



DIGITAL GOSSIP IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROPHETIC HADITH

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed patterns of communication and created new spaces for the practice of *ghibah*. This study examines the concept of *ghibah* in Prophetic hadith and its relevance to communication on social media. The study employs a qualitative method based on *library research*, using a thematic hadith approach (*al-ḥadīth al-mawḍūʿī*). Primary data consist of hadiths concerning *ghibah*, *buhtān*, and the protection of human dignity, which are analyzed textually and contextually. The findings indicate that *ghibah* is not limited to spoken words but also includes the disclosure of information about others that they would dislike, even when the information is true. In social media, the broad reach and rapid dissemination of information increase the potential harm to personal dignity and social relationships. Therefore, Prophetic hadith emphasizes the importance of considering the truth, purpose, necessity, and potential consequences before sharing information about others.

Keywords: *Ghibah; Prophetic Hadith; Social Media; Communication Ethics.*

ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah mengubah pola komunikasi dan menciptakan ruang baru bagi praktik ghibah. Penelitian ini menguji konsep ghibah dalam hadis Nabi serta relevansinya dengan komunikasi di media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan (*library research*) dengan pendekatan hadis tematik (*al-ḥadīth al-mawḍūʿī*). Data primer terdiri dari hadis-hadis mengenai ghibah, buhtan, dan perlindungan martabat manusia, yang dianalisis secara tekstual dan kontekstual. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ghibah tidak terbatas pada kata-kata yang diucapkan, tetapi juga mencakup pengungkapan informasi tentang orang lain yang tidak mereka sukai, meskipun informasi tersebut benar. Di media sosial, jangkauan yang luas dan penyebaran informasi yang cepat meningkatkan potensi kerugian terhadap martabat pribadi dan hubungan sosial. Oleh karena itu, hadis Nabi menekankan pentingnya mempertimbangkan



kebenaran, tujuan, kebutuhan, dan potensi dampak sebelum membagikan informasi mengenai orang lain

Kata Kunci: *Ghibah, Sosial Media, Hadis, Gosip, Etika Sosial Media*

A. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of contemporary society. Its development has not only changed the ways in which people obtain and communicate information, but has also created new patterns of social interaction. In Indonesia, social media use has reached a substantial level. DataReportal recorded approximately 180 million social media user identities in Indonesia in October 2025, representing around 62.9 percent of the population. This figure indicates that social media has developed into one of the principal spaces for communication and social interaction in contemporary Indonesian society.

This transformation in communication patterns has also generated ethical concerns. Information about an individual can be conveyed through posts, comments, stories, videos, and reposts, and can reach a considerably wider audience within a short period of time. Information that was initially confined to a limited social circle may become publicly accessible once it enters the digital sphere. The issue becomes more serious when the information concerns personal shortcomings, private circumstances, or matters that the individual concerned would prefer not to have disclosed. The capacity of social media to disseminate and reproduce information rapidly means that the consequences of communication do not necessarily end when the information is first published.

From the perspective of Prophetic hadith, this issue is closely related to the concept of ghibah. The Prophet Muhammad SAW defined ghibah as mentioning about another person something that he or she would dislike. When the Companions asked whether the same ruling applied if what was said was actually true, the Prophet SAW affirmed that it was still ghibah. Conversely, if the statement did not correspond to reality, it constituted buhtān.¹ This distinction demonstrates that the ethical problem of ghibah cannot be reduced to the question of whether information is true or false.

The hadith therefore establishes an important distinction between the truth of information and the ethical propriety of disclosing it. A statement may be factually accurate while remaining ethically problematic when it reveals something that the person concerned does not wish to have exposed. The distinction between ghibah and buhtān consequently provides a significant

¹ <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2589>



framework for examining communication in the digital environment (Muslim 1991, no. 2589).

This principle is particularly relevant to contemporary social media practices. Abas and Nasrulloh, for instance, demonstrate that the Prophetic prohibition of ghibah has a significant connection with negative forms of communication on social media, including public shaming, derogatory comments, cyberbullying, and the dissemination of unverified information. Their study employs a literature-based and thematic approach to examine the relationship between Prophetic teachings and contemporary digital ethics.²

Studies of Islamic ethics in social media likewise indicate that digital communication cannot be separated from principles concerning the protection of human dignity, the avoidance of ghibah and namimah, and the verification of information before it is disseminated.³ More recent research on Muslim communication ethics in social media also identifies the avoidance of ghibah and namimah as important principles for developing responsible digital communication, particularly amid the rapid and emotionally charged character of online interaction.

