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LOVE, EGO, AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ETHICS: A RUMI-BASED READING OF QS AL-ḤUJURĀT [49]: 11–13

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Abstract

*This article examines digital communication ethics through a Sufi reading of QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 based on Jalaluddin Rumi's *Fihi Ma Fihi*. The background of this study is the ethical crisis of digital speech, marked by mockery, insults, offensive labeling, hoaxes, suspicion, public shaming, and digital backbiting. This study uses a qualitative method with a library research design. The primary sources are the *Qur'an*, especially QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13, and Rumi's *Fihi Ma Fihi*, while the secondary sources include classical and contemporary tafsir, Sufi literature, and studies on digital communication ethics. The analysis shows that QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 provides a normative foundation for communication ethics by prohibiting mockery, suspicion, spying, and backbiting, while affirming *ta'aruf* as the basis of human relations. Rumi's Sufi perspective deepens these values by locating destructive speech in the unpurified heart. Mockery comes from ego, suspicion from inner darkness, and backbiting from the loss of love and self-restraint. This article concludes that Islamic digital ethics should not only regulate external speech and information sharing, but also cultivate *tawadhu*, *tabayyun*, compassion, human dignity, and *muhasabah*. Rumi's education of love offers a spiritual foundation for transforming digital speech into ethical communication.*

Keywords: digital communication; QS al-Ḥujurāt; Jalaluddin Rumi; Sufi ethics

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji etika komunikasi digital melalui pembacaan sufi atas QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 berdasarkan pemikiran Jalaluddin Rumi dalam *Fihi Ma Fihi*. Latar belakang penelitian ini adalah krisis etika komunikasi digital yang tampak dalam bentuk hinaan, pelabelan buruk, hoaks, prasangka, perundungan, pengungkapan aib, dan ghibah digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi kepustakaan. Sumber primer penelitian adalah Al-Qur'an, khususnya QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13, dan *Fihi Ma Fihi* karya Jalaluddin Rumi. Sumber sekunder meliputi kitab tafsir klasik dan kontemporer, literatur tasawuf, serta artikel tentang etika komunikasi digital. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 memberikan dasar normatif bagi etika komunikasi dengan melarang penghinaan, prasangka, tajassus, dan ghibah, serta menegaskan *ta'aruf* sebagai dasar relasi kemanusiaan. Perspektif sufi Rumi memperdalam nilai tersebut dengan menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi destruktif bersumber dari hati yang belum tersucikan. Hinaan lahir dari ego, prasangka dari kegelapan batin, dan ghibah dari hilangnya cinta serta pengendalian diri. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa etika digital Islam tidak hanya mengatur ucapan dan penyebaran informasi, tetapi juga menuntut pembentukan *tawadhu*, *tabayyun*, kasih sayang, penghormatan martabat manusia, dan *muhasabah*. Pendidikan cinta Rumi menawarkan dasar spiritual bagi transformasi ujaran digital menjadi komunikasi etis.

Kata Kunci: komunikasi digital; QS al-Ḥujurāt; Jalaluddin Rumi; etika sufi



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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital communication has become a major moral arena in contemporary society. Social media is not merely a tool for sending messages, but a structured environment that shapes how users speak, react, judge, and build social identity (Evans et al., 2017). Platform features such as visibility, persistence, association, and editability create specific possibilities for action, so communication in digital space is shaped by both human intention and technological affordance.

The central problem of this article is the ethical crisis of digital speech. Social media often changes communication into a space of insult, provocation, harsh judgment, rumor circulation, and public humiliation. Trolling does not only come from a small group of immoral users, because negative mood and exposure to toxic discussion can make ordinary users participate in harmful communication (Cheng et al., 2017). Abusive online behavior also appears in many forms, including offensive language, hateful expression, sexism, racism, aggression, and cyberbullying.

