Islamic Digital Ethics: Praiseworthy and Blameworthy Conduct in Educational and Social Engagement on TikTok and Instagram

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Abstract: Previous studies on social media ethics from an Islamic perspective have generally focused on virtual communication, TikTok usage, or the effects of social media on moral behavior. However, integrative studies mapping *mahmudah* (virtuous) and *mazmumah* (blameworthy) behaviors on TikTok and Instagram as spaces for education and social interaction remain limited. This study aims to analyze Islamic digital ethics through virtuous and blameworthy behaviors on both platforms. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach using library research. Data were collected from the Qur'an, Hadith, Qur'anic commentaries, Islamic books, journal articles, and relevant academic publications, then analyzed descriptively and analytically. The findings indicate that Islamic digital ethics are grounded in honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, politeness, and respect for others' rights and dignity. *Mahmudah* behaviors include sharing accurate information, producing educational content, protecting privacy, and strengthening *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). Conversely, *mazmumah* behaviors encompass misinformation, *ghibah* (backbiting), slander, hate speech, cyberbullying, *riya'* (ostentation), envy, and *namimah* (malicious gossip). The originality of this study lies in formulating an Islamic digital ethics framework that integrates both moral categories to analyze personal conduct, social interaction, and the educational functions of TikTok and Instagram. This study strengthens the conceptual foundation for public education aimed at fostering healthy, responsible, and socially beneficial digital interactions.

Keywords: Mahmudah Morals, Mazmumah Morals, Social Media Ethics, Instagram, TikTok.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed the ways individuals communicate, access information, construct identities, and participate in social life. Social media has evolved beyond a medium for interpersonal communication into an important space for education, economic activity, entertainment, religious dissemination, and broader social engagement (Lubis, 2021). In this context, digital platforms have considerable potential to facilitate knowledge sharing, strengthen social connections, disseminate constructive messages, and expand public access to educational and religious content. Among the platforms widely used for these purposes, TikTok and Instagram provide users with accessible and interactive spaces for producing, consuming, and circulating diverse forms of content.

The increasing use of TikTok and Instagram demonstrates that social media has become an important part of contemporary social interaction, particularly among younger generations (Maulidin, 2025). TikTok facilitates the production and dissemination of short-form audiovisual content, while Instagram supports communication through photographs, videos, Reels, Stories, and other interactive features. Their broad reach has attracted not only general users but also educators, entrepreneurs, public figures, and religious preachers who employ these platforms for communication, promotion, education, and Islamic dissemination (Khairunnisa & Asyari, 2024). Consequently, social media can function as an educational and social environment in which values, knowledge, opinions, and behavioral models are continuously exchanged.

Ideally, the expansion of digital communication should be accompanied by increased ethical awareness so that technological advancement contributes to individual and collective well-being. Social media can serve as an educational medium by providing useful knowledge, religious messages, motivation, and opportunities for constructive social interaction. In Islamic contexts, digital communication can also become a means of *da'wah* and moral education that reaches diverse segments of society (Antari, 2025). Such potential requires users to recognize that digital activities are not morally neutral; rather, the production, dissemination, and reception of content involve ethical responsibilities toward oneself and others.

In reality, however, the openness and speed of social media communication also create substantial ethical challenges. TikTok and Instagram may facilitate the circulation of unverified information, hate speech, *cyberbullying*, defamation, slander, provocation, and content

inconsistent with religious and moral norms. The pursuit of followers, likes, views, and public recognition may further encourage users to produce controversial content merely to attract attention (Hidayat et al., 2025). These conditions indicate a discrepancy between the educational and social potential of digital platforms and their potential to facilitate harmful forms of interaction. Therefore, the ethical dimension of digital engagement requires attention not only from a technological perspective but also from a moral and religious perspective.

From the perspective of Islam, communication and social interaction are inseparable from moral accountability. The Qur'an emphasizes that every utterance is subject to divine observation and recording: *"Not a word does one utter except that there is an observer ready to record it"* (Qur'an 50:18). Ibn Kathir's interpretation emphasizes that human speech is recorded and that individuals should therefore exercise caution in their communication. In the contemporary digital context, this principle can be extended analytically to written posts, comments, captions, shared content, and digital messages because these forms of communication represent expressions of human intention and action. Islamic digital ethics therefore requires users to prioritize truthfulness, civility, responsibility, respect for others' dignity, and avoidance of harmful communication (Nurjanah et al., 2024).