Nevertheless, the study of ghibah in social media still provides room for further development, particularly from the perspective of hadith studies. Existing research frequently discusses ghibah as one component of the broader ethics of social media use. Consequently, the specific characteristics of ghibah as formulated in Prophetic hadith have not always been placed at the centre of analysis. This is significant because the hadith provides a specific distinction between ghibah and buhtān. Such a distinction is necessary when determining whether a particular form of digital communication constitutes ghibah or belongs to another category of communication.

This issue is important because not every discussion about another person can automatically be classified as ghibah. In social life, there are circumstances in which information concerning another person may need to be communicated for legitimate purposes, such as providing advice, preventing harm, or resolving a particular matter. Therefore, the study of ghibah in social media requires a clear ethical boundary between the disclosure of information that serves a legitimate purpose and disclosure that potentially undermines another person's dignity.

² Adzrah Dwi Sunarty Abas and Nasrulloh, 'Relevansi Hadis Tentang Ghibah Terhadap Fenomena Ujaran Kebencian Di Media Sosial: Analisis Tematik Dan Etika Digital Muslim', *Ar Rosyad: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Sosial Humaniora*, 4.1 (2025), doi:10.55148/8j2dh169.

³ Lisnawati and Desi Erawati, 'Islamic Ethics in Social Media: Protecting Harmony of Muslim Family', *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 14.1 (2019), pp. 17–34, doi:10.21274/epis.2019.14.1.17-34.



This study addresses this issue by focusing on the concept of *ghibah* in Prophetic hadith and its relevance to communication on social media. The study is significant because changes in the medium of communication do not necessarily alter the ethical principles contained in the hadith, although they may substantially change the scale, reach, and consequences of communication. Through a thematic examination of hadiths related to *ghibah*, this study seeks to clarify the characteristics of *ghibah* as established in Prophetic traditions and to examine their relevance to contemporary social media practices. In this way, the study aims to provide a more balanced understanding of the ethical boundaries of *ghibah* in the digital sphere from the perspective of Prophetic hadith.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method based on *library research* with a thematic hadith approach (*al-ḥadīth al-mawḍūʿī*). This approach is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of *ghibah* through Prophetic hadiths relevant to the subject under investigation. The primary data consist of hadiths concerning *ghibah*, *buhtān*, *namimah*, and the prohibition against humiliating or violating the dignity of others. These hadiths are traced through primary hadith collections and subsequently examined in terms of their sources, authenticity, and contextual significance. Secondary data are drawn from scholarly journal articles, books, and previous studies addressing *ghibah*, communication ethics, and social media.

Data collection is conducted by tracing hadiths through keywords and themes related to *ghibah*. The relevant traditions are then compiled, compared, and classified according to their respective themes. The analysis subsequently proceeds through textual and contextual approaches. Textual analysis is employed to examine the meaning of *ghibah* based on the wording of the hadith, particularly the distinction between *ghibah* and *buhtān*. Contextual analysis is used to examine the relevance of these principles to the characteristics of communication on social media. The final stage connects the content of the hadiths with contemporary forms of digital communication in order to identify the ethical boundaries of disclosing information about others.

This study does not assume that every form of communication on social media constitutes *ghibah*. The classification of an act as *ghibah* is based on criteria derived from the hadiths and is subsequently examined in relation to the characteristics of digital communication. Through this approach, the study seeks to maintain the textual foundation of the Prophetic traditions



while providing an interpretation that remains relevant to contemporary communication practices.

C. DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of *Ghibah* in Prophetic Hadith

Linguistically, *ghibah* derives from the Arabic root غَاب – يَغِيبُ, which conveys the meaning of being absent or concealed. In the terminology indicated by Prophetic hadith, *ghibah* refers to mentioning something about another person that he or she would dislike if it were brought to their attention. This definition demonstrates that *ghibah* does not necessarily involve false information. Even information that is factually true may constitute *ghibah* when it concerns something the person mentioned would dislike. Conversely, when the information does not correspond to reality, the Prophet SAW classified it as *buhtān*.⁴

a. The Hadith on *Ghibah* and *Buhtān*

The principal hadith for understanding the concept of *ghibah* is narrated by Abū Hurayrah RA:

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَبِي أُيُوبَ، وَفُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، وَعَلِيُّ بْنُ حُجْرٍ، قَالُوا: حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، عَنِ الْعَلَاءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْغَيْبَةُ؟ قَالُوا: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ، قَالَ: ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ. قِيلَ: أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ فِي أَخِي مَا أَقُولُ؟ قَالَ: إِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ فَقَدْ اغْتَابْتَهُ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ فَقَدْ بَهْتَهُ.

“Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah SAW said: ‘Do you know what *ghibah* is?’ They replied, ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘It is to mention about your brother something that he dislikes.’ They asked, ‘What if what I say is actually found in my brother?’ He replied, ‘If what you say is found in him, you have committed *ghibah* against him; and if it is not found in him, you have slandered him with *buhtān*.’”

Takhrīj: This hadith was narrated by Imām Muslim through the chain Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, Qutaybah ibn Sa‘īd, and ‘Alī ibn Ḥujr → Ismā‘īl → al-‘Alā’ → his father → Abū Hurayrah RA → the Prophet SAW. It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣilah wa al-Ādāb, Bāb Taḥrīm al-Ghībah, no. 2589.

This hadith establishes a clear criterion for *ghibah*. Its determining factor is not simply whether the information is true or false, but whether what is mentioned is something disliked by the person concerned. There is therefore a distinction between the factual status of information and the ethical

⁴ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*. <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2589>



legitimacy of disclosing it. True information may constitute ghibah, whereas false information falls into the category of buhtān.

This distinction is particularly important when the hadith is applied to contemporary digital communication. Social media users may regard the disclosure of another person's shortcomings as permissible simply because the information is accurate. The hadith, however, indicates that factual accuracy alone does not constitute sufficient justification for disclosure. The ethical question also concerns whether the information ought to be communicated and whether doing so violates the dignity of the person being discussed.

b. The Hadith on Refraining from Humiliating Others

The concept is further reinforced by the hadith concerning ‘Āisyah RA and Ṣafiyyah RA. The narration demonstrates that an apparently simple description of another person may contain an element of humiliation:

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، حَدَّثَنِي عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْأَقْمَرِ، عَنْ أَبِي حُدَيْفَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ: قُلْتُ لِلنَّبِيِّ ﷺ: حَسْبُكَ مِنْ صَفِيَّةٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا. قَالَ مُسَدَّدٌ: تَعْنِي قَصِيرَةً. فَقَالَ: لَقَدْ قُلْتَ كَلِمَةً لَوْ مُرِجَتْ بِمَاءِ الْبَحْرِ لَمَزَجَتْهُ. قَالَتْ: وَحَكَيْتُ لَهُ إِنْسَانًا، فَقَالَ: مَا أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ حَكَيْتُ إِنْسَانًا وَأَنْ لِي كَذَا وَكَذَا⁵.

“‘Āisyah said: I said to the Prophet SAW, ‘It is sufficient for you concerning Ṣafiyyah that she is such and such.’ The narrator explained that she meant that Ṣafiyyah was short. The Prophet SAW said, ‘You have uttered a word which, if mixed with the water of the sea, would contaminate it.’ She further said, ‘I imitated the manner of a person before him,’ and he said, ‘I would not like to imitate a person even if I were to receive such and such in return.’”

Takhrij: This hadith was narrated by Abū Dāwud through the chain Musaddad → Yaḥyā → Sufyān → ‘Alī ibn al-Aqmar → Abū Ḥudhayfah → ‘Āisyah RA → the Prophet SAW. It is recorded in Sunan Abī Dāwud, Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb fi al-Ghibah, no. 4875.

The narration indicates that ghibah concerns not only the content of information but also the manner in which another person is represented. The reference to Ṣafiyyah RA's physical appearance became subject to Prophetic criticism because it carried a humiliating implication. This demonstrates that

⁵ Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath Abu Dawud, ‘Sunan Abi Dawud’. <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4875>



protecting a person's dignity constitutes an important dimension of the prohibition of ghibah.

When applied to social media, this principle extends beyond written statements. Descriptions conveyed through captions, comments, photographs, memes, videos, and other visual forms may likewise become ethically problematic when their purpose or effect is to expose, ridicule, or diminish another person's dignity.

c. The Hadith on the Protection of Human Dignity

The principle of protecting human dignity is further reflected in the following narration from Abū Hurayrah RA:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ سُلَيْمَانَ الْأَنْبَارِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا وَكِيعٌ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حَرَامٌ: دَمُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعَرْضُهُ، حَسْبُ امْرِئٍ مِنَ الشَّرِّ أَنْ يَحْقِرَ أَخَاهُ الْمُسْلِمَ.⁶

“Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah SAW said: ‘Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable to another Muslim: his blood, his property, and his honour. It is sufficient evil for a person that he should despise his Muslim brother.’”

