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The Interconnection of Islamic Studies Methodologies in Facing the Digital Ethics Crisis and Disinformation

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Abstract

This study examines the interconnection of Islamic studies methodologies specifically ushul al-fiqh, maqasid al-syari'ah, and Islamic hermeneutics in responding to the digital ethics crisis and the proliferation of disinformation within contemporary Muslim communities. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study systematically analyzes primary Islamic sources alongside peer-reviewed literature published between 2020 and 2025 indexed in Scopus and other reputable databases. The findings reveal that an integrated, rather than isolated, application of these three methodological frameworks constitutes a robust Islamic response to digital disinformation. Usul al-fiqh provides verification protocols analogous to contemporary fact-checking mechanisms; maqasid al-shari'ah, particularly the principle of hifz al-'aql (preservation of intellect), Islamic digital literacy grounds normatively; and Quranic hermeneutics, centered on the principle of tabayyun, offers practical guidance for responsible information behavior in digital spaces. This study contributes a novel integrative Islamic methodological framework that can serve as a foundation for digital ethics curriculum in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Islamic studies methodology, Maqasid al-syari'ah, Digital ethics, Disinformation, Tabayyun

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way humanity accesses, shares, and consumes information. On the one hand, the digital revolution has opened

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up incredibly broad horizons for the equitable distribution of knowledge and communication without geographical boundaries. Various online platforms allow anyone to instantly obtain information and connect with millions of people worldwide. However, on the other hand, the digital ecosystem has also given rise to increasingly serious ethical challenges, particularly with the spread of disinformation, fake news, and manipulative content that actively threaten social cohesion and the integrity of public knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

This threat is not an abstract one. Recent research shows that manipulative content is spread through increasingly sophisticated mechanisms, amplified by platform algorithms and artificial intelligence that tend to prioritize content that provokes emotional reactions (Aiméur et al., 2023). The various typologies of disinformation on social media demonstrate the complexity of this misinformation ecosystem, making individual caution insufficient as protection (Lewandowsky & Van der Linden, 2023).

Muslim communities in particular face significant pressures in this digital landscape. Research findings show that Muslim users negative reactions to religiously nuanced misinformation reach disproportionately high levels , indicating that religious disinformation has far greater emotional and social damage than disinformation in general (Al-Zaman, 2024). Furthermore, religious disinformation on digital platforms has been shown to cause widespread confusion and fear among Muslim communities, particularly in crisis situations such as the pandemic (Alimardani & Elswah, 2020). This situation raises an urgent academic need: how can the rich Islamic scholarly tradition provide a systematic, rather than merely reactive, methodological response to the digital ethics crisis?

Several previous studies have addressed partial aspects of this issue. Some researchers have examined the relevance of maqasid al-shari'ah as an ethical framework for social media use (Rosidi et al., 2022). Others have explored the concept of *tabayyun (reconciliation)* in the Qur'an as a solution to the spread of hoaxes (Samsir & Yusril, 2024). Others have mapped the role of Islamic values in general in addressing digital misinformation (Salsabila & Fauziannor, 2025). However, these studies are generally isolated, each discussing only one methodology without establishing comprehensive connections across the various available Islamic scholarly traditions. This gap serves as both the starting point and the compelling reason for this research.

This study presents an integrative framework that systematically connects ushul al-fiqh, maqasid al-shari'ah, and Islamic hermeneutics as a holistic response to the digital ethics crisis. Unlike previous partial approaches (Abdul Rahman, 2019), the methodological interconnections established in this study demonstrate how each of these scholarly traditions reinforces and

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complements each other in forming a coherent and applicable guideline for Muslim digital ethics. Specifically, this study aims to identify Islamic methodological principles relevant to digital ethics, analyze the interconnections between these methodologies in the context of countering disinformation, and formulate an integrative framework as a practical guide to contemporary Muslim digital ethics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic debate surrounding digital ethics and disinformation over the past five years has been dominated by technical approaches that tend to neglect the value and moral dimensions. Much of the literature focuses on the development of disinformation detection algorithms, artificial intelligence-based content moderation mechanisms, and the regulation of digital platforms (Aiméur et al., 2023). While these technical contributions are important, researchers argue that the lack of fundamental value considerations in these solutions renders them incomplete and potentially unsustainable in the long term (Lewandowsky & Van der Linden, 2023).