The problem becomes more serious when hostile expression spreads through networked communication. Hate speech can diffuse faster and reach wider audiences when hateful users form strong network positions and circulate hostile content repeatedly (Mathew et al., 2019). Echo chambers also intensify this problem because users tend to interact with like-minded peers, so information and emotion move inside homophilic clusters rather than through balanced dialogue (Cinelli et al., 2021). These patterns explain why digital disagreement can easily become group hostility. False information adds another ethical dimension to the crisis. Fake news is not a single phenomenon, because it includes satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda, depending on the level of facticity and deception (Tandoc et al., 2017). Rumors also circulate in social media because early information during fast-moving events is often incomplete, unverified, and emotionally attractive (Firmansyah, n.d.). The psychology of fake news further indicates that misinformation spreads partly because users fail to focus on accuracy before sharing content.



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Digital humiliation is another important concern. Online shaming turns perceived mistakes into public punishment, often through moral judgment, social policing, and reputational attack (Muir et al., 2023). Public shaming also reflects a new form of social control, because platforms allow mass audiences to punish someone without clear limits of proportion, context, or ethical responsibility (Forestal, 2024). This phenomenon is close to digital *ghibah* and *tajassus*, because another person's fault becomes public content.

Islamic ethics offers a strong normative foundation for this problem. QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 prohibits mockery, insult, offensive nicknames, negative suspicion, spying, and backbiting, while also affirming that human diversity exists for *ta'āruf*. The gap in many discussions is that digital ethics is often treated as a problem of literacy, regulation, or platform governance, while the inner causes of destructive communication receive less attention. The problem of digital speech is therefore not only informational, but also spiritual. A Sufi perspective is needed because destructive speech often begins in the heart. Jalaluddin Rumi's *Fihi Ma Fihi* is relevant because it treats love, humility, patience, truthfulness, trust in God, and moral discipline as foundations of spiritual formation (Hasniar et al., 2024). Rumi's concept of *mahabbah* also expands love beyond emotion and places it as a spiritual orientation that directs human beings toward God and ethical life (Octafany, 2020). The Sufi values in *Fihi Ma Fihi* also have educational implications because they train the soul to form religious and ethical character (Rumi, 2014).

The research problem can be stated as follows: digital communication ethics based on QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 requires a Sufi reading because mockery, suspicion, backbiting, and public humiliation are rooted in ego, lovelessness, and an unpurified heart. This article aims to analyze QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 through Rumi's perspective in *Fihi Ma Fihi* and to formulate a love-based model of digital communication ethics. The theoretical benefit is to connect Qur'anic ethics, Sufi interpretation, and digital media studies. The practical benefit is to offer ethical principles for digital users: humility before commenting, *tabayyun* before sharing, compassion before criticizing, and *muhassabah* before judging. The working hypothesis is that Rumi's education of love can deepen Qur'anic digital ethics by shifting the focus from external speech control to inner purification. This literature review can build the



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article's framework because it moves from digital problems, to Qur'anic ethics, and finally to Rumi's Sufi interpretation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a library research design. The object of analysis is not field behavior, but texts, concepts, and interpretive meanings related to digital communication ethics, QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13, and Jalaluddin Rumi's Sufi thought. The primary sources are the Qur'an, especially QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13, and Rumi's *Fihi Ma Fihi*. The Qur'anic verses are used to identify the ethical principles of communication, while *Fihi Ma Fihi* is used to explore Rumi's concepts of love, humility, self-reflection, and moral purification. The secondary sources include classical and contemporary tafsir, Sufi literature, journal articles on digital communication ethics, and studies on Rumi's moral thought. The analysis works through three stages. First, the study identifies digital communication problems, such as mockery, suspicion, backbiting, hoaxes, and public humiliation. Second, it analyzes QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 thematically to extract its ethical values. Third, it interprets those values through Rumi's Sufi perspective in order to formulate a love-based model of digital communication ethics.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The digital era has transformed social media from a simple communication tool into a complex social environment. It is not merely a platform where people send messages or share information. It is a space where identity, reputation, social relations, religious expression, and public opinion are continuously produced. Social media must be understood through its elements, ecologies, and effects, because profiles, networks, streams, and messages shape how users present themselves, relate to others, compare themselves, and experience social connection (Bayer et al., 2020).

This means that digital communication cannot be treated as neutral speech. The structure of social media influences what people say, how they say it, and how far their speech travels. Platform affordances such as likes, shares, comments, visibility, and algorithmic circulation create certain habits of communication. These affordances do not force users to behave badly,



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but they provide conditions that can reward speed, emotional reaction, and public judgment more than reflection and moral restraint. social media affordances shape user practices by offering possibilities for action that are interpreted and used differently in specific social contexts (Bucher & Helmond, 2018).