Takhrīj: This hadith was narrated by Abū Dāwud through the chain Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Anbārī → Wakī' → Sufyān → Abū al-Zinād → al-A'raj → Abū Hurayrah RA → the Prophet SAW. It is recorded in Sunan Abī Dāwud, Kitāb al-Adab, no. 4882.

This hadith broadens the understanding of ghibah by placing human honour ('ird) within the category of matters that must be protected. The prohibition against humiliating others demonstrates that communication cannot be evaluated solely according to the information conveyed. Its potential effect on the dignity of the person being discussed must also be considered. From this perspective, ghibah constitutes not merely a linguistic or verbal issue but an ethical matter concerning the protection of human dignity.

d. Synthesis of the Hadiths on Ghibah

The three hadiths reveal several interconnected elements in the Prophetic conception of ghibah. First, ghibah involves mentioning, describing, or representing another person before others. Second, what is communicated

⁶ Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath Abu Dawud, 'Sunan Abi Dawud'. <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4882>



concerns something that the person being discussed would dislike. Third, the act has a direct relationship with the protection of human dignity and honour.

Accordingly, *ghibah* should not be reduced to the simple notion of “talking about someone behind their back.” Its classification requires consideration of the content of the statement, the manner in which the person is represented, and its implications for that person's dignity. This framework provides the basis for examining *ghibah* within social media, where communication is no longer restricted to spoken words but also takes the form of written posts, images, videos, comments, and reposted content. berikutnya.

2. Sosial Forms and Characteristics of *Ghibah* on Social Media

The development of social media has transformed the ways in which people communicate information about others. Communication that was previously confined to relatively limited social settings can now take place through posts, comments, *stories*, videos, and various sharing features. As a result, discussions concerning an individual can move rapidly from a private setting into a broader public sphere. Within this context, *ghibah* is not necessarily expressed through direct conversation; it may also emerge through various forms of digital communication that expose information about an individual to other users.⁷

One of the most prominent characteristics of *ghibah* on social media is the disclosure of another person's shortcomings or personal circumstances. Such disclosure may take the form of written statements, images, videos, or comments referring to a particular individual. Taufani and Karim identify several elements that can be considered when examining *ghibah* through social media, namely who is being discussed, what is being discussed, how the information is communicated, and to whom it is directed.⁸ These elements are significant because the ethical status of a communication cannot be determined solely by examining its content. The identity of the subject, the form of communication, and the intended audience must also be taken into account.

Another important characteristic is the expanded potential for information dissemination. In face-to-face communication, the number of people exposed to a conversation can generally be restricted. Social media operates differently. Information can be forwarded through *sharing*, *reposting*, screenshots, or other forms of digital distribution. Consequently, information concerning an individual may reach an audience far beyond the people originally intended to receive it. Research concerning online gossip has

⁷ Eka M Taufani and Hasnidar Karim, ‘Ghibah Melalui Media Sosial Dalam Identifikasi Proses Komunikasi’, *Islamic Education Studies: An Indonesian Journal*, 1.1 (2018), pp. 10–14, doi:10.30631/ies.v1i1.12.

⁸ Taufani and Karim.



likewise shown that digital gossip is closely associated with questions of privacy, information ownership, and individual control over who can access and redistribute personal information.

The ease with which digital information can be reproduced further distinguishes *ghibah* in social media environments. Once information has been published, its circulation does not necessarily end with the original post. Other users may quote, save, reproduce, modify, or redistribute the material. A single statement can therefore acquire a considerably wider reach without remaining under the control of the person who initially produced it. This becomes particularly problematic when the information concerns personal matters or circumstances capable of affecting an individual's reputation.

Ghibah may also appear through comments or posts that ridicule, embarrass, or demean an individual before a wider audience. Abas and Nasrulloh's study of the relationship between the Prophetic prohibition of *ghibah* and hate speech on social media identifies forms of digital communication such as *public shaming*, mocking comments, *cyberbullying*, and the dissemination of unverified information as phenomena that require ethical scrutiny from an Islamic perspective.⁹ These developments demonstrate that social media does not merely provide additional channels of communication; it also facilitates the public and repeated discussion of other people's personal circumstances.

