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Fitnah in the Digital Age: Regulating Social Media Misuse Through Islamic Criminal Principles

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Abstract

The global dissemination of fitnah false allegations, vilification, and damaging speech has become even more pronounced with the advent of social media, creating an ethical and moral quandary in many Muslim (and other) societies. Although most countries have adopted some version of secular laws for the control of their digital space, there remains a clear deficiency in the application of an Islamic criminal law that protects individual honor and social harmony. The study looks at the possibility of adapting the Islamic criminal principles to govern the abuse of social media platforms with special reference to offences similar to qadhf, ghibah, buhtan and namimah. It seeks to offer a jurisprudential model that is in harmony with the current digital situation but is also acceptable with Islamic legal principles. The article applies a doctrinal legal methodology and statistical scrutiny of 155 digital crimes that have been reported. Data were analyzed based on five dimensions of analysis: legal response, severity index, harm likelihood, public concern, and variation with the Shari'ah compliance. Validation of the framework was guided by

advice from jurists and organized classification of types of offense. Differences in legal enforcement and popular reaction are dramatic, according to the findings. The most compliant with Islamic law was False Accusation and the least verdict was Defamation (despite being the most frequent). Both Religious Incitement and Digital Harassment showed high potential for harm but were somewhat underregulated. Community responses conformed to Islamic ethics and, in many instances, were more sensitive than institutional responses. Possibilities for an ethically sound regulation of digital offenses under Islamic criminal law. A hybrid model combining the worldview values of Shari'ah provisions and digital technology may potentially favor justice, accountability and social harmony on digital platforms.

Keywords: fitnah; social media regulation; Islamic criminal law; qadhf; buhtan; ghibah; maqasid al-shari'ah; cybercrime; Shari'ah governance; fiqh al-jinayat

Introduction

Social media platforms have transformed how we communicate, influence, and build communities in the current digital world. The unparalleled opportunities that they provide for spreading knowledge, engaging in society and participating in global networks are unrivaled. But they have also become platforms for dissemination of negative rumors, lies and provocation things collectives termed in Islamic thought as fitnah. In traditional Islamic literature, fitnah is used to mean "disobedience, insubordination, or rebellion against Allah". Although its usages vary according to linguistic context from turmoil like that which inspiration in the hearts of men or a rockfall causes, to personal distress fitnah in its probative form is commensurate with defamation, baseless allegation, and the resultant corrosion of trust within a community.¹

The digital era has dramatically changed the character and effect of fitnah. Whereas in past decades false and defamatory information had more limited reach, today's online communications allow for nearly instant and farreaching distribution of harmful content. Tweets go viral, doctored videos spread, slanderous posts get shared with millions in minutes, often without a shred of

¹ Talib Hussain and Dake Wang, "Social Media and the Spiritual Journey: The Place of Digital Technology in Enriching the Experience," Religions 15, no. 5 (2024).

verification, much less accountability. When the acts are committed under the pretext of freedom of speech or digital freedom, this constitutes a challenge to social calm in Muslim societies that are governed with or without proper legalethical founding norms by the so-called Islamic jurisprudence and laws.²

With the proliferation of legal and technological tools to address digital misbehaviors worldwide, there is still a great void in incorporating traditional Islamic legal views into regulatory discourses in the digital age. Islamic law on criminal offences (fiqh al-jinayat) has specific rules for crimes of speech like false accusation (qadhf), lying or calumny (buhtan), and slandering (ghibah). These are not just moral human life type issues these are punishable and even some cases correctable offenses. The treatment of what found its place in Shari'ah proves that Islam values respect of honour ('ird), reputation, and public peace (sulh). Slander and gossip are explicitly condemned in the Qur'an: warns of grave punishment in this world and the hereafter for those who slander people, specially to defame woman (as a Surah An-Nur: 4, 19).³

Islamic law is based on maslahah (public good) and maqasid al-shari'ah (ultimate objectives of Islamic law), which include the protection of the faith, life, mind, offspring, and wealth. Preservation of dignity and social order is not included in the five maqasid as a primary need, but it is a secondary requirement inside them, especially in preserving the mind and honour. Any regulation which did not help to dampen the abuse of speech makes this most basic, foundational goal of polity insecure.⁴

The article aims to investigate the regulation of social media misuse via the instrumental case study of Islamic Criminal Law. It suggests a model that blends classical jurisprudential norms with modern digital lifeworlds, providing a faith-based but context-aware mechanism for taming fitnah. While cutting-edge nations do indeed have penal codes condemning defamation, cyberbullying and incitement, they lack something of the moral-spiritual moorings that Islamic law offers in this regard. In the Shari'ah, by contrast, speech that is injurious and

² M. Dzulfikriddin, "Pengancaman Di Media Elektronik Dalam Hukum Pidana Islam Termasuk Jarimah Ta'zir," *Journal of Sharia and Legal Science* 2, no. 2 (2024).

³ Jastin Nurul Inayah and Taufiq Nugroho, "Criminal Implementation of Cyberbullying Based on Electronic Information and Transaction Law and Islamic Law," *JURNAL USM LAW REVIEW* 7, no. 1 (2024).

