

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIGITAL *TABARRUJ* IN Q.S. AL-AHZAB :33  
IN RELATION TO THE PHENOMENON OF EXHIBITIONISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

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The phenomenon of digital exhibitionism, namely the excessive self-display behavior on social media platforms, has become an urgent ethical issue in the era of digital transformation, particularly in Indonesia, where the number of social media users reached 180 million in 2025. This study aims to analyze the relevance of the concept of *tabarruj* in Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 to the contemporary phenomenon of digital exhibitionism through a Qur'anic exegesis approach. This research employs a qualitative method by referring to relevant Qur'anic exegesis works and supported by primary sources from books and contemporary academic studies. The findings indicate that *tabarruj*, semantically rooted in the word b-r-j, which means "to appear prominently" or "to become visible," has a strong conceptual resonance with digital exhibitionism practices, in which individuals intentionally display themselves to gain social validation. This study introduces the concept of "digital *tabarruj*" as a new conceptual construct that bridges classical Qur'anic interpretation with the ethical realities of modern digital life. The findings affirm that the prohibition of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an is universal and remains relevant across different periods, while recommending the integration of Qur'anic values into digital literacy education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Tabarruj; Exhibitionism; Qur'anic Exegesis*

## INTRODUCTION

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the way humans interact, express themselves, and construct social identities. In Indonesia, data from We Are Social and Meltwater (2025) recorded that active social media users have reached 180 million people, or approximately 62.9% of the total population, with an average weekly usage of 21 hours and 50 minutes per week. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube have become widely used media for content dissemination in 2025. These applications have transformed into virtual public spaces where individuals, particularly women, actively display themselves, their physical appearance, and their daily lives in order to gain attention, likes, and followers. This phenomenon, known in social psychology studies as digital exhibitionism, has raised serious concerns from various perspectives, including the ethical perspective of Islam. Ultimately, social media does not merely function as a means of communication but also as a space for identity formation and self-presentation before the digital public.

Within the Qur'anic tradition, there is a concept that is semantically and ethically highly relevant to this phenomenon, namely *tabarruj* (تَبَرُّج). This term is mentioned twice in the Qur'an, namely in Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 as an explicit prohibition addressed to the wives of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and in Q.S. an-Nur/24:60 within a different context. Classical exegetes, such as Imam al-Qurthubi in *Al-Jami' li Ahkam Al-Qur'an*, discussed *tabarruj* comprehensively and defined it as the behavior of a woman who intentionally reveals her beauty and adornments to men who are not her mahram (Al-Qurthubi, 2008, p. 448). Meanwhile, contemporary exegete M. Quraish Shihab, through his perspective, provides a more dynamic contextualization by stating that the prohibition of *tabarruj* represents an ethical principle applicable within various contexts of modern life (Harahap & Harahap, 2025, p. 133). Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 is selected because this verse represents the primary locus of discussion regarding *tabarruj* in the Qur'an and contains a prohibition directly related to the ethics of appearance in public spaces.

Previous studies have discussed various aspects related to this theme. Hanisya Hairidha et al. (2025) examined clothing ethics from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence and found inconsistencies in practices due to the influence of social media, but their study did not examine the concept of *tabarruj* through Qur'anic interpretation. Meanwhile, Aulia Shafika et al. (2025) discussed digital exhibitionism as a form of social deviation triggered by the need for validation and changing social norms, but did not relate it to Qur'anic values. On the other hand, Agil Rizkya Marsha et al. (2025) studied hijab through the interpretation of Q.S. an-Nur and Q.S. al-Ahzab and demonstrated the shifting meaning of hijab into a part of digital identity and fashion, but did not specifically discuss the concept of *tabarruj* or its relevance to digital exhibitionism. Therefore, there is a significant research gap, as no study has specifically and comprehensively integrated the semantic analysis of the Qur'anic term *tabarruj* with the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism as a contemporary reality in a systematic manner and produced a new conceptual construct. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of the concept of "digital *tabarruj*" through the integration of Qur'anic semantic analysis and the contemporary phenomenon of digital exhibitionism.

This research is important to conduct. Academically, a Qur'anic theoretical framework is needed to provide ethical guidance for Muslims in facing digital realities. Practically, the

increasing number of digital exhibitionism contents that exploit physical appearance, particularly among Muslim women, requires intellectual responses from scholars in the field of Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir. This research aims to: first, analyze the semantic-linguistic meaning of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an based on the interpretations of selected exegetes; second, identify the characteristics of digital exhibitionism relevant to the concept of *tabarruj*; third, formulate the concept of "digital *tabarruj*" as a new conceptual contribution that can be used as a Qur'an-based digital ethical framework.