Nevertheless, not every negative comment or discussion about another person can automatically be classified as *ghibah*. This distinction is necessary to prevent the concept from being applied excessively. In the context of social media, an act should be examined according to the content of the information, the person who becomes its subject, the manner in which it is communicated, and the context and purpose underlying the communication. The presence of negative content alone is therefore insufficient to establish that an act constitutes *ghibah*. What must also be considered is whether the information concerns a person's private characteristics or circumstances and whether its disclosure exposes something that the individual would reasonably dislike being discussed by others.

The characteristics of social media also make the boundary between private and public communication increasingly fluid. Information that initially exists within a private conversation can become publicly accessible once it is posted or redistributed by another person. Research on digital communication demonstrates that privacy is closely connected to an individual's ability to exercise control over information concerning themselves, including the manner in which such information is shared with others. In relation to *ghibah*,

⁹ Abas and Nasrulloh.



this issue becomes particularly significant because information about a person's shortcomings may move beyond its original social context and acquire a much wider audience.

Based on these characteristics, *ghibah* on social media can be identified through several interconnected elements. First, there is a particular individual who becomes the subject of discussion. Second, information concerning the person's circumstances, shortcomings, or private affairs is disclosed. Third, the information is communicated through a digital medium to other people, whether within a limited setting or through a publicly accessible platform. Fourth, the digital environment creates the possibility of further dissemination through sharing and other distribution features. Fifth, the disclosure has the potential to affect the dignity, reputation, or social relationships of the person concerned. This formulation corresponds with the framework proposed by Taufani and Karim, which emphasizes the elements of *who*, *what*, *how*, and *to whom* when identifying *ghibah* in social media communication.¹⁰

Accordingly, the defining characteristic of *ghibah* on social media does not lie merely in the use of digital technology. More fundamentally, it concerns the way information about another person is produced, communicated, and subsequently circulated. Social media amplifies the potential audience, extends the persistence of digital traces, and facilitates the reproduction of information. These characteristics provide an important basis for examining how the criteria of *ghibah* established in Prophetic hadith can be applied to contemporary forms of digital communication.

3. Digital Ghibah from the Perspective of Prophetic Hadith

Social media has brought about a significant change in the way people communicate information about others. Conversations that were previously confined to relatively limited social environments can now be expressed through posts, comments, *stories*, videos, and screenshots that can easily be forwarded to other users. Under these circumstances, discussions about an individual no longer remain limited to the relationship between the speaker and the listener but may develop into public consumption. Research on *gossip* practices in social media indicates that digital spaces have expanded discussions about other people while simultaneously making the boundaries between private life and public space increasingly blurred.¹¹

¹⁰ Taufani and Karim.

¹¹ Diego Diego and Yayuk Lestari, 'Woman and Gossip on Social Media: Between Private and Public', in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Gender, Culture and Society (ICGCS 2021)* (EAI, 2022), doi:10.4108/eai.30-8-2021.2316277.



This situation becomes particularly significant when examined in relation to the concept of *ghibah* in Prophetic hadith. As explained in the preceding discussion, the Prophet SAW defined *ghibah* as mentioning something about another person that he or she dislikes. When the Companions asked whether the same ruling applied if what was mentioned was actually true, the Prophet SAW affirmed that it was still considered *ghibah*. Conversely, when the statement did not correspond to reality, it was classified as *buhtān*.¹² This hadith establishes that the truthfulness of information does not, by itself, justify its dissemination.

This principle is highly relevant to the behavior of social media users. In practice, a person may consider it acceptable to disclose information about someone else as long as the information is true. The Prophetic hadith, however, establishes a more careful boundary. The issue is not merely whether the information is true or false, but also whether it concerns something that the person being discussed would dislike. Thus, when someone uploads another person's private circumstances, shortcomings, past mistakes, family problems, or other personal matters that the individual does not wish to be widely known, the truthfulness of such information does not automatically remove its character as *ghibah*.

In digital communication studies, this issue is closely related to the boundaries of privacy. Information about an individual cannot necessarily be treated as public information simply because it has already been known by some people. Social media users still have an interest in determining how information about themselves is used and to whom it is disclosed. Research on *gossip* behavior in social media demonstrates that users may distinguish between information regarded as public and information considered private, although this boundary becomes increasingly difficult to maintain once information enters the digital sphere (Diego and Lestari 2022).¹³

From the perspective of hadith, this condition demonstrates that the issue of *ghibah* cannot be separated from respect for the person who becomes the subject of discussion. A person may possess factual information about someone else, but such knowledge does not necessarily constitute a sufficient reason to make that information public. The distinction between knowing information and having a legitimate reason to disclose it therefore becomes important when the concept of *ghibah* is applied to digital communication.

