Sadd al-Dharī'ah, Social Media, and Korean Muslim Converts: A Legal Theory Analysis of Digital Content Creation

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Abstract:

This article examines the application of the Islamic legal principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* (blocking the means to harm) in the context of digital content creation by Korean Muslim converts on social media. The study investigates how the principle, traditionally employed to prevent potential harm, is interpreted and applied to the ethical challenges of producing and sharing Islamic content in digital spaces. Employing qualitative

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methods, the research draws on interviews with Korean Muslim content creators, analysis of their digital materials, and a review of classical and contemporary Islamic legal texts. The findings reveal a complex negotiation between promoting Islamic teachings and addressing potential risks, such as misinterpretation of content, commodification of religious messages, and online harassment. Content creators navigate these challenges by balancing the principle of Sadd al-Dharī'ah with the goals of da'wah (Islamic outreach) and the demands of social media algorithms, often prioritizing harm prevention while striving for engagement and authenticity. This study highlights the dynamic application of Islamic legal theory in the rapidly evolving digital landscape, offering insights into how Korean Muslims convert and contextualize their religious obligations within modern technological frameworks. By addressing the interplay between ethical content creation and religious principles, the research contributes to broader discussions on the relevance of classical Islamic jurisprudence in addressing contemporary issues. It underscores the need for further scholarly engagement with digital ethics in Islamic legal thought and provides practical recommendations for Muslim content creators navigating similar challenges worldwide.

Keywords:

Sadd al-Dharī'ah; Islamic digital content; Legal Theory, Korean Muslim Converts

Abstrak:

Artikel ini mengkaji penerapan prinsip hukum Islam *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* (menghalangi jalan menuju kerusakan) dalam konteks pembuatan konten digital oleh mualaf Muslim Korea di media sosial. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana prinsip yang secara tradisional digunakan untuk mencegah potensi bahaya ini ditafsirkan dan diterapkan terhadap tantangan etis dalam memproduksi dan membagikan konten Islami di ruang digital. Dengan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini mengandalkan wawancara dengan pembuat konten Muslim Korea, analisis materi digital mereka, serta kajian terhadap teks hukum Islam klasik dan kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya negosiasi yang kompleks antara mempromosikan ajaran Islam dan menghadapi potensi risiko, seperti kesalahpahaman

terhadap konten, komodifikasi pesan agama, dan pelecehan daring. Para pembuat konten menghadapi tantangan ini dengan menyeimbangkan prinsip Sadd al-Dharī'ah dengan tujuan da'wah (penyebaran Islam) dan tuntutan algoritma media sosial, sering kali mengutamakan pencegahan kerusakan sambil tetap berusaha mempertahankan keterlibatan dan keaslian. Penelitian ini menyoroti penerapan dinamis teori hukum Islam di lanskap digital yang terus berkembang, serta memberikan wawasan mualaf tentang bagaimana Muslim Korea mengontekstualisasikan kewajiban agama mereka dalam kerangka teknologi modern. Dengan membahas keterkaitan antara pembuatan konten yang etis dan prinsip keagamaan, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas tentang relevansi yurisprudensi Islam klasik dalam menangani isu-isu kontemporer. Artikel ini juga menegaskan perlunya keterlibatan akademik lebih lanjut dengan etika digital dalam pemikiran hukum Islam dan memberikan rekomendasi praktis bagi pembuat konten Muslim yang menghadapi tantangan serupa secara global.

Kata Kunci:

Sadd al-Dharī'ah; Konten Digital Islami; Fiqh Islam, Korean Muslim Converts

Introduction

The growing presence of Korean Muslim influencers on social media has brought attention to the unique intersection of faith, culture, and digital engagement. Notable personalities such as Ayana Jihye Moon and Daud Kim, among others, have amassed millions of followers by sharing their journeys as converts to Islam and their experiences of integrating faith into daily life. These influencers use platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to promote Islamic teachings, bridge and foster understanding of cultural gaps, Islam predominantly secular Korean society (Koreatimes.co). However, their visibility also exposes them to challenges such as misconceptions about Islam, online harassment, and the delicate balance between authenticity and digital trends, underscoring the complexities of performing da'wah in the digital age (Sule and Abdulkareem 2020).

