



e-ISSN: 2600-9617

Available online at  
<https://journal.uitm.edu.my/ojs/index.php/e-JITU/index>

E-Journal of Islamic Thought & Understanding 9 (1) 2026, 40-52

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**E-Journal of  
Islamic Thought  
& Understanding  
(E-JITU)**

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# Reframing I'tibār al-ma'āl as an ethical framework for religious communication on social media

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## ARTICLE INFO

### *Article history:*

Received 22 Jan 2026

Revised 27 Jan 2026

Accepted 17 Mac 2026

Published 1 Apr 2026

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### *Keywords:*

*Khilāf Fiqhi*

*I'tibār al-ma'āl*

Social Media

*Khilāf* Management

Digital Ethics

### *DOI:*

<https://doi.org/10.24191/5xh06e03>

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## ABSTRACT

Juristic disagreement (*khilāf fiqhi*) is an inherent feature of Islamic legal tradition, reflecting methodological diversity and interpretive plurality within *fiqh*. However, in the contemporary digital environment, such disagreement has increasingly migrated from scholarly and institutional settings into social media platforms, where it often generates public confusion, polarization, and contestation of religious authority. This shift positions *khilāf fiqhi* not merely as a legal issue, but as a complex problem of religious communication in the digital public sphere. Against this backdrop, this study examines how juristic disagreement operates on social media and proposes *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as an ethical and impact-based framework for managing religious disagreement online. Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilises document analysis of classical *fiqh* texts, works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, contemporary fatwas, institutional guidelines, and selected social media discourses related to contested *fiqh* issues in Malaysia. The findings reveal that unmanaged digital communication of *khilāf fiqhi* intensifies polarisation and undermines public trust in religious institutions. The main contribution of this study lies in conceptually reframing *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as a communication-oriented framework, operationalised as a content-filtering logic, a guide for ethical religious communication, and a social impact indicator. By integrating Islamic legal theory with media and communication perspectives, the study offers both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for managing juristic disagreement in Malaysia's contemporary digital media landscape.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Differences of opinion (*khilāf*) in Islamic jurisprudence have long been recognised as an integral feature of the Islamic legal tradition. Such differences emerge from diverse methodologies of legal reasoning, varying interpretations of religious texts, and the influence of socio-cultural contexts shaping juristic *ijtihād*. When grounded in scholarly discipline and ethical engagement, *khilāf* reflects the flexibility and dynamism of Islamic law in responding to changing realities (al-Qaradawi, 1998; al-Zarqa', 2014). However, in contemporary settings, juristic disagreement increasingly extends beyond academic circles and formal religious institutions into the public sphere, particularly through social media platforms, where its implications become significantly more complex (Mokhtar & Bahari, 2021).

In Malaysia, several *fiqh*-related issues such as the practice of *qunūt* in Subuh prayer, *tahlīl* rituals, the permissibility of Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) investments, cross-border zakat distribution, and questions of lineage (*nasab*), frequently trigger heated debates on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. Juristic differences that were previously confined to technical discussions within the realm of *furū' iyyāt* are now reframed as emotionally charged public controversies, often accompanied by personal attacks, moral judgement, and social stigmatisation (Shompa et al., 2019). As a result, members of the public increasingly struggle to distinguish between authoritative religious rulings and individual opinions, becoming trapped in reductive narratives of “right versus wrong.” This shift indicates that *khilāf fiqhi* in the age of social media is no longer merely a legal matter, but a broader issue of public communication and perception management.

This challenge is further intensified by the structural characteristics of social media ecosystems, which prioritise speed, algorithmic visibility, and sensational content over nuance and contextual understanding. Religious messages circulated in fragmented formats such as short video clips, selective quotations, or provocative headlines are highly susceptible to misinterpretation and polarisation. In this environment, the authority of religious communication is no longer monopolised by established institutions or trained scholars, but increasingly shaped by digital religious influencers whose reach may surpass their methodological competence in managing juristic disagreement (Zaid et al., 2022). Consequently, *fiqh* diversity that should foster intellectual maturity and ethical pluralism often degenerates into identity conflicts, discursive competition, and declining public trust in religious institutions.