In religious life, social media has become a significant arena for da‘wah, religious learning, and the circulation of Islamic authority. Digital religion scholarship shows that online media reshape religious practice, community, authority, and public engagement, rather than simply transferring offline religion into online space (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). This transformation is important because Islamic messages are now delivered through short videos, live streaming, captions, podcasts, and comment sections. Religious communication therefore becomes more accessible, but also more fragmented and contested. Digital religion is connected with global media flows, online communities, and radicalization, which indicates that religious communication online can produce both constructive and destructive consequences (Tsuria & Yadlin-Segal, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, digital media expands the reach of da‘wah and makes religious learning more efficient, but it also produces challenges such as biased information, misuse of technology, and weak digital literacy. Indriyani and Khadiq emphasize that contemporary da‘wah in the digital era must respond to these opportunities and challenges with contextual and responsible communication strategies (Indriyani & Khadiq, 2023). Another study on da‘wah ethics in social media argues that digital da‘wah should avoid insulting ethnic, religious, racial, and social groups, and should also avoid inappropriate jokes in religious communication (Sukayat, 2023). This point is crucial because religious content in digital space can easily shift from moral guidance into symbolic aggression when it is driven by group pride or hostility.

The first ethical problem in digital communication is the normalization of harsh comments and verbal aggression. Online interaction often reduces the direct emotional presence of the other person. The user sees a screen, not a face. This distance weakens empathy and makes aggressive speech easier to express. Recent psychological discussions on online toxicity explain that toxic behavior is shaped by disembodiment, reduced accountability, and



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disinhibition, which weaken the normal social barriers that usually restrain harmful expression in face-to-face interaction (Pandita et al., 2024). Thus, rude comments are not only individual moral failures. They are also produced within a communication environment that makes moral distance easier.

The second problem is cyberbullying. In digital space, insult and intimidation can be repeated, archived, shared, and witnessed by many people. This makes digital bullying different from ordinary interpersonal conflict. It has a public, repetitive, and traceable character. A recent systematic review explains that cyberbullying on social media remains a serious public health concern because it includes harassment, intimidation, flaming, trolling, and other harmful behaviors that affect psychological well-being (Ray et al., 2024). Another systematic review on online disinhibition and adolescent cyberbullying explains that perceived anonymity, invisibility, and weak accountability can encourage users to separate their online identity from their real moral responsibility (Wang et al., 2024).

The third problem is hate speech. Social media enables hostility to be directed not only at individuals, but also at groups based on religion, ethnicity, ideology, gender, or political identity. Hate speech is dangerous because it changes disagreement into dehumanization. A systematic review by Castaño-Pulgarín and colleagues shows that internet and social networking sites can become opportunities for online hate speech, especially when identity-based hostility is normalized in public interaction (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). This problem is directly related to the Qur'anic concern with mockery, insulting names, and social superiority, which will be discussed in QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11.

The fourth problem is hoax and misinformation. False information spreads not only because people lack knowledge, but also because digital platforms reward novelty, emotional surprise, and rapid sharing. Lazer et al. define fake news as fabricated information that imitates news media content while lacking the editorial norms and processes that ensure accuracy and credibility (Lazer et al., 2018). Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral found that false news on Twitter spread farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than true news, which suggests that misinformation succeeds because it fits human attraction to novelty and emotional reaction



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(Vosoughi et al., 2018). This analysis prepares the discussion of *tabayyun* and moral responsibility in Islamic communication ethics.

The fifth problem is digital backbiting and public exposure of private faults. Social media allows private mistakes, old statements, screenshots, and personal weaknesses to become public objects of judgment. This practice is often justified as accountability, but it can become humiliation. Muir, Roberts, Sheridan, and Coleman explain that online shaming is a widespread phenomenon in which people use the internet to shame perceived transgressions, often involving moral judgment, social policing, and public punishment (Muir et al., 2023). Billingham and Parr also argue that online public shaming is ethically problematic because it can impose reputational punishment through mass social media without proper legitimacy, proportion, or due process (Aitchison & Meckled-Garcia, 2021). In Islamic terms, this phenomenon is close to *ghibah* and *tajassus*, because it involves searching, exposing, and circulating the faults of others.