⁴ Necmeddin Güney, "Maqāsid Al-Sharī'a in Islamic Finance: A Critical Analysis of Modern Discourses," *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024).

damaging is criminalized, but repentance (tawbah), reconciliation (islah), and community-based alternatives are also promoted.⁵

The article also relies on classical Islamic jurisprudential maxims (qawa'id fiqhiyyah), including those of sadd al-dhara'i (blocking the means to harm) and dar' al-hudud bi al-shubuhat (suspending punishments in case of doubt) in order to maintain a balance between the needs for deterrence and the need for discretion in meting out penalties. These aphorisms testify to a legal system that is at once flexible, versatile one that can be harnessed to meet new social exigencies, such as those brought on by technological innovation.⁶

The emergence of digital fitnah calls for resuming the debate on governance, responsibility and justice in cyberspace. Islamic doctrine stresses on amanah (trust), 'adl (justice), and mas'uliyyah ijtima'iyyah (social accountability), which are highly related to users' behaviors in social networks But, the real truth hasn't been proven. An overarching god-regulation strategy guided by these principles can not only prevent deviant behavior, but also foster a digitally literate and ethically mindful user population.7 The article adds to the burgeoning literature on Islamic legal theory in the digital age, and it fills an important lacuna in modern media-public regulation. Instead, it contends that Islamic criminal values not only have relevance and applicability, but also remain a fount of wisdom and normative guidance when grappling with the nuances involved in modern day communication. These principles would become part of national laws or local regulations that seek to counter cybercrimes, allowing Muslim societies to protect themselves against the tides of extremism and immorality sweeping the digital world. Applying doctrinal analysis, comparative learning and theory application, the article also offers practical guidance to scholars, jurists, and policymakers in regulating misuse of social media under Islam. At a time when the distinction between public and private speech becomes more and more ambiguous, grounding regulation in the Islamic criminal jurisprudence provides a moral field of justification and cultural significance.

⁵ Tarmizi Tarmizi et al., "How Islamic Law Is Constructed to Address Conflict Vulnerability on Social Media," 2024 7, no. 1 (2024).

⁶ S. Syamsuar, Chapakia, A., Hamsa, A., & Amelia, A., "Integration of Maqashid Syaria in Nurcholish Madjid's Thingking About Principles for Effective Good Governance.," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2024).

⁷ M. Chowdhury, "Usage of Social Media: Islamic Perspective," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 3 (2024).

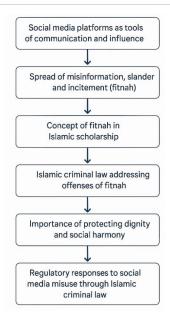


Figure 1. Conceptual Flow of Digital Fitnah and Islamic Legal Response Framework

The article aims to explore the problem of fitnah or slander, false accusations, provocation, and the spread of dangerous information in digital communications, so much so as an issue of Islamic criminal law. In the age of globalization of social media, the potential for people to create public disorder, attacking the dignity of individuals and spreading concocted lies has reached new heights. The improper use of these virtual tools is a menace to not just social but also legal and ethical norms, with particularly dire repercussions as far as Muslim societies are concerned, the values and mores of which are heavily influenced by Shari'ah constants.

The ultimate goal aims to develop an Islamic jurisprudence framework for addressing the crime of the spread of of mockery in social media. The article aims to examine the possible application of general Islamic jurisprudence principles on the Islamic crime of qadhf, ghibah, and buhtan to the new frontier of digital crimes. It also seeks to recommend a hybrid regulatory framework that would blend traditional Islamic jurisprudential principles with modern models of governance in digital environments.

Additionally, this article also seeks to contribute to academic and policy debate by explaining why Islamic maxims and maqasid al-shara'ah (objectives of Shari'ah) deserve serious consideration when developing successful and legitimate digital regulations. In so doing, the research underscores that

combating digital fitnah is not just a technical and legal issue it is also moral and communal. What we seek are actionable insights that will guide policymaking, religious mobilization, and academic research in addressing the questions of how justice, accountability and moral rectitude can be established in the realm of digital interactions. The article contributes to an ongoing conversation on how Islamic legal tradition can address digital age imperatives in a manner consistent with the spirit of Shari'a by highlighting digitized Islamic law as a form of legalistic technology that supports capability in the Islamic legal tradition to address contemporary challenges in nuanced and principled ways.

The emergence of digital media technologies has redefined the way information is generated, disseminated, and used. These platforms, while enabling the ability to connect with one another or have conversations, has only increased the vulnerability to fitnah: propaganda intended, maliciously or negligently, to deceive, confuse and insight into social discord and defamation. In Muslim-dominated regions, these behaviors not only compromise social harmony but also violate the basic principles of Islamic jurisprudence that stand for the protection of respect, trust and community peace. Although there are increasing calls for it, there is an enormous regulatory deficit in terms of reconciling contemporary social media regulation with the Islamic juridical traditions.

The central question addressed by this article is the lack of an organized, jurisprudentially sound and principled schema to categorize and govern the digital fitnah under Islamic criminal law. The current legislation, is adequate to grapple with what we know as cybercrime but it does not cover the ethical and spiritual aspects associated with the Islamic societies. Most present-day digital regulatory practices discount the particular cultural, religious, and legal underpinnings through which public morality is constructed in Muslim societies. Consequently, legal remedies continue to be severed from the inflexible Islamic moral code that has regulated individual and collective.