From the perspective of media and communication studies, this phenomenon warrants serious scholarly attention as it exemplifies the process of the mediatization of religion, whereby religious meanings, authority, and practices are reshaped according to media logic (Razali et al., 2024). In such a context, juristic disagreement is no longer evaluated solely on the strength of textual evidence, but is also determined by how it is communicated, who communicates it, and how audiences interpret and respond to it. Failure to manage the communication of *khilāf* ethically and responsibly thus risks not only undermining intra-Muslim harmony but also generating wider social repercussions in a plural society, including interreligious tension and social fragmentation.

Against this backdrop, this study argues for the urgent need to develop a framework for managing *khilāf fiqhi* that extends beyond classical legal reasoning to incorporate communication ethics and social impact considerations. The theory of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* is adopted as the analytical foundation of this study, as it emphasises the evaluation of consequences and long-term implications of legal decisions. By

integrating this theory into the context of social media discourse, the study seeks to construct a systematic, impact-oriented framework for managing juristic disagreement that is communicative, socially responsive, and aligned with the needs of contemporary Malaysian society in the digital age.

Despite the growing body of literature on juristic disagreement within Islamic jurisprudence and the expanding scholarship on religious discourse in digital media, existing studies tend to address these domains in isolation. Research on *khilāf fiqhi* largely remains grounded in doctrinal, normative, or institutional analyses, while studies on religious communication on social media focus predominantly on audience behaviour, authority contestation, or media effects. What remains insufficiently addressed is how juristic disagreement should be ethically managed as a communicative process in digital public spaces, particularly through a framework that systematically evaluates social consequences and communicative impact. This study seeks to fill this gap by integrating the theory of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* into the analysis of *khilāf fiqhi* on social media, positioning it as an ethical and impact-based framework for managing religious disagreement in contemporary digital contexts.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Religious Discourse on Social Media

The expansion of social media has significantly transformed the production, dissemination, and reception of religious knowledge. Religious discourse, which was once primarily confined to mosques, classrooms, and scholarly texts, is now widely circulated through digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. This transformation has enabled greater public access to religious content and facilitated broader participation in religious discussions. At the same time, scholars have noted that the digitalisation of religious discourse introduces new challenges related to authority, interpretation, and communicative ethics, particularly when complex religious issues are presented in simplified or fragmented forms (al-Ghazali, 2015). In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, juristic disagreements (*khilāf fiqhi*) are increasingly communicated through social media in ways that differ substantially from traditional scholarly settings. While classical *fiqh* recognises *khilāf* as a legitimate outcome of diverse methodologies of legal reasoning, its circulation in digital environments often lacks methodological explanation and contextual framing (al-Shatibi, 2017). As a result, religious discourse online tends to prioritise immediacy and audience engagement over depth and nuance, increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding among lay audiences.

Previous studies have observed that religious messages conveyed through short videos, selective quotations, or sensational headlines are particularly prone to misinterpretation, thereby reshaping how juristic opinions are perceived and evaluated in public discourse (Ani & Yusoff, 2021). From a communication perspective, this shift reflects a broader transformation in religious authority. Social media platforms enable individuals without formal religious training to gain substantial influence through visibility, algorithmic amplification, and audience trust. Consequently, religious discourse is no longer shaped solely by institutional actors such as fatwa councils or recognised scholars, but also by digital religious influencers whose communicative reach may exceed their methodological competence (Anwar & Mujib, 2022). This development underscores the need to examine juristic disagreement not only as a legal phenomenon, but also as a communicative process embedded within digital media structures.

## 2.2 Conflict, Polarisation, and Digital Religious Debate

A growing body of literature highlights the tendency of social media to intensify conflict and polarization in public discourse, including discussions related to religion (Rahman et. al, 2024). The interactive and algorithm-driven nature of digital platforms encourages the circulation of emotionally charged content, which often attracts higher engagement than balanced or explanatory material (Shamsuddin, 2024). In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, this dynamic has contributed to the escalation of *khilāf fiqhi* into public controversies characterized by moral judgement, identity-based positioning, and social stigmatization. In Malaysia, fiqh-related issues such as the practice of qunūt in Subuh prayer, tahlīl rituals, the permissibility of Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) investments, cross-border zakat distribution, and questions of lineage (nasab) frequently become focal points of online debate. Although these issues are historically recognized within the Islamic legal tradition as matters of legitimate disagreement, their digital representation often strips away scholarly context and presents them as binary conflicts (Sopiyan et. al, 2025). Empirical studies have shown that such representations contribute to public confusion regarding religious authority and exacerbate divisions between competing interpretive communities.