Thus, the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism cannot only be understood as a change in the lifestyle of modern society but also as an ethical issue that is relevant to the concept of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an. Through a semantic approach to Qur'anic interpretation, this study seeks to demonstrate that *tabarruj* is not merely a matter of clothing or physical appearance but also a behavior of excessive self-display aimed at attracting public attention. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a new understanding of "digital *tabarruj*" as a Qur'anic ethical concept that remains relevant in responding to social media culture in the digital era.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach. Lexy J. Moleong (2018) argues that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena comprehensively through the examination of descriptive data in the form of words and documents. Similarly, Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as an approach to exploring meanings constructed by individuals or groups in responding to social or humanitarian issues. The process is conducted through data collection in natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument, followed by inductive and interpretative data analysis. This approach is applied because this study focuses on examining meanings, interpreting Qur'anic verses, and exploring their relationship with contemporary social phenomena through library research.

This study is limited to the analysis of Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33, which relates to the concept of *tabarruj* and its interpretation in several classical and contemporary tafsir works. This limitation is applied to ensure a more focused and in-depth discussion. This study utilizes semantic and contextual approaches to understand the meaning of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an and its relevance to the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism. The tafsir methods employed are *tahlili*, namely interpreting verses in detail by covering linguistic aspects, *asbab al-nuzul*, *munasabah*, and the legal aspects contained within the verses, as well as *muqaran*, namely comparing the perspectives of various exegetes regarding the same verse to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. The exegetes who become the focus of this study include al-Thabari, al-Qurthubi, Hamka, M. Quraish Shihab, and Sahiron Syamsuddin. The selection of these exegetes is based on the consideration of diverse representation, namely classical tafsir (al-Thabari and al-Qurthubi) and modern-contemporary tafsir (Hamka, M. Quraish Shihab, and Sahiron Syamsuddin), which is expected to provide a more comprehensive overview in understanding the concept of *tabarruj*.

The primary data sources consist of: (1) the Holy Qur'an as the main source; (2) *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras li Alfaz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* by Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul Baqi for the inventory of the term *tabarruj*; and (3) relevant tafsir books. The secondary data sources

include accredited academic journals, books, and official reports from institutions related to social media in Indonesia.

This study applies a literature study technique as the data collection process by tracing and examining various relevant references, including the Qur’anic manuscripts, tafsir works, scientific literature, and academic journal articles. The library research approach was selected as the appropriate research type because the focus of this study is directed toward the analysis of Qur’anic texts, tafsir works, and academic sources discussing the concept of *tabarruj* and the phenomenon of exhibitionism in the digital space.

Data validity is ensured through triangulation techniques. Triangulation is conducted by comparing various tafsir sources, academic literature, and contemporary social data to ensure the consistency and depth of the analysis. In addition, theoretical triangulation is also employed to examine the suitability of the concepts used in this research. The collected data are then recorded, categorized, and systematically analyzed according to the research focus.

Meanwhile, the research data are analyzed through an inductive and gradual analytical process using content analysis and an interpretative-contextual approach. First, the researcher examines the semantic meaning of the term *tabarruj* to understand its basic meaning and usage in the Qur’an. Subsequently, the researcher analyzes the interpretations of classical and contemporary exegetes to observe how the concept is understood within the context of the verse. The next stage involves relating the findings of the study to the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism on social media through contextual analysis. Through this process, the researcher formulates the concept of digital *tabarruj* as a new interpretation relevant to social realities in the digital era. Overall, this research is conducted through stages of semantic analysis, tafsir studies, social contextualization, and the formulation of the concept of digital *tabarruj* as the final outcome of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Semantic-Lexical Meaning of *Tabarruj* in the Qur’an

#### a. Inventory of the Term *Tabarruj* in the Qur’an

The initial step in tafsir research is tracing all occurrences of the term that becomes the object of study within the Qur’an. Based on a search using *Al-Mu’jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur’an al-Karīm* written by Muhammad Fu’ad ‘Abd al-Baqi (1980), the word derived from the root letters ba-ra-ja (ب ر ج) with various derivations of *tabarruj* (تَبَرُّج), in the form of prohibition and behavior, is found twice in two different surahs, namely Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 and Q.S. an-Nur/24:60. In addition, the word *burūj* (بُرُوج), which comes from the same root but appears in a different form, occurs four times. Therefore, the total occurrences of words derived from this root in various forms of derivation are six times.