The rapid growth of social media has created new avenues for religious expression and communication, enabling individuals to share and access Islamic teachings globally (Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Ali 2011). Among these are Korean Muslim converts, a growing demographic navigating unique challenges as they integrate their newfound faith into a predominantly secular and digitally-driven society (Mandaville 2007). Social media platforms offer these individuals the opportunity to perform da'wah (Islamic outreach) by creating and disseminating digital content (Ab Latif et al., n.d.; Yousaf, Nasir, and Noordin 2025). However, this activity raises critical ethical questions regarding the potential for misinterpretation, commodification of religious messages, and the risks of online harassment (Campbell and Tsuria 2021; Al-Rawi 2020).

The principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* (blocking the means to harm) has been a cornerstone of Islamic jurisprudence, traditionally applied to prevent actions that may lead to harm, even if the actions themselves are permissible (Kamali 1999; Hallaq 2004). While this principle has been extensively discussed in classical contexts such as financial transactions and governance, its relevance to contemporary digital environments remains underexplored (Emon, n.d.; al-Qaradawi 2007). Studies by Masud (2001) and Zaman (2012) highlight the adaptability of Islamic legal principles in addressing modern challenges, yet there is limited research focusing on how *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* can be applied to social media and digital content creation (Ismail 2016).

Existing literature on social media ethics, such as works by Ess (2020) and Casanova (2006), has largely focused on Western frameworks, leaving a gap in understanding how Islamic ethics intersect with digital media. Similarly, studies on Korean Muslim converts, including those by Jung and Cho (2019) and Kim (2021), have examined their identity formation

and social challenges but rarely addressed their online activities through the lens of Islamic legal theory (Y. J. Kim 2021; R. Y. Kim 2022). This study seeks to bridge these gaps by exploring how Korean Muslim content creators navigate the ethical dilemmas of digital media using the principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* (Abdel-Kawi 1991; Casanova 1994).

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, combining Islamic jurisprudence, digital media studies, and sociological perspectives (R. Y. Kim 2022; Salvatore 2016). By integrating these fields, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how traditional Islamic principles can inform ethical decision-making in the digital age. Furthermore, it sheds light on the unique experiences of Korean Muslim converts, contributing to broader discussions on the localization of Islam in non-Muslim-majority contexts (Cesari 2014; Mandaville 2007).

This article argues that *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* offers a valuable framework for addressing the ethical challenges of digital content creation, particularly in preventing harm while promoting Islamic teachings (Rusli 2014). Through qualitative analysis of digital content and interviews with Korean Muslim content creators, the study aims to demonstrate how this principle is applied in practice and its implications for contemporary Islamic ethics. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing discourse on the role of Islamic legal theory in addressing the complexities of modern digital life.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to analyze the application of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* by Korean Muslim content creators in their digital activities. Data collection involved two primary methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 Korean Muslim content creators and content analysis of their digital materials. The interviews focused on participants' decision-making processes, ethical dilemmas, and strategies for balancing *da'wah* with harm prevention.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling from social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, ensuring diverse representation based on gender, age, and content type (Cresswell 2013).

Digital content was systematically collected from participants' public profiles over a six-month period. The materials included video posts, captions, comments, and hashtags (Korhonen 2023). NVivo software was used for coding and thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and themes, such as the prioritization of engagement versus ethical considerations (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012). Particular attention was given to how participants referenced Islamic principles, such as *Sadd al-Dharī'ah*, in their narratives or content design (Hennink, Bailey, and Hutter 2020).

The study adopted an Islamic legal theoretical framework, drawing on classical texts on *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* as well as contemporary discussions of its applicability in nontraditional contexts (Hallaq 2004; Kamali 1999). This framework was chosen to ensure alignment between the ethical considerations of content creators and the broader principles of Islamic jurisprudence. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing interview data with content analysis findings and relevant legal texts to ensure the validity and reliability of interpretations (Flick 2022).

The methodology was guided by ethical research practices, including obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring the anonymity of their digital identities (Newman, Guta, and Black 2021). By integrating qualitative methods with Islamic legal theory, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* is operationalized in digital media contexts (Tisdell, Merriam, and Stuckey-Peyrot 2025).