Previous studies have addressed several dimensions of this issue. Research on virtual communication has examined social-media ethics from an Islamic perspective, emphasizing the importance of appropriate communication and moral values in digital interaction (Risna et al., 2023; Supriatna & Jenuri, 2023). Other studies have examined the relationship between TikTok use and *akhlak mazmumah*, particularly among students (Yulia & Taufina, 2023), while recent research has specifically discussed ethical principles in TikTok use from Islamic teachings (2025). Studies on *akhlak* have likewise emphasized the distinction between *akhlak mahmudah*, such as honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, and respect, and *akhlak mazmumah*, including envy, ostentation, slander, and other morally harmful behaviors (Sesady, 2023; Wahyuni, 2024). These studies provide important foundations for understanding digital morality but tend to address particular dimensions of social-media ethics, specific platforms, or specific behavioral problems.

This body of literature leaves an analytical space for a more integrated examination of Islamic digital ethics. Existing discussions have generally considered virtual communication ethics, the effects of particular social-media platforms, or specific forms of negative behavior, whereas the

relationship between *akhlak mahmudah* and *akhlak mazmumah* can be further examined as a comprehensive framework for understanding both constructive and harmful digital conduct. Moreover, the educational and social potential of TikTok and Instagram deserves to be considered alongside their ethical risks. The research gap, therefore, lies not in the absence of studies on Islamic social-media ethics, but in the need to integrate Islamic moral categories with the dual functions of social media as spaces for educational communication and social engagement.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing TikTok and Instagram through the conceptual framework of Islamic digital ethics, particularly the complementary categories of *akhlak mahmudah* and *akhlak mazmumah*. Its novelty lies in positioning these two moral categories not merely as classifications of good and bad behavior, but as an analytical framework for understanding how digital engagement can either contribute to educational and social benefit or generate interpersonal and moral harm. *Akhlak mahmudah* is examined through practices such as disseminating truthful information, producing beneficial and educational content, protecting privacy, communicating respectfully, and strengthening *ukhuwah Islamiyah*. Conversely, *akhlak mazmumah* is examined through practices such as hoaxes, *ghibah*, slander, hate speech, *cyberbullying*, *riya'*, *hasad*, and *namimah*.

The urgency of this research is grounded in the expanding role of TikTok and Instagram in shaping contemporary communication, learning, religious dissemination, and social interaction. Without an adequate ethical framework, the accessibility and reach of these platforms may amplify harmful communication and weaken social trust and interpersonal relationships. Conversely, when guided by Islamic moral principles, digital platforms can become spaces for education, *da'wah*, positive self-expression, and constructive community engagement. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze Islamic digital ethics by identifying and interpreting forms of praiseworthy and blameworthy conduct in educational and social engagement on TikTok and Instagram. The study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of Islamic digital ethics and practically to public education concerning responsible, constructive, and socially beneficial digital engagement.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using *library research* to examine Islamic digital ethics, particularly the concepts of *akhlak mahmudah* (praiseworthy conduct) and *akhlak mazmumah* (blameworthy conduct), in

educational and social engagement on TikTok and Instagram (Hamzah, 2022). The data comprised primary and secondary sources relevant to the research focus. Primary sources included the Qur'an, Hadith, and relevant Qur'anic commentaries, while secondary sources consisted of Islamic scholarly books, scientific journal articles, and other academically valid publications. The literature was selected based on its thematic relevance to Islamic ethics, *akhlak mahmudah*, *akhlak mazmumah*, and social-media practices. Data were collected through documentary study by identifying, reviewing, and inventorying relevant literature, after which the retrieved information was organized according to the analytical themes developed in the study.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical procedures (Sugiyono, 2021). The analysis involved data reduction, thematic classification, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Relevant findings were classified into two principal categories: (1) *akhlak mahmudah*, including truthful information sharing, educational and beneficial content, privacy protection, respectful communication, responsibility, and the strengthening of *ukhuwah Islamiyah*; and (2) *akhlak mazmumah*, including hoaxes, *ghibah*, slander, hate speech, *cyberbullying*, *riya'*, *hasad*, and *namimah*. The classified evidence was then interpreted by relating Islamic ethical principles derived from the literature to the educational and social functions of TikTok and Instagram. This analytical process was intended to identify patterns of constructive and harmful digital conduct and to formulate their implications for Islamic digital ethics and community education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis reveals that Islamic digital ethics on TikTok and Instagram cannot be separated from the concept of *akhlak*, because digital activities are extensions of human behavior that remain subject to moral accountability. In the Islamic perspective, ethics is not merely a social agreement concerning appropriate behavior but is closely related to religious values, particularly the distinction between praiseworthy (*akhlak mahmudah*) and blameworthy (*akhlak mazmumah*) conduct. Thus, the first finding indicates that Islamic digital ethics is fundamentally an extension of Islamic morality into the virtual environment rather than a separate ethical system created specifically for social media. This perspective emphasizes that posting, commenting, sharing, and interacting online remain morally meaningful actions.

