

## ETHICAL VALUES AND RESPONSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

In the era of Industry 5.0, social media has become a pervasive force in the daily lives of youth, serving as a platform for communication, education, and leisure. Despite its benefits, the use of social media presents ethical challenges, particularly when evaluated through the lens of Islamic principles such as *Taqwa* (God-consciousness), modesty, and moral conduct. Accordingly, this study investigates the influence of social media on the communication patterns of university students in Malaysia. It explores the extent to which Islamic values can guide ethical digital engagement. A quantitative survey involving 410 students from selected Malaysian public and private universities was conducted to examine their social media habits, motivations for usage, and the congruence of their digital behaviour with Islamic teachings. Overall, the findings reveal that while social media is frequently used for academic and informational purposes, a significant proportion of students engage excessively with entertainment content. This often results in time mismanagement and neglect of academic and spiritual responsibilities. Furthermore, the study highlighted a critical need for structured Islamic digital literacy programs aimed at promoting responsible and ethically informed online behaviour.

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### Introduction

The advent of the Industry 5.0 era has revolutionised how people access information, interact, and conduct daily activities (Rane *et al.*, 2024). This technological shift has embedded social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, into virtually every aspect of life, from education to business, leisure, and even personal relationships (Mseer & Samhan, 2025). In Malaysia, social media usage is particularly pervasive among young adults, especially university students. Interestingly, the Malaysian Communications

and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reports that approximately 21.1 million Malaysians were active Internet users by late 2016, with youth between the ages of 15 and 25 representing a significant portion of these users (Haron *et al.*, 2025).

With this growing integration of social media into daily life, both positive and negative impacts have emerged. On the positive side, social media facilitates networking, information dissemination, and educational opportunities

(Setyaningsih & Nur, 2023). For university students, it provides a platform for collaborative learning, engaging with academic content, and maintaining personal and professional networks. Conversely, unchecked or excessive use of social media can have adverse effects, including time wastage, academic disruptions, and exposure to inappropriate content (Bhushan, 2025). At the same time, the social freedom that social media provides to teenagers can also lead to negative outcomes such as social isolation, mental health issues, as well as the distortion of cultural and religious values (Sannusi *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, users on Twitter@X often use taboo language as a means of expressing anger toward certain parties (Zamri & Idrus, 2024). For instance, users expressed dissatisfaction and anger without considering the consequences for themselves or others involved, resulting in the use of vulgar, profane, and harsh language.

For Muslims, the intersection of digital engagement and Islamic ethics raises pertinent questions. How can the principles of *Wasatiyyah* (moderation) and *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) be applied in navigating social media? Islamic teachings emphasise a balanced approach to all aspects of life, including the digital world (Munawaroh & Marlina, 2025). This calls for an intentional and disciplined use of social media to ensure that one's digital interactions do not detract from spiritual, familial, and communal obligations. Building on this, Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:143) emphasises this balance: "Thus, we have made you a just and balanced community so that you will be witnesses over the people." In the context of social media, this balance involves using these platforms constructively for knowledge sharing, social good, and self-development while avoiding the pitfalls of gossip, vanity, and time wastage.

## Literature Review

### *Social Media's Role in Personal and Academic Life*

The role of social media in modern education and socialisation cannot be overstated. Hamat *et al.* (2019) conducted an extensive study examining the usage patterns of Social Networking Services (SNS) among Malaysian university students. Notably, this research revealed that a significant proportion of students utilised SNS for collaborative purposes, with 68.6% engaging with peers and over half participating in study groups and course-related groups facilitated by lecturers. These findings highlight the pivotal role of SNS in fostering academic collaboration and community building within the digital realm (Hamat *et al.*, 2012a). Furthermore, Chein and Choo (2021) identified that interactions with peers, effective knowledge sharing, and the perceived ease of use and usefulness of social media platforms significantly enhanced student engagement.