Result and Discussion

The Ethical Implications of Sadd al-Dharī'ah in Digital Content Creation

The analysis revealed that Korean Muslim content creators utilize the principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* primarily to mitigate potential harm associated with digital content dissemination (Fadhil 2024; Hidayat 2023). Key concerns included the risk of misinterpretation of Islamic teachings, the commodification of religion, and exposure to online harassment. Interviews indicated that creators carefully curate their content to align with Islamic ethical guidelines while maximizing reach and engagement. For instance, creators deliberately avoid controversial topics and prioritize positive messaging to reduce the likelihood of harm (L. M. Campbell et al. 2014; Hallaq 2004).

Content analysis showed that creators employed strategies such as moderating comment sections, using disclaimers to clarify their expertise, and incorporating universally understood Islamic principles to avoid alienating diverse audiences (Al-Rawi et al. 2020; Mandaville 2007). These practices reflect the operationalization of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* as a tool to balance harm prevention with the obligation of da'wah (Zaman 2012). Furthermore, creators emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity when addressing audiences unfamiliar with Islam, illustrating the adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence in non-Muslim contexts (S. Kim 2014; Masud 2005).

The application of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* also reveals a duality between proactive and reactive approaches to ethical content creation (Yaqin 2021). Proactive strategies included carefully planning content to ensure alignment with Islamic principles and avoiding potentially harmful topics, while reactive measures involved addressing negative feedback or clarifying misinterpretations in real-time. This dual approach highlights how creators navigate ethical challenges in a rapidly changing digital environment (Cheong et al. 2012; Mandaville 2007). These findings are consistent with studies on digital ethics, which

emphasize the need for anticipatory ethical frameworks to address emerging challenges (Cheong et al. 2012; Casanova 1994).

Additionally, expressed concern creators the over commodification of Islamic teachings, noting that monetization features on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram often incentivize content that prioritizes entertainment over substance (Grealish 2022; Konukoğlu, Özmantar, and Agaç 2024). While many creators resist commercializing their religious content, others view monetization as a means of sustaining their da'wah tension between maintaining sincerity and efforts. This leveraging digital tools reflects broader debates about the ethical limits of monetizing religious content in the digital age (L. M. Campbell et al. 2014; Al-Rawi et al. 2020).

The findings also underscore the importance of audience engagement metrics in shaping content strategies. Creators often rely on metrics such as views, likes, and shares to gauge the impact of their *da'wah* efforts, yet these metrics may conflict with Islamic ethical priorities (Hotait and Ali 2024). For instance, some creators admitted to tailoring their content to appeal to algorithmic preferences, even when such adjustments risked diluting the depth of their messages. This dynamic illustrates the ethical compromises inherent in balancing digital visibility with adherence to Islamic principles (S. Kim 2014; Zaman 2012).

Finally, the role of cultural and linguistic barriers in shaping digital *da'wah* was a recurring theme. Many creators emphasized the difficulty of conveying Islamic concepts in a Korean cultural context, where understanding of Islam remains limited (G. Kim and Kang 2022). Strategies such as contextualizing Islamic teachings within Korean traditions or using universally relatable themes proved effective in bridging this gap. This aligns with broader discussions on the localization of da'wah, which emphasize the importance of cultural adaptation in Islamic outreach efforts (Cesari 2014; Hennink, Bailey, and Hutter 2020).

Challenges and Opportunities for Korean Muslim Converts in Navigating Digital *Da'wah*

Korean Muslim content creators face unique challenges in using social media as a platform for *da'wah* (Nibrosu Rohid et al. 2025). These include limited access to Islamic resources in Korean, cultural biases against Islam, and the technical demands of content creation. Creators highlighted the difficulty of presenting Islamic teachings in a culturally relevant manner while maintaining theological accuracy (Jung and Cho 2019; Khalid 2014). Many rely on translated Islamic texts, which may lack nuance, further complicating their efforts to accurately convey complex theological concepts (Hennink, Bailey, and Hutter 2020; al-Qaradawi 2007).

