

## **Islamic Legal Perspectives on the Viral Behavior Phenomenon Among Teenagers**

**Muh. Evendi<sup>1</sup> and Ahmad Jalaludin<sup>2</sup>**

\* Correspondence Author: [muhevendi99@gmail.com](mailto:muhevendi99@gmail.com)

<sup>1,2</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Syariah Nahdlatul Ulama Nusantara, Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia

INDEXING	ABSTRACT
<b>Keywords:</b> Keyword 1 ; Islamic law Keyword 2 ; Viral Keyword 3 ; Teenagers Keyword 4 ; Social media Keyword 5 ; Behavior	The phenomenon of viral behavior among teenagers has become a rapidly growing social symptom in line with the development of digital technology and social media. This study aims to analyze viral behavior from the perspective of Islamic law, by examining the boundaries of ethics, sharia, and its social implications. The method used is a literature review with a normative approach, focusing on the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of scholars. The results show that viral phenomena are not always negative but can become ongoing good deeds if directed toward virtue. Conversely, viral behavior that contains slander, gossip, pornography, or useless acts is considered an ongoing sin with harmful implications for both individuals and society. The conclusion is that Islamic law encourages Muslims, especially teenagers, to use social media wisely and maintain behavior in accordance with the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advancement of digital technology and social media has profoundly shaped the lives of teenagers. One notable phenomenon arising from this development is so-called “viral” behavior, referring to actions or content that spread rapidly and capture widespread attention within a short period of time (Sangiorgio *et al*, 2025). For many adolescents, virality has become a perceived marker of self-existence, popularity, and even social achievement (Yanuar *et al*, 2021). Nevertheless, this phenomenon does not always yield positive outcomes; a significant portion of viral content contains harmful elements such as hate speech and bullying.

From the perspective of Islamic law, every word, action, and digital activity is subject to accountability before Allah SWT. Fahzilah *et al* (2024) described that the Qur'an emphasizes that even the smallest deed, whether good or bad, will receive its due recompense (Qur'an, Al-Zalzalah 99:7–8). Accordingly, the phenomenon of viral behavior should be examined within the framework of Sharia to determine its ethical and legal boundaries. Islam upholds the principle of *amar ma'rūf nahi munkar*—enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (Ulya *et al*, 2025), which implies that viral content and behavior must be directed toward promoting goodness rather than facilitating wrongdoing.

This phenomenon is significant to study because teenagers, as the next generation of society, are highly susceptible to the influence of digital culture when it is not guided by religious values. Therefore, an Islamic legal review of the phenomenon of viral behavior

among teenagers is expected to provide a clearer understanding of how Islam perceives virality, while also offering an ethical framework for young people in navigating their use of social media.

Social media has become the primary arena for self-expression among adolescents (Tovar *et al*, 2023). However, such expression frequently transgresses established ethical norms and the principles of Islamic law. While viral content may at times serve an entertaining purpose, it often contains elements of gossip, slander, hate speech, and even pornography, all of which carry the potential to inflict serious moral and social harm, as well as explained by Hassim *et al* (2024), and also Ananthakrishnan and Tucker (2021). This study aims to analyze viral behavior from the perspective of Islamic law, by examining the boundaries of ethics, sharia, and its social implications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The viral phenomenon refers to the rapid and extensive dissemination of information, videos, images, or behaviors through social media platforms. The term viral is derived from the word virus, which denotes something that spreads easily from one individual to another. In the context of adolescents, virality is frequently linked to the pursuit of self-existence, the quest for social recognition, and the desire for entertainment, as well as explained by Al-Rawi (2019) and Imy *et al* (2024). Boyd (2014) highlights that adolescents often utilize social media as a means of identity construction, with viral content serving as one of the instruments to achieve such goals.

As of early 2024, Indonesia recorded more than 185 million internet users and around 139 million active social media users, signaling a profound transformation in daily digital engagement. Globally, the digital age has reshaped how people communicate, access information, and make consumer choices. In Indonesia, this evolution is especially pronounced, with internet usage reaching 66.5% of the population, equivalent to 185.3 million individuals—and nearly half of the nation actively participating on social media platforms (Tewu *et al*, 2025).