The sixth problem is moral outrage and social polarization. Digital platforms often reward emotional and moralized expression. Users who receive likes, shares, and attention for angry posts may learn to repeat the same behavior. Brady, McLoughlin, Doan, and Crockett show that positive social feedback can amplify moral outrage expression in online social networks, while users also conform their outrage to the expressive norms of their networks (Brady et al., 2023). This means that digital anger is not only spontaneous. It can become learned behavior, reinforced by platform feedback and group approval.

These problems show that the crisis of digital communication is not only technological. Technology provides speed, visibility, and reach, but the deeper problem lies in the moral and psychological condition of the user. Harsh comments, cyberbullying, hate speech, hoaxes, public shaming, prejudice, and digital backbiting are connected by a common pattern: the weakening of restraint, empathy, humility, and responsibility. Therefore, digital ethics cannot be built only through technical literacy or platform regulation. It must also address the moral formation of the speaker.

This point prepares the transition to Islamic communication ethics in QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13. The problems described above correspond directly to the ethical concerns of the verses.



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Mockery and offensive labeling correspond to digital insult and hate speech. Suspicion and spying correspond to prejudice, stalking, and the exposure of private faults. Backbiting corresponds to digital gossip and public humiliation. The principle of *ta'āruf* corresponds to the need for communication that builds recognition rather than hostility. Jubaidi's (2019) reading of QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–12 also connects prejudice and communication ethics with conflict resolution, showing that negative suspicion can produce social conflict when it is not controlled by Qur'anic ethics.

Thus, the discussion of digital communication must move from media analysis to Qur'anic moral analysis. Social media explains the arena and mechanisms of communication, but QS al-Ḥujurāt explains the ethical limits of communication. The next section therefore examines how Islam regulates speech, suspicion, exposure of faults, and human dignity through QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13.

a. Communication Ethics in Islam

QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11 states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Its meaning is: "O believers, do not let one group mock another, for they may be better than them, nor let women mock other women, for they may be better than them. Do not insult one another, and do not call one another by offensive nicknames. How evil is the name of rebellion after faith. Whoever does not repent, they are the wrongdoers."

This verse begins with the address "O believers", which means that communication ethics is part of faith, not merely social etiquette. The verse prohibits three related acts: mockery, insult, and offensive labeling. These three acts differ in form, but they share the same moral root: the desire to reduce another person's dignity. Al-Ṭabarī explains that the prohibition of mockery is general; a believer may not mock another believer because of



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poverty, sin, social weakness, or any other condition, since the mocked person may be better before God than the mocker.

The phrase "*perhaps they may be better than them*" is central. It does not only prohibit mockery; it destroys the epistemic basis of mockery. Human beings cannot fully know the inner value of others. One may see another person's weakness, but one cannot see the hidden sincerity, repentance, pain, struggle, or nearness to God within that person. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī makes this point explicit: the reason for the prohibition is that the person who is despised may be greater in rank before God and more beloved to Him than the one who despises him (Zuhaili, 2003).

Difference among human beings should not become a reason for contempt. Every person may be superior in one aspect and limited in another, so no one has a complete basis to mock another person. For him, the divine order teaches that people are equal in the scale of God, and no one should be despised because he appears lower in one visible aspect. This interpretation is relevant for digital communication, where users often judge people quickly based on appearance, class, ethnicity, education, mistakes, or fragments of online behavior.

The phrase **وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ** is also significant. Literally, it means "do not insult yourselves," but exegetes understand it as "do not insult one another." Al-Ṭabarī explains that insulting another believer is described as insulting oneself because believers are morally connected like one body (Ath-Thabari, 2022). Wahbah al-Zuhaylī adds that *lamz* includes blaming, defaming, or pointing to someone's fault through words, actions, signs, gestures, the hand, the eye, or other subtle forms (Zuhaili, 2003). This makes the verse especially relevant to digital space, because insult is not only verbal. It can appear through memes, emojis, screenshots, edited images, sarcastic captions, and indirect insinuations.