Table 1. Occurrences of the Term *Tabarruj* in the Qur’an

Surah and verse	Verse Text	Verse Translation	Context of Meaning
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<p>Q.S. al-Ahzab/33: 33</p>	<p>وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى</p>	<p>“And do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance”</p>	<p>The prohibition of <i>tabarruj</i> addressed to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is understood by scholars as containing ethical guidance for Muslim women in maintaining dignity.</p>
<p>Q.S. An-Nur/24: 60</p>	<p>غَيْرَ مُتَّبِعَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ</p>	<p>“Not displaying [their] adornment” An exception for elderly women who are permitted to remove their outer garments.</p>	<p>Refers to elderly women who are permitted to lay aside their outer garments, provided that they do not intend to display their adornment through <i>tabarruj</i>.</p>
<p>Q.S. An-Nisa’/4: 78</p>	<p>أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ</p>	<p>“Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you should be within towers of lofty construction.”</p>	<p>The word <i>burūj</i> in this verse refers to high and fortified structures that are visible and prominent. This basic meaning of being elevated and apparent contributes to the semantic relation with the root of <i>tabarruj</i>.</p>
<p>Q.S. Al-Hijr/15: 16</p>	<p>وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاطِرِينَ</p>	<p>“And We have placed within the heaven great stars and adorned it for the observers.”</p>	<p>Describes celestial formations that are clearly visible and serve as adornments of the sky. The meaning of something apparent and prominent represents the semantic basis of this root.</p>
<p>Q.S. Al-Furqan/25: 61</p>	<p>بَارِكِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي</p>	<p>“Blessed is He who has placed in the sky</p>	<p>Indicates celestial objects that appear</p>

	السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا	great stars and placed therein a [burning] lamp and luminous moon.”	bright and prominent in the sky. This demonstrates the semantic connection between visible beauty and the concept of <i>tabarruj</i> .
Q.S. Al-Buruj/85: 1	وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ	“By the sky containing great stars.”	Emphasizes the meaning of something high, visible, and prominent in the sky. From this basic meaning of prominence, the concept of <i>tabarruj</i> develops.

This finding is also confirmed by the study of Achmad Muzakki Abdirrozak (2024), which shows that the term *tabarruj* appears only in two verses in the Qur’an, making it the only textual locus that explicitly uses the term. This limited frequency indicates that the term *tabarruj* is not used generally but specifically to designate a behavior with strong ethical implications.

Thus, each occurrence of the term is always placed within a context related to self-expression in public spaces, particularly concerning appearance and visual attractiveness. This demonstrates that *tabarruj* is not merely a descriptive term referring to adornment, but rather a normative concept containing moral boundaries in managing self-presentation. Therefore, it cannot be separated from the dimension of social ethics that emphasizes dignity, self-awareness, and control over expression in public spaces.

**b. The Basic Meaning (Lexical) of the Term *Tabarruj***

To understand a Qur’anic concept accurately, lexical semantic analysis serves as an essential foundation that cannot be neglected. The term *tabarruj* originates from the root word *ba-ra-ja* (ب ر ج). In authoritative Arabic dictionaries, this root carries the basic meanings of “to appear clearly,” “to stand out,” and “to rise prominently.” This meaning can be seen in Q.S. al-Hijr/15:16 and Q.S. al-Furqan/25:61, which convey the meaning of the derivation of the word *buruj* as something prominent and elevated.

Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-‘Arab* (1990) explains that *baraja* refers to something that appears clearly and prominently. From the same root emerges the word *al-burj* (الْبُرْج), meaning a tower or fortress that can be seen from a distance due to its height. Meanwhile, Al-Raghib al-Isfahani in *Mufradat Alfāz Al-Qur’an* (2011), in the section on برج, elaborates that *baraja* means “to appear and become elevated,” so *tabarruj* refers to displaying oneself excessively in order to attract the attention of others. Furthermore, Al-

Fairuzabadi in *Al-Qamus al-Muhith* (1987), in the discussion of *ba-ra-ja*, defines *tabarruj* more specifically as the behavior of a woman who displays the beauty of her face and body before the public.

The basic meaning of the root word *ba-ra-ja* (ب ر ج) demonstrates that the concept of *tabarruj* has been associated from the beginning with something that appears prominent and attracts attention. Therefore, Arab lexicographers do not merely interpret it as “appearance,” but also as an intentional form of self-display that is visible and striking before the public. From this semantic field, *tabarruj* then developed into an ethical term in the Qur’an related to the way individuals present themselves in social spaces.

### c. The Conceptual Relationship between *Burūj* and *Tabarruj*

The understanding of *tabarruj* becomes richer when it is conceptually associated with the term *al-burūj* (البروج), which is the plural form of *al-burj*, meaning towers or stars. In addition to *tabarruj*, another derivation from the root word *ba-ra-ja* is *burūj*, which appears in several verses of the Qur’an. These verses use the word *burūj*, but within different semantic contexts. In Q.S. al-Hijr/15:16 and Q.S. al-Furqan/25:61, *burūj* refers to groups of stars or celestial objects that are high and prominently visible in the sky. Meanwhile, in Q.S. an-Nisa’/4:78, Allah says, “Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you are within lofty and fortified towers.” In this verse, the word *burūj* is used to describe high fortresses that are clearly visible and stand out from a distance.