This study highlights the critical importance of integrating collaborative tools and social media to enrich the e-learning experience. Following this, social media platforms have become essential tools for learning, collaboration, and resource sharing. Ngu (2025) further reinforced this view by adopting a self-determination framework to examine how targeted social media interventions can promote psychological well-being among university students. The study's findings affirmed that when designed with autonomy, competence, and relatedness in mind, social media platforms can positively impact student well-being, thereby reinforcing their academic resilience and engagement (Akbari & Simons, 2018). Nonetheless, the benefits of these platforms coexist with notable challenges. That is, social media also presents significant risks, such as distractions from academic tasks and the proliferation of harmful or inappropriate content

(Jha, 2024). In essence, this duality mirrors what Islam teaches about the need for balance, leveraging technology for the betterment of oneself and society while avoiding excess.

Nabsiah Abdul Wahid *et al.* (2022) emphasised the role of motivations in influencing social media use, identifying social interaction, entertainment, and self-promotion as significant drivers. These motivations often push individuals towards excessive social media use, which can conflict with the Islamic principle of *Husn al-Khulq* (good character) and modesty. Surah *Luqman* (31:18) advises Muslims to avoid pride and arrogance: “And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people nor walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone to be self-deluded and boastful.” Applying this teaching to social media, Muslims are encouraged to maintain humility and modesty in their online presence.

In addition to fostering humility, Islamic teachings encourage the pursuit of beneficial knowledge. Ibn Majah (Sunan Ibn Majah, 224) records that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, PBUH) stated: “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.” Social media can be a valuable tool for expanding one’s knowledge, particularly in the realms of education, Islamic scholarship, and community building. Still, users must be cautious about the types of information they consume and share. Moreover, the Quran warns against spreading falsehoods in Surah *al-Isra* (17:36): “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.” This verse serves as a reminder for Muslims to verify the credibility of the information they engage with online, ensuring that their digital interactions contribute to personal and societal well-being.

### ***Gender Differences in Social Media Use***

The role of gender in shaping social media behaviours is another critical area of study.

Research suggests that men and women often engage with social media for different reasons. Studies such as those by Hasbollah *et al.* (2019) observed that women are more likely to use social media for communication and maintaining personal relationships. In contrast, men are more inclined toward content creation and self-promotion (Sudha & Anuradha, 2025). This distinction raises important ethical considerations, particularly concerning modesty and self-presentation. Surah *an-Nur* (24:30-31) calls both men and women to lower their gaze and protect their modesty, a principle that extends to their online interactions.

### ***Islamic Digital Literacy Programmes***

Universities should implement Islamic digital literacy programmes to guide students in engaging with social media in ways that reflect Islamic principles of modesty, humility, and ethical communication. Research by Hamat *et al.* (2012a) highlighted the high frequency of social media interactions among students, particularly in academic and peer-collaboration contexts. Structured programmes can equip students with strategies to harness these interactions positively, aligning with the framework by Ngu (2025) that emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness in digital engagement. Additionally, integrating Quranic teachings, such as Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:286), can further reinforce awareness of ethical boundaries and responsible behaviour online.

### ***Time Management Workshops***

Given the pervasive role of social media in students’ daily lives, workshops on time management can help students balance digital engagement with academic, personal, and spiritual responsibilities. For instance, Wahid *et al.* (2024) noted that motivations like entertainment and social interaction often lead to excessive social media use, highlighting the need for practical strategies to manage time

effectively. Such workshops can operationalise the Quranic principle of utilising time wisely, as emphasised in Surah *al-Asr* (103:1-3), ensuring that online activities do not detract from productive and righteous pursuits.

### ***Encouragement of Positive Social Media Engagement***

Universities should promote constructive uses of social media, such as sharing beneficial knowledge, *da'wah*, or community service initiatives. As such, Chein and Choo (2021) emphasised that knowledge sharing and peer interaction enhance engagement and learning. Accordingly, campaigns encouraging ethical content creation align with Islamic teachings on enjoining good and forbidding evil (Surah *al-Imran*, 3:104), fostering an online environment conducive to educational, spiritual, and societal well-being.