The phrase **وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ** prohibits offensive nicknames. Al-Ṭabarī records several explanations: it may refer to calling someone *fāsiq*, hypocrite, *kāfir*, or attaching to a person a label that he dislikes (Ath-Thabari, 2022). Wahbah al-Zuhaylī explains that *tanābuz* means calling someone by a bad title that hurts or angers him, such as calling a Muslim *fāsiq* or hypocrite, or calling a convert by his former religious identity in a degrading way. This is important for digital ethics because online culture often reduces persons into labels: liberal,



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radical, deviant, ignorant, hypocrite, or other stigmatizing categories. The Qur'an rejects this symbolic violence because it replaces human dignity with social branding.

QS al-Hujurat [49]: 12 states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بََعْضُكُم بَعْضًا
أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"O believers, avoid much suspicion, for some suspicion is sinful. Do not spy on one another or backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would surely hate it. Be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful."

If verse 11 regulates visible verbal aggression, verse 12 moves deeper into the inner process that produces destructive communication. It begins with *ẓann*, or suspicion. This is important because insult and backbiting often begin not with evidence, but with an assumption. Al-Ṭabarī explains that the forbidden suspicion is negative suspicion toward believers without proper basis (Ath-Thabari, 2022). Some suspicion is obligatory or valid, such as legal reasoning and good expectation of God; some is prohibited, such as evil suspicion toward God or toward upright believers; and some may be allowed when there is a clear context of public wrongdoing or protection from harm.

This classification is important for digital ethics. Islam does not ask people to abandon critical thinking. It asks them to distinguish between responsible judgment and sinful suspicion. In digital communication, people often transform fragments of information into moral certainty (Syahridho et al., 2025). A screenshot, a short video, or a rumor becomes the basis for accusing others. The Qur'anic command avoid much suspicion therefore trains restraint before judgment. It requires the believer to slow down the movement from seeing to assuming, from assuming to accusing, and from accusing to spreading.

The next prohibition is *tajassus*, or spying. Its means as searching for people's hidden faults, investigating private matters, or looking into the inner side of affairs, especially in a negative sense. Searching for the private faults and hidden defects of Muslims, uncovering



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what people have concealed, and exposing what should remain protected (Iwan et al., 2023). In digital space, *tajassus* appears in practices such as stalking, digging old posts, leaking private chats, exposing personal mistakes, and turning hidden weaknesses into public content.

The prohibition of *ghibah* then addresses the circulation of those exposed faults. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī defines backbiting as mentioning one's brother in his absence with something he dislikes, whether the matter concerns religion, worldly life, character, body, family, property, clothing, or other personal matters (Hasanah & Hartono, 2024). *Ghibah* through a shocking image: eating the flesh of one's dead brother. Wahbah notes that this metaphor contains strong rhetorical intensification: the act is compared to eating human flesh, the flesh belongs to one's brother, and the brother is dead, which makes the image morally repulsive. Ratib al-Nabulsi also frames *ghibah*, *namīmah*, and offensive nicknaming as causes of social fragmentation, which shows that these acts destroy not only individual dignity but also communal cohesion (al Nabulsi, 2019).

QS al-Hujurāt [49]: 13 states:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Its meaning is: *"O humanity, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the most noble of you before Allah is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."*

The address now changes from "O believers" to "O humanity". This shift expands the scope of the discussion. Communication ethics is not only a rule among Muslims, but also a universal moral principle for human relations. Al-Ṭabarī argues that peoples and tribes are forms of human relation and identification, not grounds for superiority (Ath-Thabari, 2022). After prohibiting mockery, insult, offensive nicknames, suspicion, spying, and backbiting, the verse reminds people of their shared human origin so that they do not misuse social differences for rivalry and contempt .

The key term is *لِتَعَارَفُوا*, "so that you may know one another." This word transforms difference into an ethical task. Difference is not given for domination, humiliation, or tribal



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pride. It is given for recognition, communication, and cooperation. Al-Ṭanṭāwī explains that *ta'āruf* means knowing one another's lineage and relations, but also communicating and cooperating in righteousness and piety, not boasting about ancestry, status, or social rank. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī similarly emphasizes that God made people into nations and tribes for recognition, not for boasting, and that real superiority belongs only to taqwā (Zuhaili, 2003).