The second finding concerns the central position of truthfulness (*cidq*) as the foundation of ethical digital communication. The literature indicates

that users who apply *akhlak mahmudah* are expected to verify information before distributing it and to avoid producing or circulating misleading content. This principle is particularly relevant to TikTok and Instagram because the visual and short-form characteristics of these platforms facilitate rapid dissemination of information. Allah SWT states in QS. At-Taubah [9]: 119:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ

"O you who believe! Fear Allah, and be with those who are truthful (honest)." (QS. At-Taubah [9]: 119).

Accordingly, truthfulness is not simply a desirable communication style but a moral obligation that determines whether digital information contributes to public benefit or produces harm.

The third finding shows that *Amanah* and responsibility constitute a second layer of Islamic digital ethics. Social-media users are not only responsible for what they intend to communicate but also for the potential consequences of their digital actions. Every uploaded video, caption, comment, and shared message may influence other people. Therefore, responsible digital behavior is reflected in the production of useful, educational, motivational, and religious content while avoiding content that creates anxiety, hostility, or social damage. The distinctive implication of this finding is that Islamic digital responsibility extends beyond the content creator's intention to the broader social consequences of digital communication.

The fourth finding identifies polite and responsible communication as a concrete expression of *akhlak mahmudah*. Islamic digital ethics requires users to maintain appropriate language, respect differences of opinion, and avoid insults, humiliation, and hate speech. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 70:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak the right words." (QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 70).

The finding demonstrates that the principle of *qaulan sadidan* remains applicable even when communication takes place through digital interfaces. The transformation from spoken communication to comments, captions, and videos does not eliminate the ethical obligation to communicate truthfully and appropriately.

The fifth finding reveals that educational and beneficial content represents one of the most constructive forms of *akhlak mahmudah* on TikTok

and Instagram. Social media can function as a channel for knowledge dissemination, learning motivation, health education, religious communication, and other forms of public benefit. This finding is significant because it shifts the understanding of social media from being merely entertainment-oriented toward being a potential instrument of moral and educational development. In this sense, digital content becomes ethically valuable when it contributes to knowledge, motivation, social awareness, and religious understanding.

The sixth finding concerns privacy and the protection of human dignity. The literature indicates that respecting privacy is an important manifestation of Islamic morality because digital popularity should not be pursued by exposing another person's weaknesses, personal information, or disgrace. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 12:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوْا كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ
الظَّنِّ ۖ اِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ اِثْمٌ وَّلَا تَجَسَّسُوْا
وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَّعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ۗ اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ
اَنْ يَّأْكُلَ لَحْمَ اَخِيْهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوْهُ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

"O you who believe! Avoid many prejudices, indeed some prejudices are sins. And do not find fault with others, and let none of you gossip about others. Is there anyone among you who likes to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Of course you feel disgusted. Fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is the Most Accepting of repentance, the Most Merciful." (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 12).

The finding indicates that privacy protection in digital environments involves avoiding *tajassus*, *ghibah*, unnecessary exposure of personal information, and exploitation of another person's weaknesses for popularity.

The seventh finding shows that humility (*tawadhu'*) and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* provide an important corrective to the culture of visibility associated with TikTok and Instagram. The platforms encourage users to display achievements, lifestyles, opinions, and personal activities to large audiences. From an Islamic ethical perspective, visibility should not automatically become a mechanism for self-glorification. Instead, digital interaction can be directed toward strengthening friendship, solidarity, mutual support, and social connectedness. Consequently, *tawadhu'* and *ukhuwah* function as moral orientations that transform digital visibility from self-promotion into socially meaningful engagement.

The eighth finding identifies a systematic pattern of *akhlak mazmumah* consisting of hoaxes, *ghibah*, slander, hate speech, cyberbullying, *riya'*, *hasad*, and *namimah*. These behaviors differ in form but share a common moral characteristic: they place personal interest, emotional gratification, popularity, or conflict above truth, dignity, and social harmony. This pattern suggests that blameworthy digital conduct should not be understood as isolated incidents. Rather, it forms an interconnected spectrum of moral problems ranging from information distortion to interpersonal hostility and internal diseases of the heart.

The ninth finding highlights *tabayyun* as a distinctive mechanism for preventing digital misinformation. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ جَاۤءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَاٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوْٓا اَنْ تُصِيْبُوْا قَوْمًاۢ بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ

"O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you bringing news, then examine it carefully so that you do not cause a disaster to a people without knowing the circumstances that will cause you to regret your actions." (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6).