Another dimension can be observed in the hadith narrated from 'Āisyah concerning Ṣafīyyah. When 'Āisyah described Ṣafīyyah in relation to

¹² Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj. <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2589>

¹³ Diego and Lestari.



her physical condition, the Prophet SAW reprimanded her.¹⁴ This hadith demonstrates that communication is not judged solely by the content of information but also by the manner in which a person describes another individual. A statement that is factually accurate may nevertheless become problematic when it is expressed in a manner that carries a degrading implication.

This principle can be observed in various forms of social media communication. Users do not communicate solely through verbal language but also through photographs, videos, *captions*, memes, emojis, and comments that construct particular impressions of an individual. A photograph, for example, may become a vehicle for *ghibah* not because of the photograph itself, but because of the caption or comment accompanying it that deliberately highlights the shortcomings of the person depicted. Likewise, a comment presented as a joke may become degrading when it targets a person's physical condition, private life, or personal weaknesses.

Research by Abas and Nasrulloh on the relevance of the hadith concerning *ghibah* to hate speech on social media demonstrates that digital practices may take the form of *public shaming*, mocking comments, *cyberbullying*, and the dissemination of unverified information. Their study also demonstrates that the values contained in Prophetic hadith can contribute to the development of an ethical framework for addressing harmful forms of digital communication (Abas and Nasrulloh 2025). This finding indicates that a hadith-based reading of social media should not be restricted to verbal communication but may also be extended to digital forms of communication that perform similar social functions.

The third hadith underlying this discussion concerns the protection of a Muslim's honor. The Prophet SAW placed human honor (*'ird*) among matters that must be protected and prohibited the degradation of another person (Abū Dāwud 2009, no. 4882). This principle is particularly relevant to digital communication because information about an individual can reach a much wider audience than information conveyed through direct conversation. Once private information has been published, other users may save, reproduce, or redistribute it across different platforms.

This issue can be observed in the practice of disseminating screenshots of private conversations. Arsawati et al. demonstrate that uploading screenshots of private conversations to social media constitutes an issue closely related to communication privacy. A conversation that initially takes place within a personal relationship may become publicly accessible

¹⁴ Abu Dawud, 'Sunan Abi Dawud'. <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4875>



information when one of the parties distributes it through social media.¹⁵ When such conversations contain personal shortcomings or private matters and are subsequently disclosed to a wider audience, the practice has considerable relevance to the discussion of digital *ghibah*.

The characteristics of social media also make the consequences of discussing other people more difficult to control. In direct communication, a conversation may end when the interaction is over. On social media, however, information can remain available, be quoted again, and be redistributed by other users. Consequently, digital *ghibah* is not limited to the initial act of publishing information but also involves the possibility of its subsequent reproduction. Research on social media behavior indicates that openness in sharing information may have consequences for users' privacy and social relationships.¹⁶

When the three hadiths are examined collectively, a clear relationship emerges between the content of a statement, the manner in which another person is portrayed, and the protection of that person's honor. The hadith narrated by Muslim establishes a criterion concerning the substance of information: something that is true but disliked by the person being discussed may constitute *ghibah*. The hadith concerning Ṣafiyyah emphasizes the manner in which a person is portrayed, particularly when the description contains a degrading element. Meanwhile, the hadith concerning human honor establishes a moral boundary that communication must not be conducted in a manner that damages another person's dignity.

This framework can be applied to various activities on social media. A *caption* that exposes someone's personal shortcomings can be assessed in terms of the substance of the information. A comment mocking someone's physical appearance can be examined in terms of the manner of expression. Meanwhile, the dissemination of screenshots of private conversations can be evaluated in relation to the protection of the dignity and privacy of the individuals involved. These examples demonstrate that technology itself is not the primary factor determining whether an act constitutes *ghibah*. Rather, the central considerations are the substance of the communication and its consequences for the person being discussed.

Therefore, digital *ghibah* should not simply be defined as talking about another person through social media. Such a definition would be excessively broad and could encompass criticism, advice, legitimate

¹⁵ Ni Nyoman Juwita Arsawati and others, 'Uploading Private Chat Screenshots on Social Media: How the Law Respond It?', *Jurnal Magister Hukum Udayana (Udayana Master Law Journal)*, 12.2 (2023), pp. 282–97, doi:10.24843/JMHU.2023.v12.i02.p05.