Hamka's interpretation of QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 in *Tafsir al-Azhar* also highlights multicultural values: the prohibition of mockery, evil suspicion, and backbiting, together with equality, tolerance, harmony, and recognition beyond social, economic, and cultural status. This reading is especially useful for digital communication because online conflict often emerges from identity-based superiority (Putri et al., 2023). People attack others because of school, class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, ideology, or community identity. Verse 13 rejects such superiority and replaces it with taqwā as the only true measure of honor.

Thus, QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 provides a complete ethical structure. Verse 11 regulates external speech by prohibiting mockery, insult, and offensive labeling. Verse 12 regulates inner suspicion and hidden aggression by prohibiting bad assumption, spying, and backbiting. Verse 13 gives the positive social principle: diversity must become *ta'āruf*, not hostility. In the context of digital communication, these verses provide a Qur'anic framework for resisting ridicule, stigma, surveillance, exposure of faults, gossip, hate speech, and identity-based arrogance. This framework prepares the next discussion, because Rumi's Sufi perspective will deepen these ethical commands by asking about the inner diseases that produce destructive speech.

b. Jalaluddin Rumi, Fihi Ma Fihi, and the Inner Basis of Digital Ethics

Jalaluddin Rumi is relevant to digital communication ethics because his thought does not stop at external morality. He moves deeper into the inner source of moral action. In Sufi ethics, outward behavior is closely connected to the state of the heart (Ridgeon, 2014). Speech, insult, anger, envy, and compassion are not only social acts. They are signs of the soul's condition. This perspective is important for reading QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 because the verses do not only prohibit harmful speech. They also discipline the inner impulses that produce harmful speech, such as pride, suspicion, curiosity toward others' faults, and the desire to humiliate.



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Sufism also emphasize that Qur'anic ethics is central to Sufi spirituality, because Sufism treats the Qur'an as a guide for inner purification and moral formation, not merely as a legal text.

Fihi Ma Fihi is especially useful for this study because it contains Rumi's prose teachings in the form of discourses, reflections, advice, Qur'anic references, hadith discussions, analogies, and spiritual insights. Studies on *Fihi Ma Fihi* show that Rumi's thought gives strong attention to love, humility, gratitude, spiritual discipline, and moral conduct (Apriani, 2023). Rumi's education of love in *Fihi Ma Fihi* has two directions: love for God, which appears through *tawadhu*, *tawakkul*, and *shukr*, and love for fellow human beings, which appears through honoring others, advising properly, and helping one another (Iriyanto, 2024). This structure allows Rumi's thought to be connected directly with QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13, because the verses also regulate both vertical and horizontal ethics: consciousness before God and respect toward human beings.

The first value from Rumi is *tawadhu*, or humility. In the context of QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11, humility becomes the spiritual foundation for the prohibition of mockery. The verse prohibits one group from mocking another because the mocked person may be better before God. This means that mockery is not only a verbal mistake. It is a spiritual mistake. It emerges when a person assumes that he has the authority to measure another person's worth. Rumi's concept of humility challenges this assumption (Ali, 2021). If all excellence belongs to God and all human abilities are gifts, then no one has the right to turn another person's weakness into an object of contempt. Studies on Rumi's moral education in *Fihi Ma Fihi* also identify humility as one of the central values that forms noble character and prevents the domination of ego.

This value is highly relevant to digital communication. Social media often gives users a stage to perform moral superiority. A person may mock others because of appearance, social class, education, religious opinion, political identity, or a single mistake captured online. The platform intensifies this tendency because public comments can gain attention, likes, and approval. Recent research on online public shaming shows that social media can turn perceived wrongdoing into collective punishment, where users participate in public humiliation under the language of morality (Muir et al., 2023). From Rumi's perspective, such behavior is not true



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moral concern. It is ego disguised as morality. Therefore, Rumi deepens QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11 by showing that the real enemy behind mockery is the ego that enjoys feeling superior.

The second value is love as a force of moral transformation. In Rumi's view, love is not merely affection. It is a discipline that changes how one sees God, the self, and others. Octafany argues that Rumi's concept of *mahabbah* is broader than romantic love; it is a spiritual orientation that directs human beings toward God and shapes their way of living with others (Octafany, 2020). This is important because QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11 prohibits not only direct mockery, but also *lamz* and offensive naming. These acts reduce a person to a defect, a label, or a social category. Love resists this reduction. It teaches the believer to see the other as a human being whose inner reality is known only by God.