Scholars of digital religion have further noted that social media platforms tend to produce “echo chambers” that reinforce existing beliefs while marginalising alternative perspectives (Abu Bakar et. al, 2023). Within these environments, juristic disagreement may be framed as a threat to religious authenticity rather than as a reflection of legal pluralism. This process not only undermines the ethical tradition of *adab al-ikhtilāf* but also risks eroding trust in religious institutions when official rulings are perceived as merely one opinion among many competing voices (Razali et. al, 2024). Consequently, *khilāf fiqhi* in digital spaces often evolves into a form of communicative conflict rather than constructive intellectual engagement.

## 2.3 Ethical and Impact-Based Frameworks: Bridging to *I'tibār al-ma'āl*

In response to the challenges posed by digital religious discourse, several scholars have called for the development of ethical frameworks that emphasize responsibility, social impact, and communicative sensitivity. Within Islamic legal theory, the principle of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* offers a conceptual foundation for such an approach. Rooted in the broader framework of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* emphasises the evaluation of consequences and long-term implications before legal rulings are issued or applied (al-Sanusi, 2004). Classical scholars such as al-Shāṭibī (2017) argued that legal judgments should not be assessed solely on their textual validity, but also on their capacity to realise public interest (maṣlaḥah) and prevent harm (mafsadah). Contemporary scholarship has extended this principle to modern contexts, including economic transactions, governance, and social relations, highlighting its relevance in managing complex and rapidly changing environments (al-Husin, 2014). Recent studies further suggest that the logic of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* can be meaningfully applied to digital communication, where the consequences of disseminating religious opinions extend beyond individual understanding to broader social and psychological effects (Hamitu, 2018).

Despite this potential, existing literature reveals a significant gap in integrating *I'tibār al-ma'āl* into the study of religious discourse on social media. While numerous studies address juristic disagreement from a doctrinal perspective, and others examine online religious communication from a media studies viewpoint, few attempt to bridge these domains through an impact-oriented ethical framework (Asni &

Sulong, 2021). This gap is particularly evident in discussions of how juristic disagreement should be communicated, framed, and moderated in digital spaces to minimise polarisation and enhance social cohesion.

Accordingly, this study positions *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as a bridging framework that connects Islamic legal theory with contemporary media and communication scholarship (Mat Jubri et. al, 2025). By foregrounding the ethical evaluation of consequences in the communication of khilāf fiqhi, the study contributes to the development of a more systematic and socially responsive approach to managing religious disagreement in the digital age. While prior studies provide valuable insights into juristic disagreement and digital religious discourse, the literature reveals a notable gap in terms of an integrated ethical framework that connects Islamic legal reasoning with communication-oriented impact assessment. Specifically, limited attention has been given to how principles from uṣūl al-fiqh, such as *I'tibār al-ma'āl*, can be operationalised to guide the communication of khilāf fiqhi on social media in ways that minimise polarisation and enhance social cohesion. By addressing this gap, the present study advances existing scholarship by offering a structured, impact-based approach to managing juristic disagreement within digitally mediated religious discourse.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for examining interpretive, normative, and communicative dimensions of juristic disagreement (khilāf fiqhi) in digital contexts. Given the study's focus on concepts, ethical frameworks, and patterns of religious discourse rather than quantifiable variables, a qualitative approach enables in-depth analysis of how khilāf fiqhi is framed, communicated, and negotiated on social media. Data were primarily collected through document analysis. The documents analysed comprised four main categories: (i) classical fiqh texts and works of uṣūl al-fiqh discussing juristic disagreement and the theory of *I'tibār al-ma'āl*; (ii) contemporary scholarly writings on digital religion and religious communication; (iii) official fatwas, resolutions, and guidelines issued by Islamic religious institutions in Malaysia; and (iv) selected social media content related to contested fiqh issues.