### ***Fostering a Quranic Personality in Digital Spaces***

Students should be guided to embody a Quranic personality in their online interactions, reflecting virtues such as truthfulness, patience, justice, and respect. Hasbollah *et al.* (2019) identified gendered differences in online self-presentation, which address the significance of emphasising ethical self-presentation and humility, consistent with Surah *an-Nur* (24:30-31). Surah *al-Ahzab* (33:21) reinforces the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a model of exemplary conduct, guiding students to integrate these values into digital spaces.

### ***Promoting Balance Between Digital and Traditional Engagement***

Universities should encourage students to maintain equilibrium between online and offline interactions. As highlighted by Hamat *et al.* (2012a), social media is a central component of student socialisation, but unchecked reliance can

diminish physical and community engagement. At the same time, Islamic teachings advocate moderation (Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:143), and promoting balanced participation across digital and traditional spheres ensures holistic development of social, academic, and spiritual dimensions.

These discussions are grounded in empirical evidence regarding social media usage patterns, motivations, and gendered behaviours (Hamat *et al.*, 2019; Hasbollah *et al.*, 2019; Chein & Choo, 2021; Wahid *et al.*, 2024; Ngu, 2025). Hence, by incorporating Islamic digital literacy, time management strategies, positive engagement initiatives, and guidance on cultivating a Quranic personality, universities can empower students to become responsible digital citizens who uphold ethical values and enhance their overall development.

Essentially, the central aim of this study is to analyse students' patterns of social media use, evaluate the extent to which these behaviours correspond with Islamic ethical principles, and develop strategies to cultivate a Quranic-oriented digital personality.

### **Methods**

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate social media usage patterns among university students in Malaysia. Correspondingly, a probability-based simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that every student within the target population, comprising both public and private universities, had an equal chance of being selected. Ultimately, a total of 410 undergraduate students participated in the study, providing a sufficiently large sample for robust statistical analysis.

### ***Instrument Development***

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire developed through a multi-stage process to ensure content validity, clarity, and relevance. First, an extensive review of existing literature on digital behaviour, youth social media engagement, and Islamic ethical guidelines informed the initial pool of items. This was followed by expert validation involving three scholars specialising in communication studies, educational psychology, and Islamic studies, who assessed the questionnaire for conceptual alignment, comprehensiveness, and cultural appropriateness. Based on their feedback, several items were refined for clarity and precision.

A pilot test with 30 students was then conducted to evaluate reliability and item performance. Concurrently, minor adjustments were made to improve wording, flow, and response scale consistency. The final questionnaire consisted of four sections:

- a. Demographic information, including gender, academic programme, and type of university.
- b. Patterns of social media usage, capturing platforms used, frequency, and duration of daily engagement.
- c. The purpose of social media engagement, such as communication, academic use, entertainment, and information-seeking.
- d. Adherence to Islamic principles, focusing on modesty, ethical conduct, responsible content consumption, and time management during social media use.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data were collected via an online questionnaire disseminated through institutional mailing lists and student networks. Responses were exported and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Subsequently,

descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were generated to summarise overall usage patterns. Following this, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were conducted to examine potential differences in social media behaviours across demographic groups, particularly gender and academic background.

This methodological approach provides a rigorous foundation for understanding how Malaysian university students navigate their social media activities while balancing academic responsibilities, personal interests, and adherence to Islamic ethical values.