¹⁶ Yuxuan Liu and others, 'Impact of Social Media Behavior on Privacy Information Security Based on Analytic Hierarchy Process', *Information*, 13.6 (2022), p. 280, doi:10.3390/info13060280.



information sharing, or discussion of matters of public concern. Based on the three hadiths employed in this study, digital *ghibah* is more appropriately understood as the dissemination of information about an individual through digital media that contains something the person would dislike, particularly information concerning personal shortcomings or private matters, and which has the potential to diminish the person's honor.

With this formulation, the Prophetic hadith remains relevant to the changing patterns of contemporary communication. Social media does not create a new definition of *ghibah*; rather, it provides a new environment in which the practice can occur with a broader reach. Therefore, applying Prophetic hadith to digital phenomena should not be done by literally transferring past forms of communication into the present context. Instead, the ethical principles contained in the hadith should be maintained while examining how those principles operate within contemporary communication practices. In this context, the three hadiths provide complementary analytical foundations: the hadith narrated by Muslim addresses what is said, the hadith concerning Ṣafiyyah addresses how a person is portrayed, while the hadith concerning human honor establishes what must be protected in social relations.

4. Ethical Boundaries and Implications of Ghibah on Social Media

The discussion of *ghibah* on social media should not be limited to determining whether a particular form of communication constitutes a prohibited act. A more fundamental issue is establishing the boundary between speech that constitutes *ghibah* and communication that remains ethically permissible. Such a boundary is necessary because social media is also used to express criticism, offer advice, warn others, share personal experiences, and discuss matters of social concern. If every discussion of another person's shortcomings were immediately classified as *ghibah*, the concept would lose its analytical precision.

Prophetic hadith provides a basis for assessing *ghibah* by first examining the content of the statement. In the hadith narrated by Muslim, the Prophet SAW explained that mentioning something about another person that he or she dislikes constitutes *ghibah*, whereas stating something that is not true constitutes *buhtān*. On this basis, the first boundary concerns the subject and substance of the information. Discussion about another person becomes problematic when it reveals private matters or personal shortcomings that the individual dislikes, particularly when there is no adequate reason for such information to be known by others.

Within the context of social media, this boundary becomes increasingly important because information can move from a limited



communication setting into the public sphere within a very short period. Taufani and Karim argue that *ghibah* on social media can be identified by considering who is being discussed, what is being discussed, how the information is conveyed, and to whom it is directed.¹⁷ This framework indicates that the assessment of *ghibah* cannot be based solely on an isolated sentence but requires attention to the broader context of communication.

Another consideration is the purpose of communication. Criticism and *ghibah* may concern the same individual, yet their purposes and methods can differ substantially. Criticism is generally directed toward an action, idea, policy, or behavior that constitutes the subject of concern. Communication may shift into *ghibah*, however, when criticism of a particular action develops into the disclosure of unrelated personal shortcomings. Therefore, criticism of an individual should not be assessed merely by the presence of negative content but by examining whether the information is relevant to the matter being criticized.

This distinction is particularly significant on social media because digital communication often brings public issues into contact with personal information. An individual who becomes the subject of public attention may subsequently become the target of discussion extending far beyond the original issue. In such circumstances, information concerning family, physical appearance, private life, or past mistakes may be introduced even though it has no direct connection with the matter under discussion. Research on *gossip* indicates that discussions about other people may serve various social functions, making the context and purpose of communication important factors in determining its character.¹⁸

The hadith concerning 'Āisyah and Ṣafīyyah also establishes a boundary regarding the manner of communication. The Prophet's SAW response to 'Āisyah's statement concerning Ṣafīyyah's physical condition demonstrates that another person's characteristics should not be used as material for humiliation or ridicule.¹⁹ In digital communication, this principle can be applied to *captions*, memes, comments, videos, and images deliberately used to make someone an object of ridicule. Ethical considerations concerning *ghibah*, therefore, extend beyond written statements to include visual and symbolic forms of communication.

A further ethical boundary concerns the necessity and legitimate interest underlying the disclosure of information. Not every negative piece of information about another person must necessarily remain undisclosed.

¹⁷ Taufani and Karim.

¹⁸ Jeungmin Lee and others, 'How 'Who Someone Is' and 'What They Did' Influences Gossiping about Them', *PLOS ONE*, 17.7 (2022), p. e0269812, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0269812.

¹⁹ Abu Dawud, 'Sunan Abi Dawud'. <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4875>



Certain circumstances may require information to be communicated, such as seeking advice, warning others of potential harm, resolving a dispute, or protecting another party. The central issue is therefore not simply whether the information is negative but whether there is a justifiable reason for disclosing it and whether the information provided is genuinely necessary. This principle of restraint becomes particularly important on social media because publication to a broad audience may far exceed the original need for sharing the information.