With regard to social media data, the analysis focused on publicly accessible content from three major platforms widely used for religious discourse in Malaysia: Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. These platforms were selected due to their high user engagement, algorithm-driven dissemination, and prominence in shaping public religious narratives. The time frame for data selection covered a three-year period (2021–2023), during which debates on religious authority and fiqh-related issues were particularly visible in Malaysian digital spaces. The selection of social media content was guided by purposive sampling. Only content that explicitly addressed fiqh issues characterised by recognised juristic disagreement was included. These issues comprised, but were not limited to, practices of qunūt in Subuh prayer, tahlīl rituals, investment rulings related to Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB), cross-border zakat distribution, and questions of lineage (nasab). Posts, videos, and commentaries were selected based on their relevance, visibility, and potential to generate public engagement or controversy, as reflected through indicators such as discussion intensity, repetition across platforms, or reference to religious authority.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Bowen (2009). The data were organised into three interrelated analytical categories: (i) conceptualisations of khilāf

fiqhi in classical and contemporary Islamic legal scholarship; (ii) core principles of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* relevant to ethical evaluation and social impact; and (iii) communicative patterns of juristic disagreement on social media, including polarisation, authority contestation, and framing strategies. These themes formed the basis for developing parameters for managing juristic disagreement in digital environments. To enhance analytical rigor and credibility, source triangulation was employed by cross-examining findings from classical texts, institutional fatwas, scholarly literature, and social media discourse. Interpretations were further validated through cross-referencing with authoritative religious sources, including official fatwa councils and recognised Islamic institutions in Malaysia. This methodological approach ensures that the analysis remains grounded in Islamic legal tradition while being responsive to contemporary communicative realities.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicate that *khilāf fiqhi* in Malaysian society remains fundamentally rooted in the Islamic legal tradition, emerging from differences in juristic methodology, textual interpretation, and socio-cultural context. However, the rise of social media has significantly altered the mode through which juristic disagreement is expressed, negotiated, and contested. What was once confined to scholarly discourse and institutional deliberation has increasingly shifted into open, rapid, and emotionally charged public debates. This transformation has repositioned *khilāf fiqhi* from a primarily legal issue into a broader communicative phenomenon involving questions of religious authority, identity construction, and public trust in religious institutions.

In digital spaces, juristic disagreement is no longer mediated by scholarly norms such as methodological explanation, contextualisation, or ethical restraint. Instead, it is often reframed through simplified narratives, provocative framing, and algorithm-driven visibility. As a result, religious disagreement becomes performative and polarising, reinforcing binary oppositions rather than facilitating understanding. This dynamic explains why *fiqh*-related issues such as *qunūt* in Subuh prayer or *tahlīl* rituals frequently escalate into public controversies rather than remaining as recognised areas of juristic plurality. Consequently, *khilāf fiqhi* in social media functions less as a mechanism of legal flexibility and more as a site of communicative conflict.

##### 4.1 Illustrative cases of juristic disagreement on social media

To strengthen the conceptual discussion, the analysis draws on recurring patterns observed in Malaysian social media discourse related to juristic disagreement. These examples do not aim to provide exhaustive discourse analysis, but rather to illustrate how *khilāf fiqhi* operates in practice within digital environments. One frequently observed case involves debates on the recitation of *qunūt* in the Subuh prayer. On platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, short video clips and posts often frame the issue as a binary opposition between “correct” and “incorrect” religious practice. Comment sections commonly reveal emotionally charged exchanges, including accusations of *bid'ah*, blind following (*taqlīd*), or deviation from the Sunnah. Such interactions illustrate how juristic disagreement, when communicated without contextual explanation, shifts from a recognised area of *fiqh* plurality into a polarising public conflict. This pattern

supports the study's argument that khilāf fiqhi on social media functions as a communicative issue rather than merely a legal one.