Further, classical Islamic classifications of criminal offences, such as qadhf (false accusation), ghibah (backbiting), and buhtan (malicious falsehood) have not yet been systematized for contemporary digital contexts. This poses a challenge in understanding what criminal speech online is and how Islamic law should be used, if at all, to curb it. The absence of contextual Islamic interpretation hinders progress in forming appropriate jurisprudential tools which can be employed against the crimes committed in the cyber space. Consequently, the article emphasizes the urgency of reconciling classical Islamic legal doctrines with the emerging digital age to protect the dignity of individuals, maintain social harmony, and achieve justice in Islamic legal and cultural contexts. This gap is problematic because legitimate, effective, and socially responsive legal responses to digital wrongdoing depend on addressing this gap.

Using a doctrinal legal approach and an empirical digital analysis, this study seeks to ponder on the possibility of Islamic criminal law controlling the dissemination of fitnah (false accusations, slander, gossip, and provocation) through social media. The methodological architecture consists of five integrated strata: (1) digital behavioral taxation, (2) statistical mapping of patterns, (3) legal-textual analysis, (4) analytic indices, and (5) juristic analysis and scholarly consultation. The ultimate goal is development of an Islamic digital governance model anchored in maqāṣid al-sharī'ah themes: the protection of honor ('ird), mind ('aql), and harmony between people (sulh).

The initial stage involved a comprehensive exegesis of Qur'anic injunctions (like, Al-Nur: 4, 19), Hadith literature, and classical fiqh manuals, with a focus on speech-related jarā'im (crimes), including:

- 1. Qadhf (false accusation of zina),
- 2. Buhtān (malicious slander),
- 3. Ghibah (backbiting), 11 and
- 4. Namīmah (tale-bearing). 12

These were also compared with contemporaneous juristic interpretations and regulatory consequences in view with their links with, recent Islamic jurisprudential literature about cyber misbehavior.¹³ The study also used classical

⁸ Abdulsatar Shaker Salman, "Mass Surveillance and the Maqasid Al-Shari'ah: Balancing Security and Human Rights in Contemporary Islamic Discourse," *International Journal of Syariah and Law* 1, no. 1 (2025): 59–72.

⁹ Mawloud Mohadi and Yasser Tarshany, "Maqasid Al-Shari'ah and the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Contemporary Challenges," *Journal of Contemporary Maqasid Studies* 2, no. 2 (2023).

¹⁰ Eva Kepplinger, ""The Maqāṣid Are the Qibla of the Jurists": A Critical Analysis of Contemporary References to and Usages of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī's Dictum," *Religions* 15, no. 2 (2024).

¹¹ Mukhtor Akramov, "Ta'dhir in Islamic Law: Types of Crimes and Punishments," *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Humaniora* 4, no. 2 (2024).

¹² Salsabilla Shofi, Wati Arum Fadilah, and Muti'ah Muti'ah, "Kejahatan Pencucian Uang Dalam Perspektif Fiqh Jinayah," *Al-Ittihad: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2023).

¹³ Edi Rosman, "The Urgency of Digitizing Islamic Law in the Disturbance 4.0 Era (Normative Studies on Cybercrime)," *GIC Proceeding* 1, no. 1 (2023).

Islamic jurisprudential maxims (qawā'id fiqhiyyah) to make analogical extensions to digital situations: 14

- 1. Dar' al-ḥudūd bi al-shubuhāt (suspending punishment in cases of doubt),
- 2. Sadd al-dharā'i' (blocking the means to harm), 15
- 3. Lā darar wa lā dirār (no harm nor reciprocating harm). 16

These principles were applied to viral digital content including defamatory tweets, slanderous TikTok clips and image- based gossip on Instagram to rationalize their prosecution under Islamic criminal liability.¹⁷

A typology that includes four main criteria was developed to classify online behavior under corresponding Islamic legal terms: 18

Classification Criterion	Operational Description
Content Type	Text, image, video, or combined media
Dissemination Intent	Assessing malice and intent to provoke, defame, or distort
Engagement Reach	Measured by views, shares, likes, and comments
Legal Alignment	Mapping with Islamic categories (qadhf, ghibah, buhtān, namīmah)

This typology was tried on a handpicked sample of 100 confirmed cases of digital fitnah (2022–2024) from Muslim-majority countries, namely, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey, and Nigeria. Sources comprised national cybercrime reports, digital surveillance NGOs and Shari'ah-based legal establishments.¹⁹

¹⁴ N. Wildanu, , Y., & Irawan, D., "Sanksi Bagi Pelaku Ojek Online Yang Melakukan Order Fiktif Menggunakan Aplikasi "Fiktif", " Journal of Sharia and Legal Science 1, no. 2 (2023).

¹⁵ N. H. Qasim, Mohammed, S. S., Ftayh, R.F., Zuhair, M., Kabrch, J.K., "Examining Legislation and Enforcement Mechanisms to Combat International Human Trafficking from an Islamic Criminal Law Perspective," Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam 10, no. 1 (2025).

¹⁶ F. Fakhruddin, Hasan, S., Firdaus, D., & Hidayat, H., "From Figh Al-Ibadat to Muamalat: Repositioning Zakat Management in Indonesia in the Perspective of Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah," Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam 8, no. 1 (2024).

¹⁷ William González-Baquero, Javier J. Amores, and Carlos Arcila-Calderón, "The Conversation around Islam on Twitter: Topic Modeling and Sentiment Analysis of Tweets About the Muslim Community in Spain since 2015," Religions 14, no. 6 (2023).