## **Results and Discussions**

### ***Demography of Respondents***

The data, as summarised in Table 1, presents the age distribution of the sample of 410 respondents. The majority of respondents, 51.7% (n = 212), are between the ages of 21 and 24, indicating that most participants are within the younger years of their university student age range. This is followed by 35.9% (n = 147) of respondents aged 20 or younger. A smaller portion of the sample, 11.2% (n = 46), is aged between 25 and 28 years, while only 1.2% (n = 5) is 29 years and older.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the sample based on age

| <b>Age</b>             | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>%</b>     |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 20 years old and below | 147              | 35.9         |
| 21–24 years old        | 212              | 51.7         |
| 25–28 years old        | 46               | 11.2         |
| 29 years old and above | 5                | 1.2          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>410</b>       | <b>100.0</b> |

The data suggest that the study's participants are predominantly younger adults, typical of university students in Malaysia. The significant concentration of respondents in the 21 to 24 age

group highlights that this demographic is most likely to be engaged with higher education. Meanwhile, the low percentage of participants aged 29 and above suggests limited engagement of older individuals in this particular educational context or study sample. Therefore, the findings of this study are likely to be most relevant to younger university students.

**Social Media Usage Duration**

As outlined in Table 2, the majority of respondents (50.2%) use social media for three to six hours per day, with 25.6% reporting that they use it for more than six hours daily. This high level of engagement underscores the centrality of social media in the lives of university students.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of the duration of social media use in a day

| Duration of Daily Use | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------|
| Less than 1 hour      | 7          | 1.7            |
| 2 to 3 hours          | 92         | 22.4           |
| 3 to 6 hours          | 206        | 50.2           |
| More than 6 hours     | 105        | 25.6           |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>410</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

This extensive use of social media calls for a reflection on Surah *al-Asr* (103:1-3), which warns of the perils of time wastage: “By time, indeed mankind is in loss, except for those who

have believed and done righteous deeds...” From an Islamic perspective, the time spent on social media must be balanced with productive and righteous activities, ensuring that digital interactions do not detract from one’s spiritual, academic, and social obligations.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also highlighted the significance of time, saying, “Take advantage of five matters before five other matters: Your youth before you become old, your health before you fall sick, your wealth before you become poor, your free time before you become busy, and your life before your death” (*Al-Hakim*). This hadith serves as a reminder to Muslims to prioritise productive activities, especially during their youth, and avoid wasting time on distractions such as social media.

**Motivations for Social Media Use**

Table 3 indicates that the primary reasons for social media use among students are seeking information (89.8%) and education (86.6%). This is a positive sign, as these motivations align with Islamic teachings on the importance of pursuing knowledge. In line with this, the Quran encourages the seeking of knowledge in numerous verses, such as Surah *al-Zumar* (39:9), which states: “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” This verse highlights the value that Islam places on knowledge and intellectual development.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the sample based on the purpose of using social media

| Purpose of Using Social Media      | Frequency (n = 410) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Seeking information                | 368                 | 89.8           |
| To increase knowledge or education | 355                 | 86.6           |
| Seeking entertainment              | 349                 | 85.1           |
| Desire to know                     | 237                 | 57.8           |
| Connect with friends or families   | 236                 | 57.6           |
| Looking for friends                | 182                 | 44.4           |
| Business                           | 138                 | 33.7           |
| Seeking publicity                  | 56                  | 13.7           |
| Others*                            | 7                   | 1.7            |

Note: \*Others: Self-expression, eliminate boredom, reduce stress, all of the above, to study certain things or issues.

However, the data also suggest that 85.1% of respondents use social media primarily for entertainment, which requires moderation to prevent excess. Note that Islam permits entertainment and leisure activities, provided they do not lead to neglect of one's obligations. Surah *al-Mu'minun* (23:3) states: "And they who turn away from ill speech and vain talk..." This verse reminds Muslims to avoid frivolous activities that distract them from their duties to Allah, their families, and their communities.

The data reveals patterns in how respondents utilise social media, emphasising its multifaceted role in modern life, particularly for information-seeking, education, and entertainment. Table 3 illustrates the diverse motivations for social media engagement and highlights notable trends. The analysis reveals four distinct themes.

The Quranic principle of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) provides guidance on how Muslims should approach social media. It encourages believers to maintain balance in all aspects of their lives, including their digital interactions. While social media can be a valuable tool for education and networking, it is essential to engage in it with discipline, ensuring that it does not become a source of idle talk or a distraction from more important pursuits.