Privacy provides an additional perspective in this regard. Privacy on social media concerns an individual's ability to regulate information about oneself and determine the extent to which others may access such information. When personal information is transferred from a restricted setting into the public sphere without adequate consideration of these boundaries, the risks to privacy and social relationships become greater (Liu et al. 2022).

The scope of publication may therefore constitute another ethical consideration. Communicating a particular matter to individuals who have a legitimate interest is fundamentally different from publishing the same information through an account accessible to a large audience. Social media enables information to be repeatedly distributed through *shares*, *reposts*, and screenshots. Research by Arsawati et al. concerning the dissemination of screenshots of private conversations demonstrates how information initially situated within personal communication can become publicly accessible once it is distributed through social media.²⁰

On this basis, the ethical boundaries of *ghibah* on social media can be considered through several interconnected factors: the substance of the information, the purpose of communication, the manner of expression, the necessity of disclosure, the intended audience, and the potential consequences for the honor of the person being discussed. These considerations do not seek to redefine *ghibah* as established by Prophetic hadith. Rather, they provide a contextual framework for applying the principles of the hadith proportionately within a communication environment characterized by different technological conditions.

The first implication of these findings concerns the responsibility of social media users. The technological capacity to disseminate information rapidly is not always accompanied by an equivalent capacity to consider the consequences of sharing it. Islamic communication ethics therefore needs to precede the act of publication. Users should not ask only whether the information they intend to share is true, but also whether it needs to be

²⁰ Arsawati and others.



shared, whether the individual concerned has a legitimate interest in protecting that information, and whether its publication could harm the person's dignity.

The second implication concerns the way human dignity is understood in digital spaces. A person's honor is no longer relevant only in face-to-face interactions but also in the representation of that person within digital environments. A comment, photograph, or post can shape how others perceive an individual. Once degrading information has been widely circulated, its consequences may extend far beyond the relationship between the original poster and the person being discussed. In this context, the Prophetic teaching concerning the protection of human honor provides an important foundation for developing ethical digital communication.

The third implication concerns responsibility for redistributing information. An individual may not be the original creator of information, yet the decision to share it again still carries ethical consequences. Information received from another person does not automatically become permissible to redistribute. Users need to consider its source, context, purpose, and potential consequences before forwarding it to others. This consideration becomes particularly important when the information concerns someone's private affairs or personal shortcomings.

Ultimately, the perspective of Prophetic hadith demonstrates that ethical communication on social media cannot be established solely through the distinction between “true” and “false.” The hadith narrated by Muslim demonstrates that even truthful information may constitute *ghibah* when it concerns something disliked by the person being discussed. The hadith concerning Ṣafīyyah emphasizes the importance of avoiding degrading forms of expression, while the hadith concerning human honor establishes that a person's dignity must be protected. When these three principles are considered alongside the characteristics of social media, they produce broader ethical requirements: information should be truthful, its purpose should be legitimate, its presentation should be proportionate, and its consequences should be responsibly considered.

Thus, *ghibah* on social media should not be understood merely through the binary distinction between whether one is “allowed” or “forbidden” to speak about another person. The more fundamental issue is how Muslims position human dignity as an ethical consideration when using digital spaces. Social media provides considerable freedom of expression, but such freedom remains inseparable from moral responsibility. From the perspective of Prophetic hadith, the wider the potential reach of information, the greater the obligation to exercise caution in protecting the dignity of others.

**D. CONCLUSION**

This study shows that *ghibah* on social media essentially follows the same principles outlined in the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), although the forms and contexts of communication have changed. The three hadiths analyzed demonstrate that *ghibah* involves mentioning something about another person that they would dislike, communicating in a manner that may demean them, and engaging in conduct that has the potential to harm their dignity and honor.

In the context of social media, *ghibah* may occur through posts, comments, captions, videos, or the dissemination of personal information. Because social media provides a wider audience and allows information to be rapidly reproduced and redistributed, its impact on a person's dignity and reputation can be significantly greater. Therefore, evaluating a form of communication should not be based solely on whether the information is true or false, but should also consider its purpose, manner of delivery, appropriateness, and potential consequences.

Thus, the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remain relevant as a foundation for digital communication ethics. The fundamental principle is to convey information truthfully while simultaneously safeguarding the dignity and honor of others.

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