On the other hand, a number of Muslim scholars have begun to examine how Islamic studies methodology can serve as an alternative perspective in addressing digital ethics issues. This approach links ushul al-fiqh and maqasid al-shari'ah within a framework for understanding ethical values in the context of the digital world (Rosidi et al., 2022; Abdul Rahman, 2019). However, the practical application of these ideas remains very limited and underdeveloped in academic literature (Salsabila & Fauziannor, 2025). This gap is explicitly addressed by this research, positioning Islamic studies methodology not merely as a complement to discourse but as an equal and even more holistic alternative to purely technical approaches.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with library research . This methodological choice is based on the conceptual and analytical nature of the study, focusing on written sources from classical Islamic scholarly traditions and contemporary academic literature on digital ethics. Data were collected from various reputable databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and accredited national Islamic journal repositories. The study focuses on three primary methodologies of Islamic studies and their relevance to issues of digital ethics and disinformation (Kamali, 2003; al-Raysuni, 1992).

The study subjects include primary texts from the works of classical and contemporary scholars, fatwas from official religious institutions, and scientific journal articles published between

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2020 and 2025. Data collection was conducted through three systematic stages: identification and selection of sources based on thematic relevance; conceptual data extraction through recording and classifying key concepts; and relational mapping to find points of connection between methodologies.

Data analysis combined three complementary techniques: qualitative content analysis to identify methodological themes and patterns, comparative analysis to compare how different methodologies address digital ethics issues, and conceptual synthesis to formulate an integrative framework for the main findings. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, namely cross-checking between classical texts, contemporary fatwas, and Scopus-indexed academic journals (Kamali, 2003).

RESEARCH RESULT

Islamic Methodological Principles and Their Relevance to Digital Ethics.

An analysis of the sources reviewed yielded three main interrelated findings (Abdul Rahman, 2019; Kamali, 2003; Ibn Ashur, 2006). Each Islamic methodology possesses key principles that can be directly translated into digital ethical practice. The following is a mapping of the interconnections between each methodology, its core principles, and its application in a digital context:

Table 1. Interconnection of Islamic Studies Methodologies and Their Relevance to Digital Ethics

Methodology	Key Principles	Digital Ethics Application
Usul al-Fiqh	Jarh wa ta'dil; Qiyas; Istislah	Verification of credibility of digital sources; legal analogy for new content; consideration of public interest
Maqasid al-Shari'ah	Hifz al-'aql; Hifz al-din; Hifz al-nasl	Islamic-based critical media literacy; protecting religious identity from distortion; protecting generations from hoaxes
Islamic Hermeneutics	Tabayyun; Contextualization;	Verification before distributing content; contextual reading of digital narratives;

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	Maqasid al-Nass	understanding the intent of text in the digital ecosystem

The first finding relates to ushul al-fiqh as the epistemology of information verification. This discipline offers a systematic framework for assessing source credibility through the principle of *jarh wa ta'dil*, a methodology of hadith science that is essentially a structured system for assessing the reputation of narrators (Kamali, 2003). In the digital context, this principle can be realized as a protocol for evaluating accounts, content track records, and institutional affiliations of information disseminators. Moreover, this verification mechanism is not merely a formal procedure but a reflection of the morally binding value of honesty (*sidq*), making the practice of fact-checking an ethical obligation, not merely a technical option. Its relevance in the digital era is further confirmed by contemporary research findings that increasing source verification capacity is the most effective strategy in addressing information chaos on social media (Tomassi et al., 2024).