#### ***Gender Differences in Social Media Engagement***

This analysis aims to assess gender differences in social media usage within the context of socialisation. Table 4 comprises eight items, with a t-test conducted to identify significant differences between male and female respondents at a significance level of 0.05. The following presents the analysis of the data:

Table 4: Gender differences in social media use based on socialisation context

| No. | Item Socialisation Context   | Gender | N   | Min.   | SD      | DF      | T      | Sig.  |
|-----|--|--------|-----|--------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| 1   | Although I often surf social media, I still get involved in communal activities.                           | Male   | 176 | 3.9432 | 1.03491 | 408     | -0.143 | 0.234 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 3.9573 | 0.95291 | 359.539 | -0.141 |       |
|     | Although I spend a lot of time on social media, I still prioritise spending time with my family.           | Male   | 176 | 4.2955 | 0.87059 | 408     | -0.643 | 0.951 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 4.3504 | 0.84728 | 371.533 | -0.640 |       |
|     | I make social media the main medium of communication in my life.   | Male   | 176 | 3.6136 | 0.98482 | 408     | -1.838 | 0.931 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 3.7991 | 1.03077 | 385.583 | -1.850 |       |
| 2   | The use of social media strengthens the relationship between me and my family.                             | Male   | 176 | 4.0625 | 1.02068 | 408     | 2.166  | 0.060 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 3.8333 | 1.08936 | 388.910 | 2.186  |       |
| 3   | The use of social media strengthens the relationship between me and my friends.                            | Male   | 176 | 4.2216 | 0.84298 | 408     | 1.372  | 0.704 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 4.0983 | 0.94196 | 395.833 | 1.393  |       |
| 4   | Although social media is my main medium of communication, I still like to engage in pilgrimage activities. | Male   | 176 | 3.9830 | 0.95304 | 408     | -0.894 | 0.538 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 4.0684 | 0.96039 | 378.551 | -0.895 |       |
|     | Social media makes my life more meaningful.  | Male   | 176 | 3.6477 | 0.96261 | 408     | 2.049  | 0.330 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 3.4573 | 0.90794 | 364.853 | 2.032  |       |
| 5   | Through social media, I often communicate with my old and new friends.                                     | Male   | 176 | 4.0170 | 0.94702 | 408     | -0.962 | 0.745 |
|     |  | Female | 234 | 4.1068 | 0.92724 | 372.783 | -0.959 |       |

Note: \*significant,  $p < 0.05$ .

The data indicate that there are no significant gender differences in terms of participation in community activities, despite frequent social media use ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting that both males and females remain equally engaged in communal activities. Notably, this aligns with the Islamic value of communal responsibility (Surah *at-Tawbah*, 9:71), where both men and women are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining active roles in their communities.

Similarly, no significant differences were observed between males and females in prioritising family time over social media use ( $p > 0.05$ ). Both genders equally value spending time with their families, reflecting the Islamic principle of upholding familial duties, as emphasised in the Quran (Surah *Luqman*, 31:14). This underscores the significance of respecting parents and maintaining family bonds.

Regarding the use of social media as the primary communication medium, no significant gender differences were found ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting that both genders use social media similarly for communication. This aligns with the Islamic value of fostering respectful, meaningful interactions, as outlined in Surah *al-Hujurat* (49:11), which encourages Muslims to communicate with kindness and respect.

Although gender was included as a demographic variable, it was not treated as a central focus of the study. Rather, its inclusion was intended to describe the sample profile and to examine whether any observable variation existed in students' digital behaviour, consistent with common practices in social media research that control for basic demographic factors (Hamat *et al.*, 2012; Statista, 2025).

The statistical analyses revealed no significant gender-based differences across the principal dimensions of social media usage, including motivations, frequency of use, content engagement, and ethical alignment. Conversely, independent samples t-tests produced  $p$ -values

exceeding the 0.05 threshold, indicating that male and female students exhibited largely comparable patterns of behaviour across all measured variables.