Adolescence represents a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, during which identity formation, emotional regulation, and self-control are still developing (Erikson, 1968). Consequently, viral behavior among adolescents is often driven by several factors:

- a. motives of identity-seeking, where adolescents desire recognition and appreciation;
- b. peer group influence, as conformity to trends becomes a dominant force; and
- c. heightened curiosity, which makes adolescents more inclined to experiment with new phenomena. However, if these tendencies are not guided by strong religious and moral values, viral behavior may result in detrimental outcomes such as cyberbullying, exposure to pornography, and the dissemination of hoaxes.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, several theoretical foundations serve as the basis for analyzing the phenomenon of viral behavior among adolescents. These include concepts from Islamic law, communication theory, and adolescent development theory.

### 1. Islamic Legal Perspective

Islamic law encompasses a set of principles that regulate all aspects of life, including media behavior and social interactions. Three fundamental principles serve as its

foundation, namely:

a. Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar

Islam obligates every Muslim to enjoin good and forbid wrongdoing (Qur'an, Ali Imran: 104). Viral phenomena that promote preaching, education, or motivation can be categorized as *amar ma'ruf*, whereas those that involve slander, hoaxes, or pornography fall under the category of wrongdoing.

b. Hifdz al-Lisan wa al-Bayan (Guarding the Tongue and Speech)

A Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) states: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent" (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). In the digital context, this command extends to activities such as typing, sharing, and spreading content that has the potential to go viral.

c. The Concept of Sin and Continuous Reward

Viral content that continues to be accessed, whether good or bad, carries legal and ethical consequences. Good deeds that are shared may become ongoing charity (*amal jariyah*), whereas harmful content may result in ongoing sins (*dosa jariyah*) that continue to accumulate even after the individual has passed away.

d. Communication Theory and Virality

Viral phenomena can be examined through mass communication and digital media theories. According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, adolescents utilize media to pursue entertainment, construct their self-identity, and gain social recognition. Viral content is thus positioned as a means of fulfilling these needs.

In addition, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers) explains how information or trends rapidly spread within a community. In the context of adolescents, virality illustrates how certain behaviors or content can be quickly adopted and imitated through social networks.

e. Adolescent Development Theory

Adolescents are in the developmental phase of identity exploration, described by Erikson as "Identity vs. Role Confusion." During this stage, they are highly susceptible to the influence of their social environment, particularly digital media. Viral phenomena often serve as a channel for adolescents to express themselves, seek recognition, and construct a social image. However, insufficient self-control and weak religious guidance may lead them toward deviant behavior.

f. Integration of Basic Theory with Research Context

By integrating Islamic law, communication theory, and adolescent development, it can be understood that;

- a) The viral phenomenon cannot be separated from the psychological and social pressures on teenagers.
- b) Islam provides an ethical framework so that viral behavior does not deviate from Sharia.
- c) This study emphasizes the importance of Islamic digital literacy that balances the needs for adolescent self-expression with the guidance of Sharia.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of “viral” behavior among adolescents represents a social reality that is inseparable from the rapid development of technology and digital media. For many adolescents, virality serves as a form of self-expression, identity exploration, and a means of attaining social recognition. However, from the perspective of Islamic law, every viral act must be evaluated based on its intention, content, and overall impact on individuals and society.

**First**, Islamic law emphasizes that every word and deed will be held accountable, including digital content disseminated through social media (Qur’an, Al-Zalzalah: 7–8). Thus, virality itself is not a standard of goodness; rather, the value lies in the substance of the content being shared. Viral content that conveys positive values—such as da’wah, motivation, education, or healthy entertainment—may constitute *amal jariyah* (ongoing charity). Conversely, viral content involving slander, gossip, pornography, hate speech, or frivolous acts can be considered *dosa jariyah* (ongoing sin), as its harmful effects persist as long as the content circulates.

**Second**, the viral phenomenon has profound social and moral implications. Socially, it can create trends that shape adolescents’ ways of thinking, lifestyles, and social interactions. Many adolescents are inclined to imitate such trends without critical reflection on their benefits or harms. Morally, the prevalence of deviant viral behavior may erode ethical values, weaken the sense of modesty, and normalize practices that contradict Islamic teachings.

**Third**, from the standpoint of Islamic law, the principle of *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) serves as the primary foundation. Virality should be directed toward activities that promote goodness, spread knowledge, and strengthen social solidarity (*ukhuwah*). Conversely, any content that risks damaging faith (*aqidah*), morality (*akhlaq*), or social order must be avoided. Relevant scriptural references, such as the Qur’anic injunction to verify information before spreading it (QS. Al-Hujurat: 6) and the Prophet’s hadith encouraging people to “speak good or remain silent” (Bukhari–Muslim), provide highly applicable guidance for responsible social media use.