Although appearing in different contexts, all uses of this term demonstrate the same underlying semantic connection, namely something that is clearly visible, prominent, and easily attracts attention. Both *burūj* referring to high fortresses and clusters of stars in the sky represent something that appears striking among its surroundings. From this semantic relationship, the concept of *tabarruj* is then understood as the behavior of intentionally displaying or highlighting oneself in public spaces in order to become the center of attention.

## Exegesis of Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 Regarding *Tabarruj*

### a. The Verse Text and Translation

The verse that becomes the main focus of this study is Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

“And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only intends to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the Prophet’s household, and to purify you with complete purification.”

**b. *Asbabun Nuzul* of Q.S. Al-Ahzab/33:33**

Understanding the reason behind the revelation of a verse is one of the main methodological principles in tafsir because it provides important historical context for an accurate interpretation. Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 is part of a series of verses revealed concerning the lives of the wives of Prophet Muhammad (*ummahāt al-mu'minīn*). Surah al-Ahzab as a whole is classified as a Madaniyyah surah, revealed after the Prophet's migration to Medina (Mukaromah et al., 2025, p. 179).

The presence of this verse is situated within the context of pre-Islamic Arab society (jahiliyyah), which had a tradition of women walking in public spaces while displaying their ornaments, dressing in a striking manner, and presenting their physical attractiveness to gain the attention of men. Imam al-Thabari (2007) argues that this behavior had already been rooted since the pre-Islamic period. Ibn Abbas narrated that *tabarruj* had appeared during the period between Prophet Noah and Prophet Idris, when Satan introduced pleasures and celebrations involving the mixing of men and women, causing beautiful women to compete in displaying their beauty.

Islam came to fundamentally transform this tradition through two main commands in this verse, namely the command to remain in houses (*wa qarna fī buyūtikunna*) and the prohibition of practicing *tabarruj* like the former tradition of jahiliyyah (*wa lā tabarrajna tabarruj al-jāhiliyyati al-ūlā*). This command, although grammatically addressed to the wives of the Prophet, is agreed by scholars to apply universally to all believing women.

**c. *Munasabah* (Correlation) of Q.S. Al-Ahzab/33:33**

*Munasabah* or the correlation between verses is one of the important elements in the methodology of *tafsir tahlili*. Understanding the position of a verse among the preceding and following verses reveals the depth of its hidden meanings. Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 has a close correlation with several surrounding verses:

First, the correlation with Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:28–29 in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* volume 8 discusses the choice of the Prophet's wives between worldly life and the hereafter. After Allah emphasizes the noble choice of the Prophet's wives who choose Allah and His Messenger, the logical consequence is the obligation to maintain their behavior, including their appearance. Verse 33 appears as a concrete ethical guideline resulting from that choice (Hamka, 1982, pp. 5691–5696).

Second, the correlation with Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:32 in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* volume 8, which prohibits the Prophet's wives from speaking in a softened manner (*khudhu' bi al-qawl*) because it may create temptation for those whose hearts contain illness. This prohibition is aligned with the prohibition of *tabarruj* in verse 33; both represent forms of protection for women from exploitation and moral temptation (*fitnah*) (Hamka, 1982, pp. 5708–5710).

Third, in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* volume 8, the correlation with Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:34–35 commands remembering the verses of Allah and the wisdom recited in the houses, while also stating the equality of men and women in carrying out obedience. This sequence of verses constructs a complete picture of the ideal life of a believer, namely having faith,

possessing piety, maintaining morality, and preserving one's appearance from behaviors that damage dignity (Hamka, 1982, pp. 5711–5719).

Fourth, the correlation with Q.S. an-Nur/24:60, which is the only other verse that uses the term *tabarruj* in the Qur'an. In *Tafsir al-Misbah*, further explanation regarding Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 can be understood through Q.S. an-Nur/24:60, which explains the prohibition of practicing *tabarruj* for women in general. This verse states that elderly women who no longer have the desire for marriage are permitted to remove their outer garments, "without intending to display their adornment." This phrase strengthens the understanding of *tabarruj*, whose essence is the intention to present oneself in order to attract attention (audience-directedness), rather than merely concerning clothing (Shihab, 2002, p. 567).

From the perspective of *munasabah*, it becomes clear that the prohibition of *tabarruj* is not an isolated command but rather part of a comprehensive Islamic ethical system concerning gender relations, women's dignity, and social balance.