The finding demonstrates that *tabayyun* provides a practical ethical mechanism for digital information management. It connects the Islamic prohibition of false information with a concrete behavioral requirement: users should verify information before believing, commenting on, or distributing it.

The tenth and most distinctive finding is that Islamic digital ethics can be understood as a continuum between constructive and destructive digital engagement. On one side, truthfulness, responsibility, politeness, beneficial content, privacy protection, humility, and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* constitute a constructive ethical orientation. On the other side, hoaxes, *ghibah*, slander, hate speech, cyberbullying, *riya'*, *hasad*, and *namimah* constitute a destructive orientation. Therefore, the ethical quality of TikTok and Instagram is not determined primarily by the technology itself but by the moral orientation of its users. These finding positions social media simultaneously as a space for character formation and as a space in which moral weaknesses can be amplified.

Discussion

The first finding confirms that Islamic digital ethics is fundamentally rooted in the broader Islamic concept of *akhlak*. This is consistent with the distinction between ethics as a framework for evaluating good and bad

conduct and *akhlak* as the practical manifestation of moral character. Assingkily & Rangkuti (2020) explain that *akhlak* emphasizes applied conduct, whereas ethics provides a more philosophical basis for determining right and wrong. Therefore, applying Islamic ethics to social media does not require the construction of an entirely new moral system; rather, established Islamic moral principles are contextualized within contemporary digital practices.

The finding regarding truthfulness (*cidq*) strengthens the argument that the central problem of digital communication is not technological speed itself but the moral responsibility accompanying that speed. QS. At-Taubah [9]: 119 places honesty within the framework of faith and piety. In the context of TikTok and Instagram, this principle requires users to resist the tendency to prioritize virality over accuracy. The result is compatible with studies emphasizing ethical communication and responsible social-media use, but the present analysis extends the discussion by positioning *cidq* as a foundational moral filter that should operate before content is produced, shared, or amplified.

The role of *Amanah* and responsibility can be interpreted through the perspective of Ibn Miskawaih, who associates good character with balance within the soul and responsible conduct toward oneself and others. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to digital environments because users may perceive online actions as less consequential than face-to-face actions. The present finding challenges such a separation. A responsible user must recognize that digital content can generate consequences beyond the immediate interaction. Thus, Islamic digital ethics transforms *amanah* from a private virtue into a form of public digital responsibility.

The finding on polite communication is strongly connected to the Qur'anic principle of *qaulan sadidan* in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 70. The verse establishes truthful and appropriate speech as a religious obligation. When interpreted within contemporary digital communication, the concept encompasses comments, captions, direct messages, video narratives, and other forms of online expression. This expands the application of *qaulan sadidan* from conventional speech to mediated communication. The theoretical implication is that technological mediation does not neutralize the moral status of language.

The finding that educational and beneficial content represents *akhlak mahmudah* is consistent with the Islamic principle that human activity should produce benefit for others (Mahariah & Assingkily, 2021). The literature reviewed in the manuscript identifies educational, motivational, inspirational,

and religious content as positive uses of TikTok and Instagram. Wahyuni's perspective is particularly relevant because it illustrates social media as a means of disseminating knowledge and beneficial messages. The present study contributes by linking such content directly to the category of *akhlak mahmudah*, thereby demonstrating that digital educational activity can be interpreted not merely as communication but as an expression of moral character.

The finding concerning privacy protection develops the interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 12. The verse prohibits excessive suspicion, *tajassus*, and *ghibah*, all of which have clear analogues in digital practices. In social media environments, the search for another person's weaknesses may become content, while private information can be transformed into entertainment or a source of engagement. The present analysis therefore indicates that privacy protection is not simply a contemporary legal concern but can be grounded in classical Islamic moral principles. This provides a stronger ethical foundation for responsible digital behavior.

The relationship between *tawadhu'*, *riya'*, and the culture of digital visibility is another important theoretical dialogue. Al-Ghazali's understanding of *tawadhu'* emphasizes awareness that human abilities and possessions ultimately come from Allah SWT. Conversely, *riya'* reflects the desire for recognition from others. TikTok and Instagram can intensify this tension because users receive visible indicators of social approval through views, likes, comments, and followers. The finding therefore suggests that Islamic digital ethics must address not only observable behavior but also the intention underlying digital self-presentation. A seemingly positive post can become ethically problematic when its primary orientation shifts from benefit to excessive self-display.