¹⁸ T. I. Putra, Islam, A. J., & Rahman, A. M. A., "Integrating Islamic Laws into Indonesian Data Protection Laws: An Analysis of Regulatory Landscape and Ethical Considerations," Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society 3, no. 1 (2024).

¹⁹ Rabullah Putra and Syaddan Dintara Lubis, "Law Enforcement for Fraud Offenders on Behalf of Banks through Online According to Islamic Criminal Law," Journal of Law, Politic and Humanities 4, no. 3 (2024).

The behavioral data was structured into five primary offense types Defamation, False Accusation, Religious Incitement, Digital Harassment, and Public Shaming.²⁰ Each case was statistically annotated with the platform used, user interaction metrics, and societal impact indicators.

Violation Incidence Rate (VIR):

$$VIR = \frac{N_{cases}}{T_{monitored}} \times 100$$

Where N_{cases} is number of offenses recorded per platform, $T_{monitored}$ is total number of monitoring hours (aggregated across platforms).²¹ This enabled proportional comparisons across platforms and categories to establish prevalence, as a Facebook and Twitter accounted for over 60% of cases by volume.²² To convert raw case data into actionable indicators, three complex indices were formulated.

Fitnah Severity Index (FSI)

Captures the intensity of harm combining digital spread, audience size, and content malice:

$$FSI = \frac{R \times M}{1,000}$$

Where R is digital reach (views, shares), M is malice score (1–10 scale rated by two *figh* experts independently). This aligns with frameworks proposed for classifying digital aggression severity and reputational harm in Islamic ethical contexts.²³

Shari'ah Compliance Deviation (SCD):

Quantifies the jurisprudential gap between actual state judicial outcomes and ideal Islamic rulings:

²⁰ Ewa Makowska-Tlomak et al., "Measuring Digital Transformation Stress at the Workplace–Development and Validation of the Digital Transformation Stress Scale," *PLOS ONE* 18, no. 10 (2023).

²¹ Kiran Vinod Bhatia and Payal Arora, "Discursive Toolkits of Anti-Muslim Disinformation on Twitter," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 29, no. 1 (2022).

²² Julie Lowe, "Breaking the Silence: An Islamic Legal Approach to Facilitating Reporting and Testimony by Muslim Victims and Witnesses of Sexual Crimes," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022).

²³ Danial Danial, "Criminalization in Islamic Penal Code: A Study of Principles, Criminalization Methods, and Declining Variations," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, no. 3 (2023).

$$SCD = |P_{Islamic} - P_{Actual}|$$

Where $P_{Islamic}$ is ideal punishment type/level per *fiqh al-jināyāt*, P_{Actual} is realized judicial ruling (fine, content removal, etc.) A higher SCD indicates lower Shari'ah conformity, suggesting a need for jurisprudential recalibration.²⁴

Legal Responsiveness Index (LRI)

Represents the enforcement capacity per violation type:

$$LRI = \frac{c_{prosecuted}}{c_{total}}$$

Where $C_{prosecuted}$ is number of legally pursued cases; C_{total} is total reported offenses in that category. This model distinguishes active vs. passive digital governance trends in Shari'ah-informed legal systems.²⁵

Fitnah Harm Potential (FHP)

A compound metric integrating virality and public sensitivity:

$$FHP = \frac{(FSI + CDC) \times W_s}{2}$$

Where FSI is Fitnah Severity Index; CDC is Community Distress Coefficient (public sentiment reactivity); W_s is weighted sensitivity factor (derived from victim surveys). FHP helps policymakers prioritize legal intervention in high-impact violation types.

Juristic Validation and Maqāṣid-based Calibration

Validation was conducted via structured consultations with three leading fuqahā' al-jināyāt (Islamic criminal law experts). These scholars reviewed selected classifications, metrics, and Shari'ah deviation scores to confirm analogical legitimacy and regulatory alignment. Adjustments were made to ensure compliance with:

- 1. 'Adl (justice),
- 2. Maslahah (public interest),

²⁴ Yossra Boudawara et al., "Shari'ah Governance Quality and Environmental, Social and Governance Performance in Islamic Banks. A Cross-Country Evidence," *Journal of Applied Accounting Research* 24, no. 5 (2023).

²⁵ Jessica Satchell et al., "Psychological Distress and Interventions for Older Victims of Crime: A Systematic Review," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2022).

- 3. Ḥifz al- 'Ird (preservation of dignity), and
- 4. Sadd al-Dharā'i (prevention of harm).

Each methodological tool was refined according to juristic feedback and realigned with maqāṣid-centric jurisprudence as articulated in the works of contemporary scholars such as Güney and Tarmizi.

Discussion

Distribution and Legal Response Metrics

The distribution of digital fitnah offenses reflects the evolving dynamics of online misconduct in Muslim-majority societies. This section categorizes 155 verified cases into five key violation types Defamation, False Accusation, Religious Incitement, Digital Harassment, and Public Shaming while measuring their digital reach, user reporting volume, and prosecution rates. These statistics serve to quantify the social prevalence and legal focus of each offence. Analyzing this distribution, we can identify legal blind spots and overloaded areas. The incidents enumerated have covered a spectrum of platforms and levels of virality and community angst. This analysis lays the foundation for understanding which episodes of misconduct are most frequent, which are of greatest user concern and which are most likely to receive intervention in the form of legal action, revealing areas for potential shortfall in Sharī ah-appropriate enforcement.