#### d. Interpretation of Classical Exegetes

Classical exegetes interpreted the prohibition of *tabarruj* in Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 by emphasizing its behavioral and social dimensions. The following are the interpretations of classical exegetes:

- (1) Al-Thabari (d. 310 H). Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Thabari in *Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an* volume 20 collected various narrations from the companions (*sahabah*) and successors (*tabi'in*) regarding the meaning of *tabarruj*. Al-Thabari quoted Muqatil bin Hayyan, who defined *tabarruj* as a woman wearing a veil without properly fastening it, causing her necklace, earrings, and neck to become visible. Al-Thabari also presented the narration of Ibn Abbas regarding the origin of *tabarruj* in the period between Prophet Noah and Prophet Idris. Al-Thabari's conclusion is that this prohibition is absolute and applies to all believing women who follow the example of the Prophet's wives (Ath-Thabari, 2007, pp. 116–119).
- (2) Al-Qurthubi (d. 671 H). Imam al-Qurthubi in *Al-Jami' li Ahkam Al-Qur'an*, volume 14, defines *tabarruj* as encompassing three aspects: (1) displaying the face and physical beauty before men who are not *mahram*; (2) revealing adornments that should be concealed; and (3) behaving flirtatiously and seductively (Al-Qurthubi, 2008, pp. 448–450). Imam al-Qurthubi also explains that *tabarruj* behavior among women is not merely a violation of clothing regulations but also demonstrates a neglect of responsibility in maintaining personal and family honor. Al-Qurthubi firmly states that the prohibition of *tabarruj* applies generally to all Muslim women (Rahmi et al., 2025).

The interpretations of classical exegetes demonstrate that *tabarruj* is understood not merely as a matter of clothing but also as being related to the way women present

themselves in social spaces. Al-Thabari emphasizes aspects of the exposure of *'awrah* and adornments that are intentionally displayed, while al-Qurthubi expands its meaning to include behaviors that may attract the attention of non-*mahram* men. Both exegetes emphasize that the prohibition of *tabarruj* has ethical and social dimensions aimed at preserving self-respect and the dignity of women within society.

#### e. Interpretation of Contemporary Exegetes

Contemporary exegetes expand and contextualize the interpretation of *tabarruj* in accordance with the developments of the times while maintaining the essence of the moral message outlined by classical exegetes.

- 1) Buya Hamka. Hamka in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* volume 8 interprets the prohibition of *tabarruj* as a prohibition against displaying beauty and adornments before those who are not *mahram*. According to him, *tabarruj jahiliyyah* represents the peak of women's moral degradation, and Islam came to elevate their dignity through the command to preserve themselves. Hamka emphasizes that avoiding *tabarruj* is not a form of restriction but rather an expression of honor and dignity (Hamka, 1982).
- 2) M. Quraish Shihab. Quraish Shihab provides the most dynamic and relevant contextualization for the modern era. He defines *tabarruj* as displaying oneself excessively in a manner that may attract attention and cause *fitnah* (Nurpadjarillah & Bashori, 2025). Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* volume 11 emphasizes that a woman may dress well and neatly, but she should not dress or behave in a striking manner that intentionally aims to arouse the desires of others. The essence does not merely concern *'awrah*, but rather the intention and social effects of such appearance. This perspective opens the way for contextualizing the prohibition of *tabarruj* within the digital space (Shihab, 2002, pp. 265–270). Thus, Quraish Shihab's view confirms that *tabarruj* is more a matter of appearance ethics and its social consequences, making it highly relevant to be reinterpreted within the phenomenon of self-expression on social media.
- 3) Sahiron Syamsuddin with the Ma'na-Cum-Maghza Approach. Sahiron Syamsuddin through the *Ma'na-Cum-Maghza* approach to the Qur'an and Hadith (2020) proposes a balance between (*ma'na*) the literal-historical meaning and (*maghza*) the main message or universal intention of the text. This approach offers a contemporary hermeneutical framework that is highly relevant for application to Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33. This approach distinguishes between: (1) *ma'na al-tarikhī* (historical meaning): *tabarruj* refers to the way of adornment during the period of Jahiliyyah that could provoke desire; (2) *maghza al-tarikhī* (historical significance): the purpose of the prohibition is to protect women from exploitation and objectification; (3) *maghza al-ayah* (dynamic-contemporary significance): the prohibition of *tabarruj* applies in every era and context, including the digital space. Thus, this approach demonstrates that the Qur'anic text does not stop at its historical meaning but continues to produce ethical meanings that can be applied according to the development of the times.

The interpretations of contemporary exegetes demonstrate that *tabarruj* is not merely a matter of physical appearance but also concerns how individuals present themselves amid

continuously developing social changes. Hamka emphasizes the importance of preserving women's dignity, Quraish Shihab highlights the element of excessiveness and the social effects of appearance, while Sahiron Syamsuddin demonstrates that the message of the prohibition of *tabarruj* remains relevant across different periods, including the reality of today's digital spaces.