These findings align with a growing body of empirical evidence suggesting that gender is no longer a strong determinant of social media behaviour among university students. Accordingly, increased access to digital technologies, similar levels of technological competence, and comparable academic expectations have contributed to the convergence of online engagement patterns across genders (Al-Menayes, 2015). Large-scale studies further support this trend. For instance, Anderson *et al.* (2023) reported minimal gender differences in platform use, time spent online, and information-seeking behaviour among individuals aged 18 to 29 years. Similarly, Al-Menayes (2015) noted no significant gender-based variation in the intensity of social media use among university students in the Gulf region, while Hamat *et al.* (2012) observed no meaningful gender differences in Malaysian students' use of social media for academic purposes.

From an Islamic behavioural perspective, ethical digital conduct is also not gender-contingent, as Islamic principles related to moderation, responsibility, and truthfulness apply universally (*Al-Hujurat* 49:6; *al-Asr* 103:1-3). Hence, centring gender differences in this study would contradict both the statistical evidence and the conceptual framing of Islamic ethics as universally binding.

### ***Social Media and Relationships***

No significant differences were observed between males and females in how social media affects relationships with family and friends. Both genders perceive social media as beneficial in strengthening family and friendship bonds, which supports the Islamic value of nurturing relationships. Consistent with this, the Quran

places great emphasis on the importance of maintaining healthy, respectful relationships with family and friends (Surah *al-Ahzab*, 33:6, Surah *al-Furqan*, 25:63).

The lack of significant gender differences in participating in traditional social activities despite the use of social media ( $p > 0.05$ ) suggests a balance between digital and traditional social engagement. This balance also reflects the Islamic value of moderation and maintaining a comprehensive approach to social life. Notably, Islam encourages Muslims to strike a balance between the physical and spiritual, the social and the personal (Surah *al-Mu'minun*, 23:3).

### ***Social Media and Meaning in Life***

There was no significant difference in how social media contributes to the meaningfulness of life between males and females ( $p > 0.05$ ). Both genders view social media as neither detrimental nor overwhelmingly meaningful, emphasising the significance of moderation in digital engagement. Islam advises moderation in all aspects of life (Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:143), encouraging believers to avoid excess in their use of worldly distractions, including social media.

### ***Social Media as a Means of Communication***

Finally, no significant differences were recorded between males and females in their communication with both old and new friends via social media ( $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that both genders equally use social media as a tool for socialising, which aligns with the Islamic concept of fostering positive social connections and maintaining ties with both old and new friends. This is encouraged in Surah *al-Hujurat* (49:10), which stresses the importance of reconciliation and building strong social ties.

In sum, the analysis reveals no significant gender differences in social media usage within the context of socialisation. Both

males and females engage with social media in similar ways to communicate with family, friends, and the community, and maintain a balance between digital and traditional social interactions. Remarkably, these findings align with Islamic teachings on equity, respect, and balanced social engagement, as outlined in the Quranic verses referenced throughout this analysis. At the same time, both genders are equally accountable for their actions in both the physical and digital realms, with the core Islamic principles of modesty, respect, and moderation applying equally to all Muslims, regardless of gender.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the empirical findings, which indicate that students primarily engage with social media for informational and educational purposes as well as dedicate substantial time to entertainment, leading to potential time mismanagement, several actionable recommendations are proposed. These recommendations are designed to align students' digital practices with Islamic ethical principles and support the development of a Quranic-oriented digital personality.

### ***Strengthening Islamic Digital Literacy Initiatives***

Universities should embed Islamic digital literacy modules within their student development programmes. These modules should address:

- i. Ethical communication (*adab al-hiwar*),
- ii. Verification of information (*tabayyun*),
- iii. Modesty in self-presentation (*haya'*), and
- iv. Avoiding harmful or prohibited content.