Another illustrative example concerns online discussions surrounding tahlīl rituals. Viral posts and livestream debates often focus on delegitimising opposing views rather than explaining the juristic basis of disagreement. In several instances, users selectively quote religious authorities or classical texts to reinforce pre-existing positions, while dismissing alternative interpretations as invalid. This communicative practice reflects a lack of *I'tibār al-ma'āl*, as little consideration is given to the social consequences of public shaming, community division, or erosion of mutual respect. In matters related to Islamic finance, such as the permissibility of Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB), social media discourse frequently demonstrates confusion between official fatwa decisions and individual scholarly opinions. Commentaries often frame institutional rulings as politically motivated, while elevating alternative views as religiously superior without adequate methodological justification. These examples highlight how juristic disagreement, when circulated without ethical framing, can undermine institutional authority and public trust precisely the risks that *I'tibār al-ma'āl* seeks to mitigate through consequence-oriented evaluation.

Sensitive issues such as lineage (nasab) further reveal the ethical implications of digital religious discourse. In some online discussions, individuals are subjected to moral judgement based on partial legal interpretations shared publicly. The absence of empathetic language and contextual sensitivity illustrates how juristic opinions, when detached from ethical communication principles, may exacerbate psychological harm and social stigma. These observations reinforce the study's argument that *I'tibār al-ma'āl* should guide not only what is communicated, but how and where juristic opinions are communicated in digital spaces. These illustrative cases demonstrate that the challenges surrounding khilāf fiqhi on social media are not hypothetical, but grounded in observable communicative practices. When viewed through the lens of *I'tibār al-ma'āl*, such cases underscore the necessity of treating juristic disagreement as an ethical communication issue. The framework's emphasis on consequence evaluation enables religious actors and digital users to assess whether the dissemination of a particular juristic view contributes to understanding and cohesion, or instead amplifies conflict and misunderstanding.

#### **4.2 Conceptual framework of *i'tibār al-ma'āl* in digital religious communication**

By embedding *I'tibār al-ma'āl* within real-world digital practices, the discussion moves beyond normative theorisation and demonstrates the framework's practical relevance in addressing contemporary challenges of religious communication on social media. The analysis further demonstrates that the theory of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* is not only conceptually relevant, but can be reframed as a practical framework for managing juristic disagreement in digital environments. Rather than functioning solely as a principle of legal reasoning, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* may be understood as an evaluative lens that prioritises consequences, social effects, and communicative responsibility. In the context of social media, this reframing enables the theory to operate across three interrelated dimensions: content-filtering logic, communication ethics, and social impact assessment.

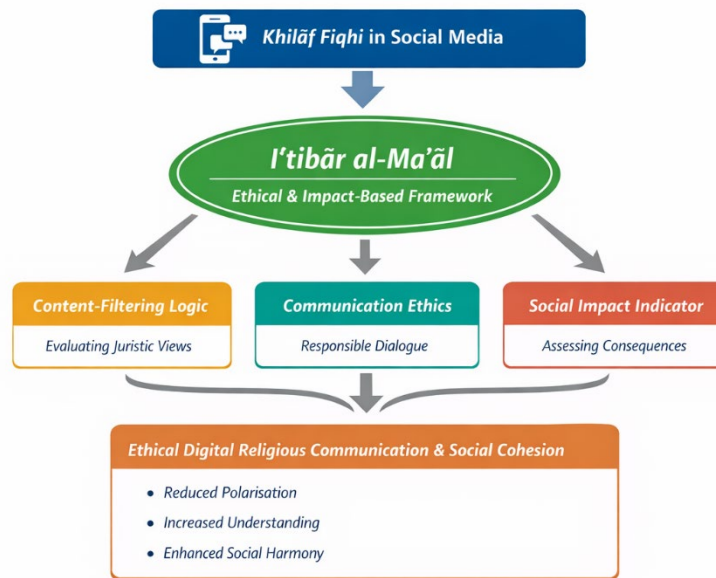


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* in Digital Religious Communication