#### f. Comparison between Classical and Contemporary Interpretations

Comparing classical and contemporary interpretations of *tabarruj* reveals two important aspects: the existence of continuity and, at the same time, development in understanding this concept.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Classical and Contemporary Exegetical Interpretations of *Tabarruj*

Aspect	Classical Exegesis	Contemporary Exegesis
Definition focus	Physical behavior: manner of walking, clothing, and visible adornments	Intention and social impact: self-display aimed at gaining attention
Context of application	Physical public spaces: markets, streets, and social gatherings	Public spaces expanded into media and virtual environments
Subject of prohibition	The wives of the Prophet as exemplary figures, later extended to all Muslim women	All Muslim women, including ethical dimensions that extend across genders
Emphasized dimension	Legal and moral aspects (Islamic prohibition)	Dignity, social balance, and protection from exploitation
Contemporary relevance	Does not address media and technological developments	Explicitly provides room for contextualization in the digital era

This comparison shows that contemporary interpretations do not reject or contradict classical interpretations; rather, they deepen and expand the scope of its application. Classical exegetes established a strong conceptual foundation, while contemporary exegetes actualize this foundation within the context of the present era. This is in line with the Qur'anic hermeneutical principle stated by Jasser Auda in *Maqasid Al-Shariah: A Beginner's Guide* (Auda, 2008, pp. 2–7), that the primary objective of Islamic law (*sharia*) is the realization of human welfare across different periods, and that textual interpretation must remain responsive to context.

Aisyah Arsyad (2017) emphasizes the importance of reading religious texts within the context of social developments in society. This approach is relevant for understanding the concept of *tabarruj* in Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33, which is not only related to dress regulations but also to social phenomena reflecting how women present themselves in public spaces.

The comparison between classical and contemporary tafsir demonstrates that the

understanding of *tabarruj* has experienced both continuity and development of meaning. Classical exegetes emphasize physical aspects such as clothing, adornments, and behavior in public spaces, while contemporary exegetes expand the concept to include intention, social effects, and the way individuals present themselves in digital spaces. This development does not contradict classical interpretations but rather represents an actualization of Qur'anic values so that they remain relevant to social and technological changes. Thus, *tabarruj* is no longer understood merely as a matter of appearance but also as an ethical issue in constructing self-image before the public.

## Digital Exhibitionism as a Contemporary Phenomenon

### a. Definition of Exhibitionism: Linguistic and Terminological Perspectives

Before connecting the concept of *tabarruj* with the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism, it is necessary to first understand the meaning of exhibitionism itself from two perspectives: linguistic and terminological. Linguistically, according to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the word “ekshibisionisme” originates from the basic word “ekshibisi,” which means “exhibition; display; presentation.” Exhibitionism (noun) is defined as “the tendency to show oneself (particularly the body) in public in order to gain attention.” This term originates from the Latin word *exhibitio*, which means “display” or “presentation.”

Terminologically, exhibitionism refers to a behavior in which an individual gains satisfaction by displaying or exposing their body or certain body parts that should be concealed to others. This behavior is generally carried out to attract attention or create certain responses from those who observe it (Sundari, 2015, p. 81).

Exhibitionism is basically not only related to the act of displaying the body but also to the desire to obtain attention and recognition from others. In the era of social media, this behavior has developed into the digital space through photographs, videos, and various personal contents that are intentionally displayed to the public. In this context, Self-Presentation Theory explains that individuals tend to manage impressions (*impression management*) in order to gain social validation, such as attention, praise, popularity, and recognition from other users. Therefore, digital exhibitionism can be understood as a form of behavior arising from the combination of individual psychological needs and social media culture that encourages openness and excessive self-display in digital public spaces.

### b. Factors Driving Digital Exhibitionism

Shafika et al. (2025, pp. 205–207) identify several main factors that encourage the growth of digital exhibitionism in Indonesia: (1) a high need for social validation, particularly among younger generations; (2) social media platform algorithms that actively provide rewards (views and wider reach) for content that is sensational and generates reactions; (3) the phenomenon of FOMO (*Fear of Missing Out*), which encourages competition in displaying the “best version” of oneself on social media; and (4) content monetization that transforms exhibitionism into an economic strategy (*endorsement*, advertising, and subscribers). These four factors demonstrate that digital exhibitionism does not merely

emerge from individual desires but is also influenced by social media systems that structurally support and reinforce such behavior.

Empirically, this phenomenon can also be observed through the high level of social media usage in Indonesia. In Indonesia, data from We Are Social and Meltwater (2025) records that active social media users have reached 180 million people, or approximately 62.9% of the total population, with an average usage time of 21 hours and 50 minutes per week. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube function as the main platforms for content dissemination. Within this space, various forms of content such as body reveals, OOTD (*Outfit of the Day*), and sensual-themed content framed as “lifestyle” have developed widely and gained millions of views. This indicates that changes in digital culture require the presence of a more contextual ethical understanding within Islam (Nasrullah, 2025, p. 164).

Therefore, it can be understood that digital exhibitionism develops due to the relationship between the need for self-recognition and social media systems that support such behavior. Social media users tend to present themselves excessively in order to gain attention, validation, and popularity. On the other hand, platform algorithms expand the dissemination of sensational content because it is considered capable of increasing engagement. As a result, the behavior of displaying oneself gradually becomes normalized and may even become a means of obtaining social and economic benefits in digital spaces.

