastic comments, insulting memes, body shaming, class shaming, and ridicule directed at educational background, economic status, accent, facial expression, clothing, occupation, or personal mistakes. Digital culture often transforms insult into a form of entertainment. A person may become an object of public laughter merely because of a short video clip, a verbal mistake, physical appearance, or a different lifestyle. When ridicule is presented in an attractive visual form, such as a meme or reaction video, insult becomes more easily accepted as humor, even though its substance remains degrading to human dignity.

In cyberbullying studies, degrading behavior in digital spaces is understood as an act that may affect the psychological condition of victims. Patchin and Hinduja show that experiences of cyberbullying are associated with issues of self-esteem among adolescents, indicating that digital verbal violence cannot be dismissed as harmless joking.¹⁷ This perspective is consistent with hadith ethics, which views speech and acts of degradation as serious matters because they may wound a person's honor and dignity. In other words, digital *sukhriyah* is not merely a matter of linguistic politeness, but also a form of symbolic violence that may affect social relations and psychological well-being.¹⁸

The phenomenon of insulting memes illustrates how ridicule can be packaged as light, humorous, and easily shareable content. Memes often work by reducing an individual or group to a stereotype. In certain cases, memes may function as legitimate social criticism. However, when memes are used to insult a person's body, social class, cultural identity, occupation, or personal mistakes,

¹⁶ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2564a: The Prohibition of Wronging, Forsaking, or Despising a Muslim", *Sunnah.com*, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2564a>.

¹⁷ Justin W. Patchin and Sameer Hinduja, "Cyberbullying and Self-Esteem", *Journal of School Health*, vol. 80, no. 12 (2010), pp. 614–21, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ910097>.

¹⁸ Tekeng, A., & Ibrahim, S. (2025). The Dynamics of Contemporary Islamic Thought: Between Traditionalism and Reform in the Context of Globalization. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 10(2), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.30603/jjai.v10i2.7554>

they become a form of digital *sukhriyah*. Islamic ethics does not reject humor, but it sets ethical limits so that humor is not built upon insult, degradation, or the violation of another person's honor.

The hadith concerning the protection of speech is also relevant to this phenomenon. The Prophet stated that whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good words or remain silent.¹⁹ In the digital context, "speaking good words or remaining silent" applies not only to oral speech, but also to comments, posts, replies, memes, and other forms of digital expression. This principle shifts the standard of communication from what is merely "permissible to say" to what is proper, beneficial, and non-harmful to publish. Therefore, digital *sukhriyah* must be understood as a violation of communication ethics because it turns others into objects of degradation within the digital public sphere.

D. Viral Culture and the Normalization of Communicative Sins

The viral culture of social media creates a condition in which messages are evaluated according to the degree of attention they receive. The number of likes, comments, shares, views, and followers is often treated as a measure of communicative success. In such a situation, content that provokes emotion has a greater chance of spreading widely. Berger and Milkman show that emotion plays a significant role in encouraging content to spread virally.²⁰ This finding is important for understanding why content involving conflict, anger, shock, or ridicule often attracts substantial attention on social media.

The ethical problem arises when public attention is gained through the exploitation of other people's mistakes and faults. The culture of clicks encourages some users and content producers to package personal errors, domestic conflicts, quarrels, private screenshots, or embarrassing video clips as public entertainment. In this situation, communicative sins become normalized: *ghibah* is treated as ordinary gossip, *namimah* as interesting information, and *sukhriyah* as humor.²¹ This normalization is dangerous because it shifts society's moral sensitivity. Practices that hadith regards as violations of honor and social relations may instead receive validation through digital popularity.²²

Platform algorithms also intensify this problem. Gillespie explains that algorithms play an important role in determining which information is considered relevant and displayed to the public.²³ In the context of social media, content that generates high engagement may gain greater visibility. This means that when the

¹⁹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, "Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6475: To Protect One's Tongue", *Sunnah.com*, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6475>.

²⁰ Berger and Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?"

²¹ Ibrahim, S., & Hairul, M. A. (2024). Wasathiyah in Tafsir: A Semiotic Study of the Meaning of Moderation in the Qur'an. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 9(2), 246–260. <https://doi.org/10.30603/jiaj.v9i2.7679>

²² Tekeng, A., & Ibrahim, S. (2025). The Dynamics of Contemporary Islamic Thought: Between Traditionalism and Reform in the Context of Globalization. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 10(2), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.30603/jiaj.v10i2.7554>

²³ Tarleton Gillespie, "The Relevance of Algorithms", in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, ed. by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), pp. 167–94, <https://direct.mit.edu/books/edited-volume/3021/chapter/82555/The-Relevance-of-Algorithms>.

public actively comments on, shares, or debates content that humiliates someone, those actions may extend the life cycle of its virality. Thus, users who appear merely to be “watching” or “commenting” may in fact become part of the distribution mechanism that amplifies the ethical impact of such content.

Viral culture also creates the illusion that popularity equals worthiness. From the perspective of Islamic ethics, however, popularity is not a measure of truth or goodness. A piece of content may become viral not because it brings benefit, but because it exploits curiosity, anger, hatred, or the public’s tendency to take pleasure in the mistakes of others. This is where hadith offers a strong moral critique of the logic of social media. Hadiths concerning *ghibah*, *namimah*, the protection of honor, and the discipline of speech show that communication must be evaluated according to its moral consequences, not merely its reach and audience engagement.

Therefore, viral culture may become a space for the normalization of communicative sins when it is not governed by ethical principles. A person’s mistake, which should be addressed through proportionate advice, may become a commodity of entertainment. A conflict that should be de-escalated may instead be amplified. Humor that should bring joy may turn into collective humiliation. For this reason, a thematic hadith approach to *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* is important for restoring digital communication to the principles of dignity, public benefit, and social responsibility.