This conceptual framework illustrates the application of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as an ethical and impact-based mechanism for managing juristic disagreement (*khilāf fiqhi*) within digital religious communication. The framework positions *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as the central evaluative lens that mediates between juristic discourse and its communicative consequences in social media environments. At the foundational level, juristic disagreement (*khilāf fiqhi*) originates from legitimate differences in legal methodology, textual interpretation, and contextual reasoning within Islamic jurisprudence. When such disagreement enters digital platforms, it is transformed by media characteristics such as speed, algorithmic amplification, and public visibility, increasing the risk of misinterpretation and polarisation. The framework operationalises *I'tibār al-ma'āl* through three interrelated functional dimensions. First, as a content-filtering logic, it guides individuals and institutions to evaluate the potential consequences of disseminating specific juristic views before sharing them online. Second, as a communication ethics framework, it regulates how religious opinions are conveyed, emphasising respectful language, contextual explanation, and sensitivity to audience diversity. Third, as a social impact indicator, it assesses broader implications for social cohesion, institutional trust, and the public image of Islam.

#### a) *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as a content-filtering logic

As a content-filtering logic, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* encourages users to assess the potential consequences of sharing juristic opinions before disseminating them online. The findings suggest that many digital conflicts surrounding *fiqh* issues stem not from the existence of disagreement itself, but from unreflective content circulation. Applying *I'tibār al-ma'āl* in this context transforms religious engagement into a form of digital self-discipline, whereby users evaluate whether a particular post is likely to reduce confusion or intensify tension (Ismail & Baharuddin, 2023). For instance, when confronted with provocative content criticising

tahlil practices, the application of this principle discourages impulsive sharing driven by outrage or affirmation bias. Instead, it promotes referencing authoritative explanations or offering balanced contextual clarification. In this way, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* functions as a preventive filter that mitigates the amplification of conflict and repositions users as guardians of social harmony rather than passive distributors of divisive narratives.

*b) I'tibār al-ma'āl as communication ethics*

The findings also highlight the relevance of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* as a framework for ethical religious communication. In digital environments characterised by emotional intensity and public scrutiny, the manner in which juristic disagreement is communicated often matters as much as the substance of the ruling itself (al-Amidin, 2003). Reframed as communication ethics, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* emphasises tone, language choice, and audience sensitivity in the presentation of fiqh discourse. This ethical dimension is particularly evident in discussions surrounding sensitive issues such as lineage (nasab) or moral transgressions. The application of *I'tibār al-ma'āl* in such cases discourages condemnatory rhetoric and public shaming, instead prioritising compassionate language, guidance-oriented messaging, and contextual explanation. By doing so, juristic disagreement is prevented from becoming a tool of social stigma and instead serves its intended purpose as a means of moral guidance and communal support.

*c) I'tibār al-ma'āl as a Social Impact Indicator*

Beyond individual communication practices, the study finds that *I'tibār al-ma'āl* can function as a social impact indicator for institutional and public decision-making. In plural and highly connected societies such as Malaysia, the dissemination of juristic opinions carries implications that extend beyond legal correctness to include social cohesion, intergroup relations, and institutional credibility (Izz, 2020). When applied as an impact indicator, *I'tibār al-ma'āl* assists in determining which juristic views are most appropriate to foreground in public discourse without negating the legitimacy of alternative opinions. For example, in debates surrounding Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) investments, this approach supports the recognition of official fatwa authority while acknowledging juristic diversity as part of Islamic intellectual heritage. Such an approach fosters balanced public understanding and reduces the risk of ideological polarisation.

The interaction of these three dimensions leads to ethically mediated religious communication outcomes, including reduced digital polarisation, enhanced public understanding of juristic plurality, and the preservation of social harmony. The framework thus demonstrates how *I'tibār al-ma'āl* functions not merely as a principle of legal reasoning, but as a practical tool for ethical governance of religious discourse in contemporary digital public spheres. At the institutional level, this principle can inform digital communication strategies by guiding how religious authorities frame messages on contested issues such as cross-border zakat distribution. Evaluating economic implications, public confidence, and long-term trust enables institutions to communicate rulings in ways that reinforce legitimacy and social stability rather than provoke contestation.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL RELIGIOUS GOVERNANCE

Overall, the findings confirm that *khilāf fiqhi* in social media is shaped not only by doctrinal differences but also by communicative dynamics, psychological responses, and socio-political contexts. Without an impact-oriented ethical framework, juristic disagreement is likely to continue evolving into polarised digital conflict. Reframing *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* as a content-filtering logic, communication ethic, and social impact indicator offers a comprehensive approach to managing this challenge. The study therefore suggests several strategic implications. First, religious institutions should strengthen coordinated digital communication that prioritises clarity, accessibility, and ethical sensitivity. Second, religious educators and digital influencers should be equipped with media literacy grounded in *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* to enhance awareness of communicative consequences. Third, public engagement with fiqh discourse should be guided by dialogical norms that privilege understanding over contestation.