The second finding demonstrates the normative power of the maqasid al-shari'ah, particularly the principle of *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of reason), as the foundation of Islamic digital ethics (Ibn Ashur, 2006; al-Raysuni, 1992). This principle does not merely imply a passive prohibition against things that undermine the ability to think. It carries a much more active meaning, namely the obligation to proactively develop critical thinking capacity. In a digital information ecosystem rife with manipulation, this translates into the responsibility of every Muslim to seriously develop media literacy skills, rather than simply avoiding the reactive consumption of disinformation (Rosidi et al., 2022). Two other maqasid principles, *hifz al-din* (preservation of religion) and *hifz al-nasl* (preservation of generations), add a layer of protection to religious identity from various digital distortions and safeguard future generations from the harmful impacts of the spread of hoaxes (Al-Zaman, 2024).

The third finding highlights the contribution of Islamic hermeneutics through the concept of *tabayyun,* which originates directly from the Qur'an (Samsir & Yusril, 2024; Esack, 1997). Tabayyun is not simply an admonition to be cautious; it is an operational guideline encompassing three stages: verifying information sources, analyzing content, and assessing social impact before information is disseminated. Its relevance in the digital context is highly significant because these three stages directly address how disinformation operates, exploiting the speed of spread and the inattention of recipients (Lewandowsky & Van der Linden, 2023). Furthermore, Islamic hermeneutics emphasizes contextual reading, enabling the identification of manipulative framing

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and hidden intentions behind digital narratives, something that is crucial in addressing modern disinformation, which is often disguised as distorted facts (Rahman, 2009).

Methodological Interconnection as a Holistic Response

These three findings do not stand alone, but rather form an organic and complementary interconnected system. Usul al-fiqh serves to provide concrete and practical technical protocols for verification (Kamali, 2003). Maqasid al-Shari'ah provides normative-moral motivation that makes verification practices not merely a habit, but a continuing call of faith (Ibn Ashur, 2006). Meanwhile, Islamic hermeneutics provides the contextual sensitivity needed to critically and deeply understand digital narratives (Esack, 1997; Rahman, 2009).

This interconnected configuration directly addresses the fundamental weaknesses of existing partial approaches. The digital ethics crisis facing Muslim communities is multidimensional: it is simultaneously an epistemic crisis (how to know what is true), a normative crisis (how to behave properly), and a hermeneutical crisis (how to properly understand texts and narratives). Only an integrative framework that operates across these three dimensions simultaneously can provide a truly sustainable solution, not just a patchwork (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

This argument finds support from various sources in contemporary literature. Research on digital information crises confirms that technical strategies lacking a strong ethical foundation tend to be short-lived and easily exploited by disinformation actors (Tomassi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research on information democratization suggests that responding to digital epistemic crises requires interventions that operate simultaneously at both the institutional and individual levels (Schulz & Springer, 2023). Interestingly, the three Islamic scholarly traditions focused on in this study inherently encompass both levels: ushul al-fiqh and maqasid al-shari'ah provide the framework for institutional policy, while tabayyun and hermeneutics address everyday individual practices (Samsir & Yusril, 2024; Rosidi et al., 2022).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study produce an integrative framework that connects three methodologies of Islamic studies. ushul al-fiqh, maqasid al-syari'ah, and Islamic hermeneutics as a holistic response to the crisis of digital ethics and disinformation. The following discussion places these findings in critical dialogue with existing literature, while highlighting the novel contributions they offer.

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First, the findings regarding the relevance of ushul al-fiqh as a verification protocol strengthen and expand the argument that increasing source verification capacity is the most effective strategy in dealing with information chaos (Tomassi et al., 2024). Previous studies generally recommend technology-based *fact-checking mechanisms* as the primary solution (Aiméur et al., 2023). These findings suggest that *the jarh wa ta'dil tradition* offers a structurally equivalent, if not value-richer, epistemological framework because it integrates a moral dimension into verification procedures—something that has not been explored in previous digital ethics literature (Abdul Rahman, 2019; Kamali, 2003).

