



THE RELEVANCE OF IBNU MISKAWAIH'S THOUGHTS ON CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MEDIA

RELEVANSI PEMIKIRAN IBNU MISKAWAIH TENTANG PENDIDIKAN AKHLAK DALAM KONTEKS MEDIA SOSIAL KONTEMPORER

Fajar Rahman¹, Bahtiar Siregar², Elsa Padia³, Ulil Amri⁴, Kiki Hardini⁵

¹Panca Budi University Medan

^{2*}Panca Budi University Medan, Email: ajarrahman841@gmail.com

³Panca Budi University Medan

⁴Panca Budi University Medan

⁵Panca Budi University Medan

*email koresponden: ajarrahman841@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62567/micjo.v3i1.1909>

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine how Ibn Miskawayh's thoughts on moral education influence the management of moral challenges in the current social media era. Various ethical issues such as cyberbullying, the spread of hoaxes, and the lack of politeness in communication have emerged alongside the increase in digital platform usage, indicating a decline in digital morals. This study is a qualitative research using the library research method. The primary data are drawn from Ibn Miskawayh's seminal work, Tahdhib al-Akhlaq, which is analyzed using content analysis and descriptive-philosophical methods. The results show that Ibn Miskawayh's concept of moral education remains relevant as a foundation for digital ethics through three main pillars: first, the concept of al-wasat (moderation) which trains social media users to be wise and proportional in consuming information; second, the strengthening of cognitive power (al-quwwah al-nathiqah) to filter negative content; and third, the formation of character based on internal self-control to achieve justice ('adalah) when interacting in virtual public spaces. The conclusion of this research confirms that Ibn Miskawayh's thoughts provide a curative and preventive framework for building a more civilized and ethical digital ecosystem.

Keywords : Ibn Miskawayh, Moral Education, Social Media, Library Research, Digital Ethics.

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat bagaimana pemikiran Ibnu Miskawaih tentang pendidikan akhlak berpengaruh dalam menangani tantangan moral di era media sosial saat ini. Berbagai masalah etis seperti perundungan siber, penyebaran berita bohong, dan kurangnya kesantunan berkomunikasi muncul seiring dengan peningkatan penggunaan platform digital, yang menunjukkan penurunan moral digital. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan metode studi pustaka (library research). Data utama diambil dari karya penting Ibnu Miskawaih, Tahdzib al-Akhlaq,



yang dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis isi dan deskriptif-filosofis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep pendidikan akhlak Ibnu Miskawaih tetap relevan sebagai fondasi etika digital melalui tiga pilar utama: pertama, konsep al-wasath (moderasi) yang melatih pengguna media sosial untuk bijak dan proporsional dalam mengonsumsi informasi; kedua, penguatan daya kognitif (al-quwwah al-nathiqah) untuk memfilter konten negatif; dan ketiga, pembentukan karakter berbasis kontrol diri internal untuk mewujudkan keadilan ('adalah) dalam berinteraksi di ruang publik virtual. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pemikiran Ibnu Miskawaih memberikan kerangka kuratif dan preventif dalam membangun ekosistem digital yang lebih beradab dan beretika.

Kata Kunci : Ibnu Miskawaih, Pendidikan Akhlak, Media Sosial, Studi Pustaka, Etika Digital.

1. INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of human social interaction has been revolutionized by advancements in information and communication technology. Social media was originally intended as a means of connection, but it has now evolved into a complex public sphere where identity and character are at stake (Nasrullah, 2017). Contemporary digital reality reveals a worrying trend of moral degradation, despite offering convenience in information exchange. According to Pavlika (2019), phenomena such as the spread of disinformation (hoaxes), cyberbullying, and the loss of privacy due to a culture of showing off (flexing) are examples of ethical crises on the internet. This indicates that the maturity of a user's character does not always keep pace with technological progress.

Ibn Miskawayh's classical thoughts on moral education provide a highly relevant theoretical framework as we face modern moral challenges. In his magnum opus, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Miskawayh, a pivotal figure in Islamic ethical philosophy, asserts that morality is a condition of the soul regulated through training and habituation, rather than mere spontaneous behavior (Miskawayh, 2011). The concept of moderation (al-wasath) and the balance between the three powers of the soul—rationality (al-nathiqah), courage (al-ghadhabiyyah), and desire (ash-syahwaniyyah)—form the core of Miskawayh's thought.

In the context of social media, this thinking is vital because digital desires, such as the thirst for validation, and anger, such as hate speech, often dominate common sense. Previous research has extensively discussed moral education as a whole. However, the understanding of Miskawayh's ethics regarding specific behaviors on social media still needs to be deepened. The purpose of this article is to examine how Miskawayh's concept of soul health maintenance and the "middle path" can be used as ethical guidelines for modern digital society. Thus, moral education is no longer viewed as a static doctrine, but as a dynamic solution in navigating the complexities of the virtual world.