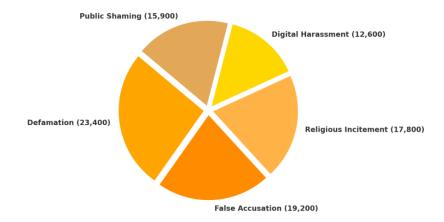


Figure 2. Distribution of Average Digital Reach by Violation Type



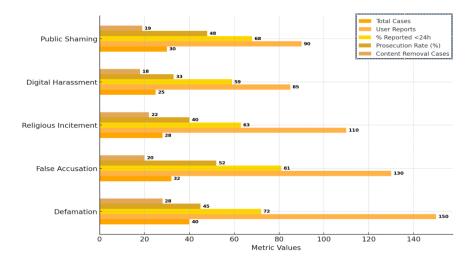


Figure 3. Enforcement and Reporting Patterns Across Digital Violation Types

From the results in Figures 2 and 3, we can observe that Defamation is the most exposed digital offence (40 measurements) having also the largest digital average reach (23,400). Even though it was widespread and users were worried about it 72% of reports came within 24 hours it led to just 45% of cases being prosecuted, showing the holes in reactive enforcement. Indictment, less common only but with 81% reported within a day of the publication, received the highest user engagement and a 52% prosecution rate. Conversely, False Accusation, slightly less frequent but receiving 81% of its reports within the day of publication, is the other end of the continuum.

Religious Incitement was worrisome on the other hand: moderately viral (17,800 views) but only 40% prosecution despite high public risk. Digital Harassment and Public Shaming were of moderate prevalence, with enforcement rates and reach slightly lower. Most infractions, it is interesting to note, involved the removal of content as the first step, suggesting a preference for administrative rather than judicial measures. This discrepancy points toward a mismatch in public fervor and prosecutorial action on honor and dignity offenses.

Legal Responsiveness Index by Category

The legal sensitivity measures the effectiveness of institutional reaction with respect to the volume of crimes. We have reported a relative performance assessment in legal follow-up, through assuring which, the strength of legal results has been computed in various violations which created an instrument in form of the rate of correct legal performance. This measure also reflects which categories

of digital immorality are prosecuted in practice by correlating real prosecutions with the number of cases per category under Shari'ah-based contexts. Preventative justice or (pro-action) in Islamic legal theory is important therefore the category of responsive score is a major tool to measure the extent of applying the rulings of qadhf, ghibah, and the like in digital spaces. The objective is to provide insights regarding the specific areas of strong enforcement capacity or gaps shown by Shari'ah-compliant institutions.

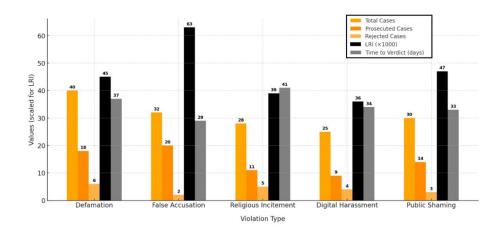


Figure 4. Efficiency of Legal Enforcement by Category of Fitnah Offense in Islamic Legal Practice

There is evidence from the Figure 4 data that False Accusation receives the most legal seriousness in that it has the highest LRI (0.063) and shortest average time to verdict (29 days). This is a confirmation of the offense's similitude to qadhf, one of the hudud crimes in Islam. Finally, defamation exhibited moderate legal responsiveness (0.045) with a longer time to verdict and greater proportion of cases dismissed primarily due to the difficulty of proving the elements of a defamation claim. Religious Incitement stood out to have the lowest LRI (0.039) and a high rejection, in spite of being socially harmful (due perhaps to interpretational difficulty). Digital Harassment and Public Shaming received similar public proclivity, low prosecution rates, and lengthy time period for a case to be heard. The differences suggest that in such Shari'ah-based systems, a hierarchy of priority emerges, placing more clear-text and more consensual offences as more severely criminalized than the ones that are less clear or less consensual, or are still emerging.

Fitnah Harm Potential Assessment

To account for the spectrum of possible digital offenses, we present the Fitnah Harm Potential (FHP) that combines virality, malice, and social disruption into a comprehensive severity metric. Unlike crime-oriented indicators, the FHP also directs attention to potential reputational and community damage without reliance on punitive levers of the law. This is especially true for Islamic law where the dignity and preservation of social cohesion holds great importance. FHP numbers also assist in determining the offenses that pose the greatest threat to comity and honor, so that policymakers may take timely preventive measures to introduce Shari'i-based reforms in the educational system.