Despite these challenges, digital platforms offer opportunities for converts to connect with broader Islamic communities and educate their non-Muslim audiences. For instance, creators leverage algorithms to reach viewers who may not actively seek Islamic content but encounter it through recommendations (Heathershaw and Montgomery 2014; Mandaville 2007). This has led to a growing interest in Islam among Korean audiences, evidenced by increased engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments (Cresswell 2013; Tracy 2024).

The principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* is particularly relevant in this context, as it provides a framework for balancing outreach efforts with ethical considerations. Creators reported using the principle to evaluate potential risks associated with specific content, such as topics that could perpetuate stereotypes or provoke backlash (L. M. Campbell et al. 2014; Díaz et al. 2015). This careful approach aligns with broader trends in Islamic digital ethics, where scholars emphasize the importance of harm prevention in navigating the complexities of modern media (Hallaq 2004; Kamali 1999).

Creators also discussed the dual role of social media as both an opportunity and a constraint (Lestari et al. 2024). While platforms enable accessibility and interaction, they also demand significant investment in time and resources for content production, editing, and audience engagement (Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy 2021). Many creators noted the tension between fulfilling their spiritual responsibility of da'wah and managing the commercial and logistical realities of social media (Cheong et al. 2012; Casanova 1994). For example, the need to adhere to platform-specific trends and algorithms sometimes conflicts with the depth and complexity required for meaningful Islamic discussions (Voll 2007).

Another critical challenge is the persistent cultural and religious biases that shape audience reception. Korean creators frequently encounter prejudice rooted in the historical marginalization of Islam in East Asia, as well as stereotypes perpetuated by global media (BOUGUERN Hamida 2023). To overcome these obstacles, creators have adopted culturally sensitive approaches that integrate Korean cultural elements, such as language, humor, and references to shared societal values, into their content (S. Kim 2014; Mandaville 2007). These strategies not only make Islamic teachings more relatable but also serve to humanize Muslims in Korean society (Zaman 2012; Khalid 2007).

The gendered experiences of content creators further illustrate the complex dynamics of digital *da'wah*. Female creators reported additional challenges, including heightened scrutiny and a greater emphasis on modesty in their content. Some chose to anonymize their profiles or focus on topics that are less likely to attract controversial discussions, such as family values or Quranic recitations (L. M. Campbell et al. 2014; Al-Rawi et al. 2020). These practices reflect the intersection of gender norms and Islamic ethical considerations in shaping their da'wah efforts (Masud 2005; Cesari 2014).

Additionally, digital *da'wah* offers unique opportunities for fostering a global Islamic community. Creators reported receiving support and collaboration opportunities from Muslims worldwide, which helped them refine their content and address theological gaps (H. A. Campbell 2020). This networked approach highlights the potential of social media to bridge geographical and cultural divides, creating a shared space for diverse interpretations and practices of Islam (Heathershaw and Montgomery 2014; Cheong et al. 2012). However, the influence of external Islamic ideologies also raised concerns about the preservation of local traditions and the risk of homogenization (Mandaville 2007; Voll 2007).

Ultimately, these findings illustrate the dynamic role of digital media in shaping the da'wah experiences of Korean Muslim converts (Basir et al. 2024). By leveraging platforms to navigate challenges and maximize opportunities, creators embody the adaptability of Islamic legal and ethical principles in contemporary contexts. Future research should explore longitudinal changes in their strategies and the broader implications of digital da'wah for the evolving understanding of Islamic jurisprudence in non-Muslim-majority societies (Díaz et al. 2015; Emon, n.d.).

Shifts in the Application of Sadd al-Dharī'ah: Positive Transformations

The principle of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* has undergone significant interpretive shifts as it is applied to contemporary contexts, including digital media and content creation. Traditionally, *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* emphasized preventing harm by prohibiting actions that could potentially lead to negative consequences, even if those actions were not inherently harmful. Classical scholars such as Al-Qarafi and Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated on this principle, emphasizing its role in safeguarding societal welfare (*maslahah*) and minimizing risk (*dharar*) (Qayyim 2005; Al-Qarafi 1994). In modern times, the application of this

principle has expanded to address novel contexts such as online interactions, reflecting the dynamic adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence (Kamali 1999; Hallaq 2004).