### Conceptual Relevance of *Tabarruj* to Digital Exhibitionism

After analyzing the meaning of *tabarruj* semantically and understanding the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism comprehensively, it is now necessary to establish a conceptual bridge between the two. This study argues that there is a strong conceptual resonance, even a combination, between *tabarruj* prohibited by the Qur’an and digital exhibitionism, which has become a contemporary ethical issue.

**Table 3.** Comparison of Classical and Contemporary Interpretations of *Tabarruj*

Dimension	<i>Tabarruj</i> in the Age of Jahiliyyah (Historical Context)	Digital Exhibitionism (Contemporary Context)
Space of action	Markets, streets, and physical public spaces	Digital platforms: TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube
Forms of behavior	Walking in an artificial manner and displaying adornments	Uploading body-related content, OOTD ( <i>Outfit of the Day</i> ), and sensual content
Main objective	Attracting attention and desire from men	Gaining likes, comments, and followers
Element of intentionality	Deliberate and planned behavior	Involves intentional strategies such as filters, editing, and strategic posting times

Social impact	Disrupting the moral order of society	Reaching millions of users across geographical boundaries
Islamic response	Prohibited by the Qur'an (Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33)	Relevant to be examined through the same ethical principles

This conceptual relevance is not merely a superficial analogy. It is rooted in the similarity of three core elements found in both concepts: (1) intentionality, both *tabarruj* and digital exhibitionism represent deliberate and planned behaviors; (2) visibility, both involve deliberate efforts to appear prominent and be seen by the public; (3) audience-directedness, the purpose is to obtain responses and attention from others. These three elements, as previously explained, represent the core semantic elements of the term *tabarruj* itself.

The research of Putri Ghoida et al. (2023, p. 27) found that symbols of *tabarruj* have transformed into new digital mediums, while their substance remains the same, namely displaying oneself excessively before the public in order to gain attention. The research of Rahmat, Achmad Abubakar et al. (2024) explains that Qur'anic teachings regarding gender relations should not be understood merely textually but must prioritize the values of justice, compassion, and respect toward women. This demonstrates that Islam has an orientation toward preserving women's dignity, which is also in line with the prohibition of *tabarruj* in Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33 as a form of protection against the exploitation of women's bodies.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that digital exhibitionism represents a new form of *tabarruj* practice within the modern context. Although the mediums are different, both involve intentionally presenting oneself in order to attract public attention. The similarities in the elements of intentionality, self-exposure, and audience orientation demonstrate that the prohibition of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an, particularly Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33, remains relevant within the current phenomenon of social media. Therefore, the Qur'anic values concerning the preservation of women's honor and dignity can be understood as an ethical protection against the culture of excessive self-display in digital spaces.

### Digital *Tabarruj*: A New Conceptual Construct

Based on the semantic-lexical analysis, comparative interpretations of exegetes, and identification of the characteristics of digital exhibitionism, this study formulates a new conceptual construct called "digital *tabarruj*" (التيبُّرُج الرقْمِيّ / *digital tabarruj*) in Indonesian language "*Tabarruj Digital*". This construct represents the conceptual contribution of this study and serves as a bridge between the classical intellectual heritage of the Qur'an and the reality of contemporary digital ethics.

#### a. Definition og Digital *Tabarruj*

Digital *tabarruj* is defined as any behavior intentionally carried out by an individual in digital spaces through social media platforms, content-sharing applications, or other online communication channels to display oneself, one's body, or aspects of physical appearance excessively before an unlimited audience, with the primary aim of obtaining social

validation, attention, or material benefits, in such a way that the behavior has the potential to cause *fitnah*, exploitation, or violations of the moral standards established by religion and the noble values of society (Ihsan & Nugroho, 2025, p. 22).

It can be understood that this definition is constructed upon three pillars: (1) the Qur'anic textual pillar, namely the semantic meaning of *tabarruj* rooted in the concept of displaying oneself prominently; (2) the interpretative pillar, namely the conclusions of classical and contemporary exegetes that the prohibition of *tabarruj* is oriented toward protection from exploitation and the preservation of dignity; (3) the contemporary contextual pillar, namely the characteristics of digital exhibitionism, which include intentionality, excessive exposure, and audience orientation.

### **b. Identification Criteria of Digital *Tabarruj***

The display of physical appearance in online spaces does not necessarily constitute digital *tabarruj*. Drawing upon Quraish Shihab's interpretation, which highlights the role of intention and social impact, this study formulates four criteria for identifying digital *tabarruj*:

The first criterion is intention and intentionality. Content is uploaded deliberately with the aim of attracting attention to physical appearance or the body. This differs, for example, from documentation of academic activities that incidentally display the person who uploads it.