E. Principles of Hadith-Based Digital Communication Ethics

Based on a thematic reading of hadiths concerning *ghibah*, *namimah*, *sukhriyah*, the protection of honor, and the discipline of speech, several principles of hadith-based digital communication ethics can be formulated. These principles are not intended merely as individual moral advice, but as a conceptual framework for evaluating communication practices on social media.

First, *tabayyun* before disseminating information. In the digital context, *tabayyun* does not only mean verifying whether information is true or false. It also requires examining the context, purpose, source, and consequences of its dissemination. Even true information may become ethically problematic if it is disseminated in a way that violates dignity, provokes conflict, or exposes faults that do not need to be made public. Therefore, the principle of *tabayyun* must be expanded from factual verification to ethical verification: Is this information true, necessary, beneficial, and free from social harm?

Second, protecting the dignity of others in digital communication. The hadith concerning the inviolability of a Muslim’s honor shows that human dignity constitutes an ethical boundary that must not be crossed.²⁴ This principle requires social media users not to turn another person’s mistakes, weaknesses, body, social class, background, or personal experiences into material for public consumption. In digital communication, protecting dignity means refraining from circulating content that humiliates, mocks, or exploits the vulnerabilities of others.

²⁴ al-Ḥajjāj, “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2564a: The Prohibition of Wronging, Forsaking, or Despising a Muslim”.

Third, refraining from harmful comments. The hadith commanding believers to speak good words or remain silent provides a highly relevant minimum standard for social media communication.²⁵ Digital comments are often treated as trivial because they are not spoken face to face. Yet comments can wound, humiliate, trigger bullying, and leave long-lasting digital traces. Therefore, hadith ethics requires comments to be evaluated not only in terms of freedom of expression, but also in terms of moral responsibility for their consequences.

Fourth, not turning personal faults into public consumption. The hadith on *ghibah* affirms that the truth of information does not automatically make it ethically appropriate to disseminate.²⁶ In social media contexts, this principle is important for limiting the culture of “spilling,” digital gossip, and excessive public clarification. If a matter can be resolved privately, through legal mechanisms, institutional procedures, or proportionate advice, bringing it into the digital public sphere must be considered very carefully.

Fifth, not disseminating information that divides people. The hadith on *namimah* shows that the circulation of information may become a serious sin when it damages social relations.²⁷ This principle is relevant for evaluating provocative content, decontextualized screenshots, divisive headlines, and posts deliberately designed to intensify differences. In hadith-based digital communication ethics, the value of information is measured not only by its attractiveness, but also by its contribution to social harmony.

Sixth, prioritizing public benefit in digital communication. Every act of communication should be directed toward benefit, not merely spontaneous expression or the pursuit of popularity. In the digital context, public benefit includes the protection of dignity, the prevention of conflict, the enhancement of knowledge, the strengthening of solidarity, and the improvement of the public sphere. This principle requires social media users to ask before posting or sharing content: Does this content improve the situation, or does it worsen social relations?

Seventh, being responsible for digital traces. Social media has a documentary character: posts, comments, screenshots, and videos may endure over time and be redistributed beyond the control of their creators. Therefore, responsibility in digital communication does not end when a message is sent. Every user must recognize that digital messages may become moral traces with continuing consequences. From the perspective of hadith, responsibility for the tongue can be extended to responsibility for digital expression, since both are forms of communication that may produce either benefit or harm.

Through these principles, hadith-based digital communication ethics functions not merely as a set of moral prohibitions, but also as an evaluative framework for understanding communication practices within viral culture. *Ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* demonstrate that the central problem of social media is not only the dissemination of false information, but also the erosion of

²⁵ al-Bukhārī, “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6475: To Protect One’s Tongue”.

²⁶ al-Ḥajjāj, “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2589: The Prohibition of Backbiting”.

²⁷ al-Ḥajjāj, “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 105a: The Tale-Bearer Shall Not Enter Paradise”.

communicative ethics when faults, conflicts, and humiliation are turned into commodities of public attention. Therefore, a thematic and contextual reading of hadith can make an important contribution to the development of Islamic digital communication ethics that is relevant to the challenges of contemporary social media.

Conclusion

This article affirms that *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* are ethical concepts in hadith that can be contextualized to examine problems of digital communication on social media. Digital *ghibah* appears in the practice of discussing, exposing, or disseminating another person's faults in the digital public sphere, even when the information is true. Digital *namimah* emerges through the circulation of messages, fragments of conversations, or narratives that damage social relations and intensify conflict. Digital *sukhriyah*, meanwhile, is manifested in mockery, insulting memes, degrading comments, body shaming, class shaming, and the culture of public humiliation.

These conceptual findings show that digital communication ethics cannot be limited to the validity of information alone. Even true information may become ethically problematic when it is disseminated with the intention of humiliating, provoking conflict, degrading others, or exploiting personal weaknesses for public attention. Hadith therefore provides a broader ethical framework: communication must be evaluated not only in terms of truthfulness, but also in terms of intention, manner of expression, social consequences, and respect for human dignity.

Thus, *ghibah*, *namimah*, and *sukhriyah* can be understood as critical principles for developing hadith-based digital communication ethics. These concepts guide social media users to practice *tabayyun*, protect the dignity of others, refrain from harmful comments, avoid turning personal faults into public consumption, resist disseminating divisive information, and prioritize public benefit in digital communication. From this perspective, Islamic communication ethics is not merely normative, but also reflective and critical toward a viral culture that often normalizes violations of communicative propriety.

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