**Fourth**, adolescents, as the future generation of both nation and religion, require proper guidance in responding to viral trends. Islamic digital literacy, the strengthening of *aqidah* and *akhlaq*, as well as guidance from parents, teachers, and religious leaders, are crucial in shaping responsible behavior. Without adequate direction, adolescents may fall into hedonistic, sensational, and harmful forms of viral behavior that bring detriment to themselves and others.

The phenomenon of “viral” behavior among teenagers is one of the consequences of the rapid development of information technology and social media. As a generation in the process of identity formation, adolescents are particularly susceptible to trends and challenges that circulate swiftly in digital spaces. Virality is often perceived as a benchmark of success or popularity, although it does not necessarily contribute positively to the development of their character and morals. In a broader social context, viral behavior may foster uncritical imitation, consumerist tendencies, and even potential deviance.

From the perspective of Islamic law, every word and action, whether in the real world or the virtual world, will be held accountable (QS. Al-Zalzalah: 7–8). This shows that virality cannot be used as a justification if it contains elements that contradict Sharia, such as slander, gossip, pornography, or futile actions. Conversely, if virality is used to spread

da'wah, knowledge, and goodness, then it is considered a continuous charity that earns rewards.

Thus, Islamic law offers guidance for regulating viral phenomena in accordance with the principle of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*amar ma'rūf nahi munkar*). Several strategies may be proposed to assist teenagers in responding to viral phenomena, including:

- a) Strengthening faith and morals through religious education and the habituation of Islamic manners in social media use.
- b) Islamic digital literacy, which involves equipping teenagers with an understanding of Sharia law related to communication ethics, guarding speech and writing, and verifying information before sharing it.
- c) The role model from parents, teachers, and religious figures, as role models play a significant role in shaping teenage attitudes.
- d) Supervision that is dialogical, not just prohibitive, but also provides space for discussion so that teenagers can discern beneficial content and leave behind harmful material.
- e) Instilling awareness of digital sins and rewards, that every trace left in the cyber world will continue to have an impact, whether as ongoing charity or ongoing sin. With this strategy, it is hoped that teenagers will not only be able to enjoy technological developments but also use them as a means to spread goodness in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The general material of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of “viral” behavior among teenagers from the perspective of Islamic law. In addition, it seeks to delineate the boundaries, values, and principles of Sharia that can serve as guidelines for the responsible use of social media and for ethical interaction within the digital sphere. More broadly, the general material of this activity are :

- a) Providing a scientific analysis of the viral behaviors prevalent among teenagers by examining them in relation to the principles of Islamic law, particularly in the dimensions of creed (*‘aqidah*), Sharia, and ethics.
- b) Demonstrating the position of Islamic law in evaluating viral phenomena, specifically whether they fall into the category of righteous deeds that merit divine reward or sinful acts that may result in ongoing sin (*dosa jariyah*).
- c) Providing both a normative and practical foundation for young Muslim generations to engage with social media wisely, productively, and in alignment with Islamic teachings.
- d) Showing as an academic contribution to enriching the body of literature in contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in the field of Islamic law as it relates to social phenomena and the development of digital technology in the modern era.

In Islam, communication and behavior in public spaces—whether physical or digital—are governed by clear ethical guidelines. The Qur’an introduces principles such as *qaulan ma’rufan* (kind speech), *qaulan balighan* (effective and meaningful speech), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech) (QS. An-Nisa: 5; QS. Al-Isra: 28; QS. Thaha: 44) as foundational norms for interaction. For adolescents engaged in viral behavior, these principles serve as reminders to uphold truth (*tabayyun*, QS. Al-Hujurat: 6), safeguard their speech (HR. Bukhari-Muslim), and refrain from futile actions (QS. Al-Mu’minun: 3). Thus, Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive framework to regulate digital expression,

ensuring that virality becomes a medium of benefit rather than harm. Thus, virality can only be justified if its content brings benefits and does not contradict faith, morality, or Islamic law.