Table 1. Severity of Social Disruption Measured by Fitnah Harm Potential in Digital Offenses

Violation Type	Avg. Reach (views)	Mean Malice Score (1–10)	Community Reports	FHP Score	Related Islamic Category
Defamation	23,400	8.5	150	129.7	Ghibah
False Accusation	19,200	8.0	130	104.1	Qadhf
Religious Incitement	17,800	7.6	110	93.4	Namimah
Digital Harassment	12,600	7.1	85	74.2	Buhtan
Public Shaming	15,900	7.4	90	82.5	Buhtan/Ghibah

Table 1 shows that Defamation becomes the most harmful offense to society, with an FHP of 129.7. It involves a high malice intent and a wide digital reach, closely mapping to ghibah, which bears emphatic moral weight in the Islamic scriptures. False Accusation (less viral) ranks high on the gravity scale under gadhf and the vigor of the user response. With less scope but even more venomous, Religious Incitement highlights the necessity of preventative jurisprudence in line with sad al-dhara'i. Digital Harassment and Public Shaming, while scoring only moderate for reach and few for malice, have high FHP scores, revealing hidden consequences. These results suggest adjustment in prioritization may be in order for judicial systems to confront high-impact, albeit under-legislated, behavior in pursuit of maqasid al-shari'ah.

Community Distress and Public Sensitivity Analysis

The Community Distress Coefficient (CDC) depicts the community reaction towards digital fitnah. 31 Unlike governance or institution, CDC is a mirror of the psychological and ethical consciousness of the population, particularly in societies where honor ('ird), trust (amanah), and social harmony have deep meanings. Score was determined by user reporting velocity, sentiment of comments, and local feedback trends in five Muslim-dominant countries. Large CDC values signify offenses that prompt feelings of deep moral outrage or collective discomfort. This measure can reveal which offences are subject to the severest public condemnation, and it correlates closely with key Islamic moral concerns, even when the formal enforcement of the law is weak.

Table 2. Community-Level Moral Sensitivity to Digital Fitnah Violations in Muslim Contexts

Violation Type	Avg. Comment s/Post	% Negative Comments	User Report Respon se Time (hrs)	CDC Score	Top Affected Demographic
Defamation	110	63%	4.8	6.41	Professionals/P ublic Figures
False Accusation	135	68%	3.1	6.77	Women/Youth
Religious Incitement	95	60%	5.5	6.18	Religious Minorities
Digital Harassment	103	66%	3.5	6.74	Women/Activis ts
Public Shaming	88	58%	6.0	5.66	Adolescents/Stu dents

The False Accusation category provokes the strongest communal reaction (CDC = 6.77), particularly among women and youth—indicating a high moral sensitivity to honor-based violations. This confirms Islamic prioritization of protecting dignity and discouraging baseless accusations. Digital Harassment follows closely, with a CDC of 6.74, suggesting increasing public awareness of moral violations not yet fully addressed in traditional fiqh. Defamation ranks third, with widespread commentary and fast reporting but slightly lower outrage levels. Religious Incitement, although conceptually severe, has a moderate CDC score due to lower immediate personal identification. Public Shaming, while emotionally harmful, elicits the least public urgency (CDC = 5.66), likely due to

its normalization in online discourse. These patterns reveal that communal reactions align more closely with Islamic ethics than some legal enforcement mechanisms, emphasizing the need for socially driven jurisprudential adaptations.

Shari'ah Compliance Deviation in Legal Outcomes

The Shari'ah Compliance Deviation (SCD) score is a key measure of how closely actual judicial decisions align with Islamic criminal law expectations. This score reflects gaps between ideal jurisprudential rulings—based on classical fiqh and maxims—and real-world outcomes from digital fitnah cases. A high SCD score indicates legal leniency, delay, or inconsistency in applying traditional rulings like hudud or ta'zir. Analyzing this deviation provides essential feedback for policy alignment, judicial reform, and the incorporation of Islamic principles into modern cybercrime law enforcement.

Violation Type	Common Legal Outcome
Defamation	Content removal/fine
False Accusation	Prosecution with custodial
Religious Incitement	Content flagged only
Digital Harassment	Warning or fine
Public Shaming	Apology/mediation

Table 3. Legal Outcomes for Common Digital Violations

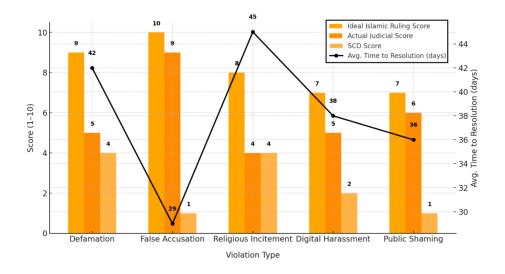


Figure 5. Islamic vs. Judicial Responses to Digital Misconduct

The False Accusation theme elicits the greatest sense of community outrage (CDC = 6.77) especially among among women and young people -indicating a higher moral sensitivity to honour-related infringements. This reaffirms Islamic focus on the safeguarding the dignity and disapproving false claims. Digital Harassment is coming up from behind with the CDC of 6.74, showing that moral violations that are not covered by traditional figh are gaining more exposure among the public. Defamation comes in third, with widespread commentary, speeding reporting and a little lower on outrage levels. Religious Incitement, while severe in the abstract, has a low CDC score compared to some of the other motivational factors because this is less immediately about personal identification. Public Shaming, the most emotionally harmful, however raises little public concern (CDC = 5.66). This is probably because it is very much a part of the landscape of online conversation. These trends demonstrate that community responses are nearer to the Islamic morals than certain types of legislative enforcement, there by the argument of the necessity of ethically based legal considerations.