Finally, sustained collaboration between religious authorities, media practitioners, and policymakers is necessary to counter sensationalist narratives and cultivate a healthier digital religious ecosystem. The study further recommends that future research focus on developing applied models and training modules that operationalise *I'tibār al-ma'āl* for digital religious communication. Such initiatives should integrate technical guidelines, ethical communication strategies, and conflict-management skills tailored to online religious discourse. Through a more structured and impact-oriented approach, the management of juristic disagreement on social media can evolve from a source of division into a platform for ethical education, intellectual maturity, and social cohesion in the digital age.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms that juristic disagreement (*khilāf fiqhi*) is an inherent and legitimate feature of Islamic legal tradition, reflecting the epistemic diversity and dynamism of *ijtihad*. However, within the contemporary Malaysian context marked by plural social realities, institutionalised religious governance, and pervasive digital media juristic disagreement can no longer be approached solely as a doctrinal issue. The findings demonstrate that when *khilāf fiqhi* is communicated in digital public spaces without ethical and impact-oriented considerations, it risks generating public confusion, intensifying polarisation, and undermining trust in religious institutions. In this regard, the theory of *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* emerges as a relevant and necessary framework for managing juristic disagreement in the digital age, as it foregrounds the evaluation of consequences prior to the dissemination of legal opinions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the advancement of contemporary Islamic legal and communication scholarship by positioning *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* as an integrative framework that bridges *uṣūl al-fiqh* and media and communication studies. While existing literature tends to examine juristic disagreement from a normative or doctrinal standpoint, this study demonstrates that *khilāf fiqhi* must also be understood as a communicative phenomenon shaped by media logic, audience reception, and social impact. By reframing *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* as a content-filtering logic, a framework for ethical religious communication, and a social impact indicator, the study extends the application of Islamic legal theory beyond legal reasoning to encompass ethical governance of digital religious discourse. This theoretical

integration enriches current debates on digital religion by introducing an impact-based ethical lens grounded in Islamic jurisprudence.

In terms of practical implications, the findings offer concrete guidance for managing juristic disagreement across different levels of the digital religious ecosystem. For religious institutions and fatwa authorities, the study underscores the importance of coordinated digital communication strategies that emphasise clarity, contextualisation, and ethical sensitivity when addressing contested fiqh issues. For religious educators, preachers, and digital influencers, *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* provides a practical framework for cultivating responsible communication practices, including reflective content sharing, respectful language use, and sensitivity to audience diversity. At the societal level, the framework encourages the development of digital literacy among Muslim users, fostering awareness that engaging with juristic disagreement online entails ethical responsibility, not merely the assertion of legal correctness. Collectively, these applications support the creation of a more constructive, dialogical, and socially cohesive digital religious environment.

Overall, this study highlights that the ethical management of *khilāf fiqhi* in social media contexts is essential for preserving social harmony and reinforcing the image of Islam as a religion grounded in mercy, justice, and public welfare. By operationalising *I'tibār al-Ma'āl* within digital religious communication, the study offers a systematic and context-sensitive framework capable of addressing the challenges posed by contemporary media environments. Beyond its scholarly contribution, this framework provides practical pathways for enhancing ethical religious engagement and fostering a more mature culture of disagreement in Malaysia's digital public sphere.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article forms part of the findings derived from the doctoral research. The authors has gratefully acknowledge the collaboration and institutional support provided by the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

## 8. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with the publication of this article. The first author was responsible for conducting the literature review, designing the research methodology, performing data analysis, refining the discussion section, and verifying the references. The second author contributed to the writing of the literature review, data collection, and discussion of the findings. The third author provided critical enhancements to the literature review section, while the fourth author conducted a comprehensive review of sentence structure, analytical coherence, and overall discussion to ensure academic clarity and consistency.

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