With this background, the objective of this research is to thoroughly study Ibn Miskawayh's perspective on moral education in addressing moral issues in the modern era. This research specifically explores how the concept of the "middle path" (al-wasath) and the management of soul powers can be used to prevent deviant behavior on social media. This study is expected to discover ways to develop digital ethics based on classical Islamic philosophical values to build a more moral virtual social order.



2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method, a type of literature study. Zed (2014) stated that literature study is a collection of actions that include reading, recording, and processing research materials without conducting field research. This method was chosen because the primary objective of the research was to study Ibn Miskawayh's philosophical ideas found in classical works and how these concepts relate to contemporary issues. Two categories of data sources were used in this study. The first category of primary data consisted of Ibn Miskawayh's main works, such as the book *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-A'raq*. The second category of secondary data consisted of books, scientific journals, and articles discussing Ibn Miskawayh's thoughts, digital communication ethics, and the phenomenon of social media behavior (Mulyana, 2013).

The data collection method involved searching and reviewing literature related to the research topic. To obtain accurate data, the researcher used academic databases such as library catalogs, Google Scholar, and JSTOR (Sugiyono, 2019).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Analysis of Moral Problems on Social Media through the Trilogy of Soul Powers

Moral problems on social media today are a manifestation of the imbalance of an individual's soul powers rather than technical issues or platform features. According to Ibn Miskawayh, negative phenomena in the technological era can be categorized based on the dominance of uncontrolled soul faculties.

1) Dominance of Al-Quwwah asy-Syahwaniyyah

The Phenomena of Flexing and Thirst for Validation In Ibn Miskawayh's structure of the soul, Al-Quwwah asy-Syahwaniyyah is the lowest yet most dominant faculty if not educated, as it is directly related to material desires and sensory pleasures (Miskawayh, 2011). In the contemporary era, this power finds a very vast medium of expression through social media.

Flexing, or the behavior of excessively showing off wealth and luxury, is a clear manifestation of the soul's inability to control the appetitive power. According to Miskawayh, Al-'iffah (self-control or simplicity) is the primary virtue of this power. However, al-syarah—greed or gluttony for attention—is produced by social media algorithms that reward the visibility of luxury content (Sahrin, 2020). Individuals no longer seek sufficiency but seek material recognition to satisfy their selfish desires.

The dominance of digital appetitive power is also seen in an individual's dependence on the number of likes, followers, and positive comments. Miskawayh warns that pleasure derived from external and material factors is a deceptive pleasure (*al-ladzdzhah al-khadi'ah*) (Abuddin, 2015). When someone makes digital validation their primary source of satisfaction, they are trapped in an unstable state of the soul. The absence of validation will cause anxiety, which in modern psychology is often linked to decreased self-esteem and depression (Pavlika, 2019).

When Al-Quwwah asy-Syahwaniyyah is not under the control of Al-Quwwah an-Nathiqah (reason), humans lose their dignity as noble creatures. Oversharing for the sake of



content, ignoring privacy for the sake of virality, and forcing a lifestyle beyond one's means are evidence of the loss of the "middle path" virtue. For Miskawayh, such individuals have descended in rank to become like animals (*al-bahimiyyah*) because they only pursue the fulfillment of lust without mature moral consideration (Miskawayh, 2011).

2) Imbalance of *Al-Quwwah al-Ghadhabiyyah*

Cyberbullying and Cancel Culture *Al-Quwwah al-Ghadhabiyyah*, or the irascible power, is a potential of the soul that naturally functions as a tool for self-defense and a driver for courage. However, in Ibn Miskawayh's philosophy, this power is like a "wild beast" that, if not controlled by reason, will explode into destructive behavior (Miskawayh, 2011). In the digital space, this power is often over-stimulated and misdirected.

Cyberbullying is a tangible form of the dominance of the irascible power that exceeds limits (*ifrath*). Miskawayh explains that anger unguided by ratio will give birth to *al-tahawwur* (recklessness or ferocity). Social media users who engage in bullying often feel they have power or superiority behind the anonymity of the screen. This destroys the virtue of *al-syaja'ah* (courage), because true courage according to Miskawayh is defending the truth in a civilized manner, not attacking the dignity of others (Hamed, 2013).

Mass digital ostracism or "cancel culture" often begins with the intention of upholding justice but frequently gets trapped in the extremities of anger. Ibn Miskawayh emphasizes that the "Middle Path" attitude is very important. When mass anger on social media turns into mass judgment without room for improvement or clarification, the individual has lost soul control. According to Sahrin (2020), this imbalance distances digital society from forgiveness and tolerance, which are part of the virtues of healthy anger.