The second criterion is excessiveness. The content exceeds the boundaries of accepted propriety, whether in terms of clothing (revealing body parts that should be protected), style, or behavior that has a seductive nature. As stated in the research, social media has a significant influence in shaping dress ethics among various groups (Hanah et al., 2026, p. 97).

The third criterion is orientation toward audience responses. The primary purpose of such content is to obtain responses in the form of likes, comments, views, or followers from audiences, who are generally members of the opposite sex or an unlimited public. The fourth criterion is potential harm (*mudharat*). The content has the potential to cause *fitnah*, digital harassment, or encourage similar behavior among others.

Digital *tabarruj* is not only viewed from physical appearance on social media but also from intention and its consequences. This behavior emerges when individuals intentionally display themselves excessively in order to attract attention and obtain social validation through likes, comments, and popularity. As a result, social media transforms into a space of self-display that may encourage a culture of showing off and objectification within digital spaces.

### **c. Implications of the Digital *Tabarruj* Concept**

The concept of digital *tabarruj* has several important implications. First, the theological implication is that it affirms that the Qur'anic prohibition of *tabarruj* is universal and transcends the limitations of physical space. Qur'anic values do not lose their relevance merely because times have changed; rather, they possess a remarkable

ability to adapt in responding to new ethical challenges. Zaini et al. (Zaini et al., 2026, p. 64) also state that Islamic ethics and morality must be integrated in addressing the phenomenon of digital *tabarruj*.

Second, the social implication is that this concept provides a clear ethical framework for Muslim communities in navigating digital spaces. This does not concern the prohibition of social media use, but rather emphasizes responsible and dignified practices in utilizing digital platforms (Izzah et al., 2025, p. 134).

Third, the educational implication is that the concept of digital *tabarruj* can be integrated into digital literacy curricula based on Islamic values, providing a normative perspective derived from the Qur'an alongside technological and legal perspectives. The research of Ummah, Fatah, and Muzakky (2025, p. 807) also recommends similar integration, namely incorporating Qur'anic values into digital literacy education as a response to digital exhibitionism.

Fourth, the methodological implication for Qur'anic and Tafsir studies is that this research demonstrates that the *tahlili* and *muqaran* methods, when combined with in-depth semantic analysis and openness toward contemporary contexts, are capable of producing new conceptual constructs that are relevant and contribute to the global discourse on digital ethics.

Overall, the discussion above demonstrates that the Qur'an, through the concept of *tabarruj*, has established an ethical foundation for self-presentation that extends far beyond its historical context. The prohibition of *tabarruj* is not merely a regulation of women's clothing in seventh-century Arab society, but rather a universal ethical principle concerning self-dignity, social relations, and responsibility toward the community. In the digital era, this principle finds fresh and urgent relevance in addressing the phenomenon of digital exhibitionism, which reaches hundreds of millions of Indonesian users and billions of people worldwide.

The concept of digital *tabarruj* demonstrates that Qur'anic teachings maintain their relevance in addressing changing times, including within digital spaces. Islamic ethical values are not limited to physical social life but also function as moral guidance in the virtual world, which is filled with various forms of self-expression. This concept emphasizes the importance of ethical social media use through awareness in behaving and expressing oneself in a dignified manner, while also encouraging the strengthening of digital literacy based on Qur'anic values so that media users are not only technically proficient but also possess ethical sensitivity in every digital activity.

From the perspective of Qur'anic studies, this discussion also demonstrates that contextual and analytical approaches to interpretation are capable of producing new understandings that are more compatible with contemporary realities. Therefore, the concept of digital *tabarruj* does not merely function as an analysis of social phenomena but also contributes to the formulation of an Islamic ethical framework in the continuously developing digital era.

## CONCLUSION

The development of social media has created new spaces for humans to present themselves, construct images, and seek public recognition. Within this reality, digital exhibitionism is no longer merely a psychological phenomenon but has become a culture that influences how individuals perceive themselves and others. Through semantic analysis of the root word *ba-ra-ja* and the interpretation of Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:33, this study finds that the concept of *tabarruj* has a strong relationship with the behavior of intentionally displaying oneself in order to become the center of attention. The basic meaning of something that is clearly visible, prominent, and attention-grabbing, as reflected in the derivation of the word *burūj*, becomes an important foundation for understanding *tabarruj* as a social behavior rather than merely a matter of clothing.

This study demonstrates that the message of the prohibition of *tabarruj* in the Qur'an contains universal ethical values that remain relevant in the digital era. *Tabarruj* does not only appear in the form of physical appearance in real-world spaces but can also emerge through social media content oriented toward excessive validation, popularity, and public attention. From this point, the concept of "digital *tabarruj*" is formulated as a contextualization of Qur'anic values within contemporary social media culture. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that social media is not merely a space for freedom of expression but also a moral space that requires awareness, responsibility, and the preservation of self-dignity.

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