One prominent shift in the application of Sadd al-Dharī'ah is the redefinition of harm in digital spaces. Classical jurists, including Al-Shatibi, framed harm as tangible actions affecting individuals or communities (Al-Shatibi 1997). Contemporary scholars have extended this understanding to include intangible harms, such as misinformation, digital harassment, and the commodification of religion, aligning with broader discussions on ethical practices in media (Díaz et al. 2015; Cheong et al. 2012). This evolution highlights how the principle can accommodate new forms of harm while remaining faithful to its classical foundations.

The positive shift in *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* is further exemplified by its use to promote ethical responsibility in content creation. Modern scholars, such as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, emphasize that the principle is not merely prohibitive but also directive, encouraging actions that enhance public welfare and ethical engagement (al-Qaradawi 2007; Kamali 1999). This interpretation has been instrumental for Korean Muslim content creators, who apply *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* to balance their religious obligations with the demands of social media algorithms, thereby fostering a responsible and ethical approach to da'wah (S. Kim 2014; Mandaville 2007).

Furthermore, the integration of cultural and contextual sensitivity into the application of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* represents a significant shift from classical interpretations. Al-Qarafi noted the importance of understanding local customs (*'urf*) in the application of legal principles (Al-Qarafi 1994). Contemporary Muslim jurists and content creators have adopted this approach to tailor their messaging to culturally specific audiences, demonstrating the principle's continued relevance in non-Muslim-majority societies (Casanova 1994; Masud 2005). This

adaptation underscores the flexibility of *fiqh* in addressing modern challenges while maintaining its ethical core.

The shift also reflects a greater emphasis on balancing harm prevention with the promotion of Islamic values. Classical scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah cautioned against excessive prohibitions that could alienate individuals or create unnecessary hardship (Ibn Taymiyyah 1987). Modern applications of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* in digital spaces echo this sentiment, as content creators strive to present Islam in an accessible and positive light while avoiding controversy or divisive topics (Zaman 2012). This balance highlights the principle's potential to harmonize ethical considerations with practical realities.

Finally, the role of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* in fostering collaborative efforts among Muslim communities reflects its potential for collective benefit. Scholars such as Al-Shatibi emphasized the communal dimension of harm prevention, arguing that societal welfare should take precedence over individual interests (Al-Shatibi 1997). This principle has been embraced by digital da'wah initiatives that prioritize community building and mutual support among Muslim content creators, ensuring that ethical practices are upheld collectively (Heathershaw and Montgomery 2014; L. M. Campbell et al. 2014). Such efforts demonstrate the evolving application of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* as a tool for ethical guidance in an interconnected world.

Conclusion

This study investigated the ethical implications of *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* in digital content creation and the challenges and opportunities faced by Korean Muslim converts in navigating digital *da'wah*. The findings reveal that *Sadd al-Dharī'ah* serves as a valuable framework for mitigating potential harm in digital spaces while enabling content creators to engage effectively in *da'wah*. Key ethical considerations included the avoidance of

misinterpretation, commodification of religion, and exposure to online harassment. Simultaneously, creators leveraged culturally sensitive strategies to bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and Korean societal norms, demonstrating the adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence in non-Muslim contexts.

Despite the opportunities provided by digital platforms, such as algorithmic reach and global connectivity, creators faced significant challenges, including limited access to nuanced Islamic resources in Korean, the need to address cultural biases, and the pressures of platform dynamics. Female creators, in particular, highlighted gender-specific challenges, such as heightened scrutiny and harassment, further complicating their efforts. These findings underscore the intersectionality of Islamic ethics, digital media, and socio-cultural contexts in shaping the *da'wah* experiences of Korean Muslim converts.

This research contributes to the understanding of how classical Islamic principles can be applied in contemporary, nontraditional contexts, providing practical insights for Muslim content creators globally. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single demographic and the reliance on self-reported data. Future research should expand to include longitudinal studies of content strategies and explore the experiences of Muslim creators in other non-Muslim-majority settings. Additionally, examining the impact of digital *da'wah* on audience perceptions and community formation would further enrich the discourse on the role of Islamic legal theory in the digital age. By addressing these areas, scholars can deepen the understanding of how Islamic ethics and jurisprudence continue to evolve in response to modern challenges.

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