The identification of *hasad* and *namimah* demonstrates that digital morality also involves internal psychological conditions and relational consequences. *Hasad* may emerge when users continuously compare themselves with the curated achievements and lifestyles of others. *Namimah*, meanwhile, can be facilitated by screenshots, forwarded messages, and selectively edited information that intensify interpersonal conflict. These findings support the classical Islamic understanding that moral problems can originate in the heart and subsequently appear in outward behavior. The digital environment does not create these moral weaknesses, but it can provide mechanisms that accelerate their expression and broaden their social consequences.

The finding concerning *tabayyun* provides an important dialogue between

Qur'anic ethics and contemporary information behavior. QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6 establishes verification as a moral safeguard against acting upon uncertain information. Quraish Shihab's interpretation, as represented in the reviewed literature, emphasizes *tabayyun* or clarification as a form of moral responsibility. In the context of TikTok and Instagram, this principle is highly relevant because information can circulate before users have sufficient opportunity to establish its accuracy. Therefore, *tabayyun* can be conceptualized as a form of Islamic digital literacy: users are not merely required to know how to access information but also to possess the moral discipline to verify it before dissemination.

Taken together, the findings support a broader theoretical proposition: Islamic digital ethics operates through the interaction of character, content, intention, and social consequences. *Akhlak mahmudah* regulates constructive engagement, while *akhlak mazmumah* identifies behaviors that undermine truth, dignity, and social harmony. This integrated framework offers a more comprehensive perspective than viewing social-media ethics solely as a matter of communication etiquette. The distinctive contribution of the study is therefore the conceptualization of TikTok and Instagram as morally ambivalent spaces: the same platforms can facilitate education, *da'wah*, solidarity, and character development while simultaneously amplifying misinformation, humiliation, envy, and conflict.

The research has conceptual and practical implications for Islamic education and digital citizenship. Conceptually, the findings strengthen *akhlak mahmudah* and *akhlak mazmumah* as an integrated framework for interpreting digital behavior. Practically, Islamic education can incorporate *cidq*, *amanah*, *qaulan sadidan*, *tabayyun*, privacy protection, *tawadhu'*, and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* into digital-literacy programs. Such an approach can move digital education beyond technical skills toward moral formation, enabling students and communities to evaluate not only whether content is engaging but also whether it is truthful, beneficial, respectful, and socially responsible.

This study has limitations arising from its library-research design. Because the analysis relies on Qur'anic sources, Hadith, Islamic scholarship, books, and relevant academic literature, it does not empirically measure the frequency of behaviors among TikTok and Instagram users or compare differences across demographic groups. The findings should therefore be understood primarily as a conceptual and normative framework rather than as statistical evidence of user behavior. Future empirical studies are needed to test how these ethical categories are practiced, negotiated, and understood by users in different social and educational contexts.

Future research should develop the framework through empirical studies involving students, teachers, content creators, religious communicators, and other social-media users. Quantitative research could examine the relationship between Islamic digital-literacy levels and ethical behavior, while qualitative studies could investigate how users understand *tabayyun*, *riya'*, *ghibah*, *ukhuwah*, and privacy in everyday digital interactions. Comparative studies between TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms could also identify how platform characteristics influence the expression of *akhlak mahmudah* and *akhlak mazmumah*. Such research would strengthen the empirical basis of Islamic digital ethics and support the development of context-sensitive educational interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic digital ethics on TikTok and Instagram is fundamentally an extension of Islamic *akhlak* into the digital sphere. The analysis identifies a constructive ethical orientation consisting of *cidq*, *amanah*, responsibility, *qaulan sadidan*, beneficial and educational content, privacy protection, *tawadhu'*, and *ukhuwah Islamiyah*. Conversely, *akhlak mazmumah* appears in the forms of hoaxes, *ghibah*, slander, hate speech, cyberbullying, *riya'*, *hasad*, and *namimah*. A distinctive finding is that these two categories should not be treated merely as separate lists of good and bad online behaviors. They represent two competing moral orientations that determine whether social media functions as an instrument of education, solidarity, and public benefit or as a medium for misinformation, humiliation, conflict, and moral degradation.

The study therefore implies that the development of Islamic digital literacy should integrate technological competence with character formation and moral accountability. The principles of *tabayyun*, truthfulness, responsibility, respect for dignity, and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* can serve as practical foundations for guiding users in producing, consuming, and sharing digital content. For Islamic educators, educational institutions, families, and digital communities, the recommended approach is to develop social-media education that evaluates content not only by its popularity or engagement but also by its truthfulness, usefulness, ethical intention, and social consequences. In this way, TikTok and Instagram can be directed toward educational and socially constructive engagement while minimizing the expression and amplification of *akhlak mazmumah*.

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