This point is significant in digital culture, where users are easily reduced to labels. People are called deviant, ignorant, hypocrite, radical, liberal, or enemy based on limited fragments of online identity. Hate speech studies show that online hostility often works through identity-based degradation, where people attack others not as full persons but as members of disliked groups (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). Rumi's love-based ethics rejects this reduction. It restores the person behind the label. Thus, the Qur'anic prohibition of offensive naming can be read through Rumi as a call to resist the dehumanizing logic of digital labeling.

The third value is *muhasabah*, or self-examination. Rumi's well-known idea that a believer is a mirror for another believer gives a deeper meaning to QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11, especially the phrase "do not insult yourselves." In many classical interpretations, this phrase means "do not insult one another," because believers are morally connected. Rumi gives this meaning a spiritual depth. When one sees a fault in another person, that fault should become a mirror for examining the self. Study on *Fihi Ma Fihi* shows that Rumi connects love and wisdom with human self-awareness, including the need to return from outward judgment to inner reflection (Syahriyah et al., 2021).

This mirror concept is crucial for digital ethics. Online culture often encourages immediate judgment. A mistake becomes content. A weakness becomes a joke. A private failure becomes public entertainment. Rumi interrupts this movement. Before asking "what is wrong with that person?", the user must ask "what does my reaction reveal about me?" This is



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where Rumi's ethics becomes sharper than ordinary digital etiquette. Digital etiquette may say, "do not insult." Rumi's Sufi ethics asks, "why does your soul enjoy insulting?" This question moves the discussion from external regulation to inner purification.

The fourth value is restraint before suspicion. QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 12 begins with the command to avoid much suspicion. This is important because harmful digital communication often begins with assumption, not knowledge. A short video, screenshot, rumor, or edited quotation can become the basis for accusation. Rumi's emphasis on inner purification helps explain why suspicion is dangerous: it turns the heart into a producer of negative meanings. The problem is not only that the information may be false. The deeper problem is that the soul becomes comfortable with imagining evil about others.

This analysis is relevant to contemporary misinformation. False information spreads not only because users lack data, but also because users are emotionally attracted to novelty, outrage, and confirmation of existing prejudice. Lazer et al. define fake news as fabricated information that imitates journalistic content while lacking norms of accuracy and credibility (Lazer et al., 2018). False news spreads farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than true news, partly because it produces stronger emotional responses (Vosoughi et al., 2018). In this context, Rumi's ethics complements *tabayyun*. Verification is not only a technical act. It is also a spiritual act, because it prevents the heart from becoming a servant of suspicion.

The fifth value is protection of human dignity. QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 12 prohibits *tajassus* and *ghibah*. These two acts are closely related in digital culture. *Tajassus* appears when users search for private faults, old posts, hidden mistakes, or personal conversations. *Ghibah* appears when those findings are circulated and discussed for public judgment. Digital technology makes both acts easier. The user can collect, store, screenshot, repost, and amplify another person's weakness. Research on online public shaming notes that public shaming often involves social policing and moral punishment through internet exposure, but it can also produce harm, disproportionate punishment, and loss of dignity (Muir et al., 2023). Forestal also argues that online public shaming is shaped by network structures that intensify social control and moral punishment in public digital spaces (Forestal, 2024).



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Rumi's education of love directly challenges this pattern. Love does not mean ignoring wrongdoing. It means refusing to turn another person's fall into a spectacle. In *Fihi Ma Fihi*, advice and correction must be connected with care. Iriyanto(2024) notes that Rumi treats rebuke as something that belongs to love, not hatred. This distinction is essential for digital criticism. A criticism that aims to improve is different from a criticism that aims to destroy. A warning that protects dignity is different from public humiliation. Through Rumi, QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 12 can be read as an ethical barrier against digital voyeurism: the desire to search, expose, and consume the faults of others.