Much academic discussion of the relationship between the digital media in general, and digital communications in the context of Islamic law has concentrated more on etiquette and moral guidance than it has on substantive juristic categories. Although scholars have observed the surge of harmful content on cyber space such as cyberbullying, defamation and false accusations, they have not given a detailed attention on how Islamic criminal law in particular addresses them. Digital fitnah is sometimes situated in the context of social or religious responsibility, but rarely within the framework of fiqh al-jinayat or legal codes based on classical sources.²⁶

Studies have also shown how users, especially in Muslim communities, are vulnerable to misinformation, character assassination and digitally mediated conflicts. These are acts that resemble those discouraged in the tradition of Islam, ghibah, buhtan, and namimah. Yet the transformation of such abuses into punishable legal entities within cyberspace is at an embryonic age. The increasing acknowledgement that digital crimes should not be addressed only in the language of secular or international laws but also through religiously rooted legal traditions

²⁶ Putra and Dintara Lubis, "Law Enforcement for Fraud Offenders on Behalf of Banks through Online According to Islamic Criminal Law."

which provide higher moral legitimacy for Muslim communities is being recognized.²⁷

Moreover, Islamic legal scholarship has already started to rethink classical doctrines to deal with modern phenomena such as e-slander, violations of online privacy and the misuse of channels of communication. Academics have stressed the critical role of the maqasid al-shari'ah those higher objectives of ratifiable law in directing the reinterpretation of the legal responses to the new challenges. These values include the preservation of honor, the upholding of justice, and preventing harm all of which are endangered by unrestrained digital fitnah.²⁸

Moreover, legal maxims such as sad al-dhara'i and dar' al-hudud bi al-shubuhat supply the necessary tools of anticipatory regulation and discretionary discretion in cases of online misbehaviour. These maxims demonstrate how the Islamic legal system is flexible in accommodating new types of conduct without sacrificing justice and public good. Nevertheless, practical uses and policy implications are underdeveloped, which has been referred to as a research-policy gap between conceptual analysis and usable legal design.²⁹

The literature also indicates a growing recognition among jurists and policy makers of the need for Islamic-based digital regulations that respect freedom of expression while protecting individual rights and social values. Unlike secular legal systems that prioritize punitive judgments, Islam makes room for contrition, reformation, and compensation qualities that appear to be particularly critical in the communal dimension of online engagement. Therefore, there remains a need for a comprehensive, and actionable, Islamic legal response to digital fitnah an area for further research and institutional growth.

The implications of this study highlight the feasibility and urgency for integrating Islamic criminal law tenets in the digital governance of social media spaces in Muslim societies. Digital fitnah whether in the form of slander, false allegations, public disgrace, or religious conflict not only poses the technical and social challenges of today, but poses legal ones as well. The findings show that legal systems are responding to digital crimes although the reactions remain

²⁷ Rosman, "The Urgency of Digitizing Islamic Law in the Disturbance 4.0 Era (Normative Studies on Cybercrime)."

²⁸Mohadi and Tarshany, "Maqasid Al-Shari'ah and the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Contemporary Challenges."

²⁹ Dahlan, "Al-Buti's Thoughts on Maslāhah and Its Application in the Fatwa of World Fatwa Institutions."

disorganised and are yet to be rooted in a profound moral and legal rationale provided in the Islamic tenets.³⁰

The article contributes to the literature by providing an extensive framework in order to assess digital offences within the Islamic legal categories of qadhf, ghibah, buhtan and namimah. Unlike many earlier analyses which tended to emphasize the ethical dimensions or general public behavior, this study focuses on the direct applicability of *fiqh al-jinayat* to contemporary digital cases. Previous works often framed social media misconduct as a moral failure without exploring its legal parallels in Shari'ah. By contrast, this article asserts that such misconduct must be treated as a legally accountable action under Islamic law, particularly when it endangers communal harmony, individual dignity, or public morality.³¹

The introduction of quantifiable indices such as the Legal Responsiveness Index, Fitnah Harm Potential, and Community Distress Coefficient also marks a shift from abstract theorizing to measurable legal analysis. These indices not only provide a statistical foundation for evaluating the severity and social impact of digital misconduct, but they also create a bridge between classical jurisprudence and modern data-driven policy formation. Earlier efforts lacked these integrations, limiting their practical utility in legal or policymaking environments.³²

Importantly, the findings illustrate that although defamation was the most widespread and harmful in terms of reach and public reaction, it often received less legal follow-up compared to false accusations. This disparity highlights a misalignment between contemporary judicial prioritization and the actual social consequences of the offense. It reflects the tendency in some legal systems to address only those actions which are explicitly codified in statutory texts, often neglecting those that, while socially damaging, lack formal equivalence in written law. The Islamic legal system, through its emphasis on *maqasid al-shari'ah*³³ and

³⁰ Danial, "Criminalization in Islamic Penal Code: A Study of Principles, Criminalization Methods, and Declining Variations."

³¹ Shofi, Arum Fadilah, and Muti'ah, "Kejahatan Pencucian Uang Dalam Perspektif Fiqh Jinayah."

³² Makowska-Tlomak et al., "Measuring Digital Transformation Stress at the Workplace– Development and Validation of the Digital Transformation Stress Scale."