Such initiatives directly respond to the findings that students' online engagement is high yet not always value-guided. Furthermore, structured interventions are necessary to enhance moral

discernment in digital spaces. On a similar note, collaborations between Islamic scholars, media educators, and psychology experts can ensure a holistic and culturally grounded approach.

### ***Time Management and Digital Discipline Programmes***

Given that 75.8% of students spend three hours or more daily on social media, universities should offer time management interventions focusing on:

- i. Digital self-regulation strategies,
- ii. Establishing personal screen-time limits,
- iii. Prioritising academic and spiritual commitments, and
- iv. Understanding the spiritual implications of excessive leisure consumption.

These programmes operationalise Islamic teachings that emphasise the ethical valuation of time, as articulated in Surah *al-'Asr* and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It concerns five matters to be taken advantage of before five, which are youth before old age, health before illness, wealth before poverty, free time before busyness, and life before death (Hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbās, reported by al-Hākim, 1990). Such initiatives are necessary to address the discrepancy between students' educational intentions and their actual social media usage patterns, which remain predominantly oriented toward entertainment.

### ***Promoting Positive and Value-Driven Social Media Engagement***

Universities should encourage students to utilise social media for:

- i. Spreading beneficial knowledge (*al-'ilm al-nafi'*),
- ii. Participating in community service and *da'wah* activities, and
- iii. Supporting mental, academic, and spiritual well-being.

Concurrently, campaigns and student-led initiatives can transform social media into a platform for public good (*khayr*). This recommendation directly corresponds with the findings for the cultivation of digital behaviour grounded in Islamic values.

### ***Integrating the Concept of a Quranic Personality in Digital Behaviour Education***

A central finding of this study is that adherence to Islamic principles on social media varies, particularly in areas of time stewardship and self-regulation. Universities should therefore embed the concept of a Quranic digital personality, emphasising:

- i. *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) in all online actions,
- ii. Honesty, respect, and humility in communication,
- iii. Avoidance of vanity, gossip, and harmful discourse, and
- iv. Moral accountability in digital footprints.

This approach positions Islamic virtues not merely as abstract ideals. Rather, it serves as practical behavioural guidelines for daily digital life.

### ***Encouraging Balance between Digital and Real-World Engagement***

Although no significant gender differences were observed, both male and female students demonstrated high digital immersion. Universities should promote balance by:

- i. Encouraging involvement in offline communal activities,
- ii. Strengthening peer-support and family-oriented programmes, and
- iii. Creating campus-wide digital detox or mindfulness activities.

This aligns with the Quranic principle of *wasatiyyah* (moderation), as the foundation of a spiritually conscious digital citizen.

## Conclusions

The findings reveal that although students primarily use social media for information seeking and educational purposes, both of which are consistent with Islamic encouragement toward beneficial knowledge, a significant portion of their time is also devoted to entertainment. Notably, this imbalance contributes to challenges related to time management and reflects areas where digital behaviour may diverge from key Islamic principles such as moderation, self-discipline, and purposeful engagement.

Moreover, the absence of significant gender differences across all measured dimensions indicates that digital behaviours among university students have become highly uniform, shaped more by technological norms than by demographic factors. This reinforces the need for universal interventions rather than gender-specific approaches.

A central theoretical contribution of this study is the articulation of the “Quranic digital personality,” a conceptual model grounded in Islamic virtues such as *Taqwa*, humility, respect, and responsible communication. Thus, embedding these values into digital engagement frameworks can guide students toward more ethical, mindful, and spiritually coherent online behaviour.

Overall, the study emphasises the importance of structured Islamic digital literacy, time management programmes, and initiatives promoting positive and value-driven online engagement. Hence, by implementing these strategies, universities can support the development of morally grounded digital citizens who navigate social media responsibly and embody the spiritual and ethical ideals encouraged in Islam. Such efforts are essential for nurturing balanced, resilient, and ethically conscious young Muslims in an increasingly interconnected digital era.

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