The sixth value is compassionate correction. Digital culture often confuses advice with aggression. Users may claim that they are "correcting" someone, while their language is sarcastic, humiliating, and hostile. Rumi's ethics separates correction from ego. True advice must aim at moral repair, not domination. Study sufistic interpretation of hadith in *Fihi Ma Fihi* shows that Rumi often reads religious texts in a way that preserves their textual meaning while deepening their spiritual implication (Hasniar et al., 2024). Applied to QS al-Ḥujurāt, this means that the Qur'anic prohibitions are not only social rules. They are training in how to correct others without becoming spiritually corrupted by anger.

This is especially important because digital platforms often reward outrage. Studies on moral outrage in online networks show that social feedback can intensify outrage expression and make users repeat morally angry content when such content receives attention (Brady et al., 2023). Recent research also suggests that people may overperceive moral outrage in online networks, which inflates beliefs about intergroup hostility. Rumi's value of compassionate correction resists this feedback loop. It asks the user not only to ask whether the criticism is true, but also whether the criticism is spiritually clean.

The seventh value is *ta'āruf* as recognition, not domination. QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 teaches that human diversity exists so that people may know one another. Digital media can support this value because it connects people across geography, class, ethnicity, and religious background. However, it can also distort *ta'āruf* into comparison, competition, tribalism, and hostility. Digital religion scholarship shows that online spaces reshape religious authority, community, practice, and identity, which means that digital religious communication can



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produce both connection and conflict (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Rumi's love-based ethics helps direct digital diversity toward recognition rather than rivalry.

In Rumi's perspective, the other person is not primarily a competitor, enemy, or object of judgment. The other is a mirror, a fellow seeker, and a creature of God. This view transforms QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 into a spiritual principle for digital life. *Ta'āruf* is not only knowing another person's identity. It is recognizing the dignity of the other before God. Hasniar, Masnani, and Agussalim identify values in *Fihi Ma Fihi* such as repentance, patience, truthfulness, piety, contentment, trust in God, fear, and hope, all of which show that Rumi's Sufi values are directed toward inner discipline and ethical life (Hasniar et al., 2024). These values are needed in digital interaction because recognition without inner discipline can easily become surveillance, comparison, and judgment.

Based on this analysis, Rumi's contribution to digital ethics can be formulated in five connected principles. First, *tawadhu* before commenting: the user must not speak from superiority. Second, *tabayyun* before sharing: the user must verify information and examine intention. Third, dignity before exposure: the user must not turn another person's fault into public entertainment. Fourth, compassion before criticism: advice must seek repair, not humiliation. Fifth, *muhasabah* before judgment: the fault seen in others must first become a mirror for the self. These principles are not external additions to QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13. They are spiritual deepening of the same Qur'anic ethics.

Thus, Rumi's perspective sharpens the meaning of QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 in the digital era. The Qur'an prohibits mockery, insult, suspicion, spying, and backbiting because these acts destroy human dignity and social harmony. Rumi explains the inner roots of these acts: ego, pride, lovelessness, and the failure of self-examination. In digital communication, these inner diseases are amplified by platform speed, visibility, anonymity, and social feedback. Therefore, the solution cannot be limited to digital literacy. It must also include spiritual literacy. Digital ethics becomes truly Islamic when the user not only controls speech, but also purifies the heart from which speech emerges.

4. CONCLUSION



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This study shows that QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11–13 provides a strong Qur’anic foundation for digital communication ethics. The verses prohibit mockery, insult, offensive labeling, suspicion, spying, and backbiting, while also affirming that human diversity exists for *ta’āruf*, not hostility. In the digital era, these teachings are highly relevant because social media often becomes a space for harsh comments, hoaxes, public shaming, prejudice, and the exposure of others’ faults.

Through Jalaluddin Rumi’s perspective in *Fihi Ma Fihi*, these Qur’anic values gain a deeper spiritual meaning. Rumi shows that destructive communication does not only come from weak digital literacy, but also from an unpurified heart. Mockery comes from ego, suspicion comes from inner darkness, and backbiting comes from the loss of love and self-restraint.

Therefore, digital ethics in Islam should not only regulate external speech and information sharing. It must also cultivate *tawadhu*, *tabayyun*, compassion, respect for human dignity, and *muhasabah*. Rumi’s education of love offers a spiritual foundation for transforming digital speech into ethical communication. In this sense, the reform of digital communication begins with the purification of the soul.

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