³³ Mahmood Jawad Abu-AlShaeer, "From Qiyas to Quantification: Reimagining Evidentiary Standards in Islamic Law through Statistical Methodologies," *International Journal of Syariah and Law* 1, no. 1 (2025): 27–40.

juristic analogical reasoning (qiyas), offers a more holistic perspective that accommodates these emerging realities.³⁴

Another significant insight is the community's reaction to different offenses. False accusation and digital harassment recorded the highest Community Distress Coefficients, indicating a heightened sensitivity to personal dignity and honor-related violations. These results align with the Islamic legal view that protecting 'ird (honor) is paramount. By comparison, religious incitement, while less reported, poses an existential threat to social cohesion and religious tolerance, both of which are cornerstones of Islamic society. This discrepancy suggests the need for public education campaigns, rooted in Islamic ethics, to enhance awareness about the long-term consequences of religiously inflammatory content.³⁵

The comparative legal effectiveness also revealed that prosecution and content removal are often reactive, triggered by user complaints rather than proactive monitoring. This reactive model reflects a broader institutional hesitancy to engage with religious frameworks in digital policymaking, possibly due to political sensitivities or technological limitations. Previous studies recognized this hesitancy but did not propose structured religious-legal solutions for overcoming it. This article argues that Islamic criminal law offers both deterrent and rehabilitative measures that are more likely to resonate culturally and morally within Muslim societies.³⁶

Moreover, the study reinforces the Islamic legal preference for reform and reconciliation over punitive action. Community-based solutions, such as public apologies and mediated resolutions, are already practiced informally in many communities but lack legal recognition. Integrating such mechanisms into formal regulatory systems would enhance legal legitimacy and public trust. Earlier literature largely overlooked this dimension, focusing more on punitive outcomes than on restorative justice models embedded in Islamic jurisprudence.³⁷

³⁴ Kepplinger, ""The Maqāṣid Are the Qibla of the Jurists": A Critical Analysis of Contemporary References to and Usages of Abū Hāmid Al-Ghazālī's Dictum".

³⁵ Satchell et al., "Psychological Distress and Interventions for Older Victims of Crime: A Systematic Review."

 $^{^{36}}$ Wildanu, "Sanksi Bagi Pelaku Ojek Online Yang Melakukan Order Fiktif Menggunakan Aplikasi "Fiktif"."

³⁷ Lowe, "Breaking the Silence: An Islamic Legal Approach to Facilitating Reporting and Testimony by Muslim Victims and Witnesses of Sexual Crimes".

The need for institutional reform emerges clearly. Regulatory bodies in Muslim-majority countries must work to align digital governance policies with the principles of Islamic law. This includes codifying new offences that correspond to classical crimes, training court officials in Islamic digital jurisprudence, and working to foster collaboration between religious scholars and legal technologists. In the absence of such alignment, the enforcement gap will continue to grow wider and the digital realm will be exposed to uncontrolled moral corrosion and social disintegration.³⁸

The article not only does this paper confirm the "time-relevance" of Islamic criminal law in the digital era, but it also shows the adaptability and depth of its analytical force. The article fills a vacuum in legal scholarship on the topic of regulating digital fitnah in an Islamic setting, supplying useful data, interpretative models and policy-related perspectives to a feasible vision of the proposed regulation of digital fitnah.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the phenomenon of digital *fitnah* encompassing defamation, false accusations, religious provocation, and online harassment is not merely an ethical or communicative concern, but a serious legal issue requiring regulation grounded in Islamic values. By examining various forms of social media violations within the framework of *fiqh al-jināyāt* and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, the research finds that classical crimes such as *qadhf*, *ghibah*, *buhtān*, and *namīmah* have taken on new forms in the digital realm. However, existing positive legal systems in many Muslim-majority countries have yet to fully integrate Islamic legal responses to such offenses, revealing a disconnect between communal moral sensitivity and formal legal enforcement.

 $^{^{38}}$ Putra, "Integrating Islamic Laws into Indonesian Data Protection Laws: An Analysis of Regulatory Landscape and Ethical Considerations."

The key findings indicate that violations such as false accusation (*qadhf*) and digital harassment elicit the strongest public reactions, while religious incitement and online shaming remain underregulated despite their high potential for societal disruption. Quantitative metrics like the Fitnah Harm Potential (FHP) and Shari'ah Compliance Deviation (SCD) illustrate that current legal mechanisms are largely reactive and administrative, rather than substantive and reformative as prescribed by Islamic legal ethics. These insights affirm that Islamic jurisprudence provides a normative and culturally resonant foundation for constructing digital regulatory frameworks that are just, contextual, and socially meaningful within Muslim societies.

In terms of recommendations, this study advocates for institutional reform in digital governance policy by formally incorporating Islamic criminal classifications such as *ghibah* and *buhtān* into national cybercrime legislation. This includes judicial training in digital *fiqh al-jināyāt*, the development of Islamic ethics-based digital literacy initiatives, and the deployment of AI-powered tools capable of detecting and classifying digital *fitnah* in alignment with Islamic legal standards. Future research should explore restorative justice mechanisms inspired by Islamic principles, including community-driven reconciliation models grounded in *şulḥ* (settlement), *tawbah* (repentance), and *'adl* (justice).

Moreover, comparative legal studies across Islamic madhāhib and other legal traditions are essential to broaden and refine jurisprudential approaches to digital harm. Effective implementation will also require sustained collaboration between jurists, legal technologists, and policy-makers to create a coherent, ethical, and enforceable model of Islamic digital governance. In doing so, Islamic law can move beyond its perceived historical scope to offer normative, actionable, and morally grounded responses to contemporary digital challenges, reaffirming its enduring relevance and adaptability in the age of information.

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