In Islamic legal studies, every human action is classified into the five *ahkam taklifiyyah* (legal rulings): *wajib* (obligatory), *sunnah* (recommended), *mubah* (permissible), *makruh* (discouraged), and *haram* (forbidden), it is related to Suhaimis *et al* (2025). Viral behavior can thus be situated within these categories depending on its content and impact:

- a) *Wajib / Sunnah*: content that disseminates da‘wah, educational material, or moral values that promote goodness.
- b) *Mubah*: neutral entertainment or creative expression that does not contradict Sharia principles.
- c) *Makruh*: content that is trivial, wasteful, or devoid of meaningful benefit.
- d) *Haram*: content that involves slander, gossip, pornography, provocation, hostility, or other forms of corruption (*fasad*).

The concept of ongoing charity (*sadaqah jariyah*) and ongoing sin (*ithm jariyah*) is also relevant in this context. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever initiates a good practice will receive its reward and the reward of those who practice it after him, without any decrease in their reward. And whoever initiates an evil practice will bear its sin and the sin of those who practice it after him, without any decrease in their sin” (HR. Muslim). This hadith highlights that viral behavior spreading goodness may become a perpetual source of reward, whereas harmful content may result in continuous sin, extending as long as the content circulates and influences others.



**Figure. 1** Delivery of Islamic Study Material on Teen Ethics in Facing Viral Phenomena

*Source: Researcher (2025)*

The phenomenon of “viral” behavior among teenagers represents an unavoidable social reality in the digital era. Social media has transformed virality into a benchmark of popularity, prompting many adolescents to present themselves in ways designed to capture public attention. This indicates that viral behavior is not merely a passing trend, but rather an integral aspect of social identity formation among teenagers within the broader context

of modernization. Viral behavior has a significant impact on the formation of character, morals, and the identity of Muslim adolescents, among others:

- a) Impact on character: teenagers can easily become individuals who crave recognition, tend to seek instant gratification, and have little appreciation for the process. This has the potential to weaken the strong, patient, and steadfast character taught in Islam.
- b) Impact on morality: virality often gives rise to negative behaviors, such as speaking without verification, imitating harmful trends, and normalizing inappropriate jokes. In fact, noble character requires carefulness in speaking and acting.
- c) Impact on identity: Muslim adolescents are at risk of losing their Islamic identity because they prioritize a popular lifestyle over the principles of Sharia. The Islamic identity, which should be reflected in modesty, manners, and obedience, is gradually eroded by digital existence culture.

Therefore, viral behavior needs to be examined through the lens of Islamic law, so that teenagers are not only aware of prevailing trends but are also able to discern which practices align with the values of enjoining good and forbidding evil. This study is significant in guiding viral phenomena to function as a medium for promoting virtue rather than as a vehicle for moral corruption.

The phenomenon of viral behavior carries a number of fairly complex implications:

- i. Social Implications
  - i. The emergence of shifting values and a diminishing sense of shame among teenagers.
  - ii. The potential for social conflict arising from the spread of hate speech, slander, and provocative content.
  - iii. The rise of an instant lifestyle that prioritizes popularity over genuine achievement.
- ii. Legal Implications
  - i. From the perspective of positive law, the dissemination of negative content can be prosecuted under the Information and Electronic Transactions Law (UU ITE), particularly in cases involving the spread of false information, defamation, and pornography.
  - ii. In Islamic law, viral content that contains elements of *munkar* (wrongdoing) falls under the prohibitions of Sharia, meaning that the perpetrator is considered sinful and will be held accountable before Allah SWT.
  - iii. Viral content also carries the potential for *dosa jariyah* (ongoing sin), as its negative impact continues as long as the content remains accessible to the public.

Thus, the viral phenomenon cannot be separated from social and legal responsibility. Within the context of Indonesian Muslim society, it is essential to guide teenagers to utilize virality as a means of promoting goodness in accordance with the principle of *amar ma'rūf nahi munkar*. In this way, technology is not reduced to a tool of deviation, but rather becomes a medium for *da'wah* and for advancing the welfare of the community.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the viral phenomenon among adolescents presents both opportunities and risks. When directed toward positive objectives, virality can serve as a means of worship, *da'wah*, and social benefit. However, when misused, it can lead to the dissemination of immorality and social harm. Islam provides clear and relevant guidance

to ensure that adolescents, in particular, use social media productively and responsibly. Thus, the primary challenge is not how to avoid virality, but how to manage it in accordance with Islamic values so that it becomes a vehicle for goodness rather than corruption.

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