Second, the reinterpretation *of hifz al-'aql* as an active mandate for developing critical capacity is an important contribution. Previous studies on maqasid al-shari'ah and social media have generally interpreted this principle more passively (Rosidi et al., 2022). By emphasizing its active dimension, this study responds to criticisms that discussions of digital ethics have too neglected the value dimension (Gonzalez et al., 2020), while also offering a theologically sound and compelling normative foundation (Ibn Ashur, 2006; al-Raysuni, 1992). When linked to the argument that collective epistemic integrity is a prerequisite for healthy democratic life (Schulz & Springer, 2023), maqasid al-shari'ah appears to have resonance far beyond the boundaries of the Muslim community.

Third, the addition of the dimension of manipulative framing analysis to the concept of *tabayyun* represents a significant extension of previous studies that have discussed this concept (Samsir & Yusril, 2024). Islamic hermeneutics, through the principles of contextualization and *maqasid al-nass* , allows for a more in-depth reading of the narrative structure of disinformation, including the identification of manipulation techniques commonly used to distort perceptions (Esack, 1997; Rahman, 2009). This dimension of critical narrative analysis has not been explicitly articulated in previous literature on Islam and digital disinformation (Salsabila & Fauziannor, 2025).

The most important novelty of this research is the interconnected construction of the three methodologies as a complementary system. Partial approaches produce inadequate solutions because the digital ethics crisis is multidimensional—epistemic, normative, and hermeneutical at once (Abdul Rahman, 2019). The interconnectedness constructed here combines verification protocols (usul), ethics and moral motivation (maqasid), and contextual intelligence (hermeneutics) within a coherent and mutually supportive framework.

In terms of practical implications, this integrative framework has great potential for application in developing digital literacy curricula in Islamic educational institutions. The high level

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of vulnerability of Muslim communities to religious disinformation demonstrates the urgent need for structured, values-based interventions (Al-Zaman, 2024; Alimardani & Elswah, 2020). This framework provides a concrete roadmap: ushul al-fiqh can be translated into religiously legitimized fact-checking training modules (Kamali, 2003); maqasid al-shari'ah can form the foundation of digital media use policies in Islamic institutions (Ibn Ashur, 2006); and Islamic hermeneutics can enrich critical media literacy curricula (Rahman, 2009). Thus, this research not only contributes theoretically but also paves the way for concrete actions that can be taken by Islamic educational institutions and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

This research has successfully developed an integrative framework connecting three methodological traditions in Islamic studies as a systematic response to the crisis of digital ethics and disinformation. Usul al-fiqh, maqasid al-shari'ah, and Islamic hermeneutics are not only partially relevant, but actually reinforce each other when operated as a connected whole (Kamali, 2003; Ibn Ashur, 2006; Esack, 1997). Usul al-fiqh provides a verification procedure based on moral values; maqasid al-shari'ah provides a sustainable religious motivation to practice critical digital literacy; and Islamic hermeneutics equips both with the ability to read context and analyze narratives in depth (Samsir & Yusril, 2024; Rahman, 2009).

The most important contribution of this research is to demonstrate that the methodological isolation of previous studies has produced solutions that are not commensurate with the complexity of the problem (Abdul Rahman, 2019; Rosidi et al., 2022). Only by establishing holistic interconnections can the Islamic scholarly tradition provide truly effective digital ethics guidance, encompassing the technical, normative, and hermeneutical dimensions simultaneously.

These findings have direct implications for Islamic education: the resulting integrative framework can be readily developed into a comprehensive Islamic values-based digital literacy curriculum. However, this study has limitations due to its conceptual-theoretical nature and the lack of practical application of the framework. Future research is recommended to develop measurement instruments, test the effectiveness of this framework through concrete interventions in educational institutions, and explore additional dimensions such as aspects of cyber law from an Islamic perspective and the role of digital media in shaping the religious identity of young Muslims (Al-Zaman, 2024; Salsabila & Fauziannor, 2025).

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