Miskawayh views uncontrolled anger as one of the diseases of the soul (*amradh al-nafs*). On social media, this disease spreads quickly through content provocation. Individuals who are constantly exposed to or involved in digital conflict will experience a clouding of the soul, making it difficult to achieve true happiness (*as-sa'adah*). Without a process of *riyadhah* (training) to subdue anger under the command of *al-quwwah al-nathiqah* (reason), the digital space will continue to be a destructive arena of ego warfare (Abuddin, 2015).

3) Weakness of *Al-Quwwah an-Nathiqah*

Disinformation and Hoaxes *Al-Quwwah an-Nathiqah* (rational power) is the essential identity of humans that distinguishes them from other creatures. In Ibn Miskawayh's hierarchy of the soul, this power is what should be the leader (*imam*) for the irascible and appetitive powers. However, in the reality of contemporary social media, the rational power often experiences a weakening of function, resulting in the individual's inability to filter information (Miskawayh, 2011).

The primary virtue of the rational power is *al-hikmah* (wisdom). Someone who possesses *al-hikmah* will always consider the benefits and truth before acting. The weakness of this power causes someone to be trapped in the extremity of *al-balahah* (stupidity or intellectual negligence), where information is accepted raw without a verification process (*tabayyun*). Hoaxes flourish not only because of the existence of fake news creators but because there is a



mass whose critical reasoning power does not function when exposed to provocative information (Sahrin, 2020).

Ibn Miskawayh emphasizes that if the rational power is weak, the soul will be ruled by the impulses of anger or lust. In the context of disinformation, many social media users spread hoaxes driven by hatred toward certain groups (dominance of anger) or the desire to be considered the fastest to know (dominance of lust for recognition). When reason is no longer a filter, humans lose their objectivity and only seek information that validates their own prejudices—a phenomenon in modern communication called confirmation bias (Nasrullah, 2017).

Miskawayh considers the failure to use reason to seek the truth as a very severe type of soul disease. Moral education should teach logic to remain firm in truth and skeptical of falsehood. The absence of digital literacy in society indicates that al-quwwah an-nathiqah has not been fully educated. A person will continue to be an object of information manipulation if they cannot analyze it correctly. This is dangerous for social harmony and public safety (Abuddin, 2015).

4) The Absence of Al-'Adalah (Justice) in the Virtual Space

The pinnacle of these problems is the loss of digital justice. Justice, according to Miskawayh, is a condition where the three powers of the soul are in the "Middle Path" (Al-Wasath) position. When social media is only filled with showing off luxury (excessive lust) and insults (excessive anger), then the harmony of the soul is lost. Social media users lose their orientation toward as-sa'adah (true happiness) and are trapped in a circle of pseudo-pleasure that is destructive to mental health and the nation's character (Abuddin, 2015).

b. Relevance and Implementation of Ibn Miskawayh's Thought

The implementation of Ibn Miskawayh's thought in the context of contemporary social media is not only relevant as theoretical discourse but also as a practical strategy in building a resilient digital character. Here are the implementation points of Miskawayh's key concepts:

1) Digital Moderation (The Concept of Al-Wasath)

Miskawayh's "Middle Path" concept can be implemented as a guide for moderate behavior in the digital space. Social media users are encouraged to avoid two extremities: becoming too closed off (anti-social) or becoming too vulgarly open (oversharing). Digital moderation means sharing content that has beneficial value, maintaining personal and others' privacy, and remaining polite in responding to differences of opinion. This al-wasath attitude is the key to creating a stable and non-provocative digital environment (Sahrin, 2020).

2) Digital Self-Control through Tahdhib al-Nafs

Miskawayh emphasizes the importance of soul training (riyadhah) and self-discipline. In the context of social media, this means practicing self-control before taking digital action—such as delaying the urge to make harsh comments or restraining the impulse to show off luxury (flexing). The implementation of tahdhib al-nafs demands individuals to become the "masters" of their gadgets, not slaves to algorithms that trigger addiction and negative emotions (Miskawayh, 2011).



3) Activation of Critical Literacy (Al-Quwwah an-Nathiqah)

The most important implementation in the information age is restoring the function of reason as the leader of emotions and desires. Strengthening the rational power means practicing the "Ethics of Tabayyun"—performing deep verification of every piece of information before believing or spreading it. Digital wisdom (al-hikmah) requires users to always ask themselves: "Is this information true?" and "Is this information useful?" (Zurqoni & Retnawati, 2018).

4) Transformation of Social Media as a Space for Virtue

Ibn Miskawayh asserts that humans are social beings who achieve happiness through good interaction with others. Therefore, social media functions must be transformed from merely a place to seek self-validation into a means of building friendship (al-shadaqah) and cooperation in goodness. Contemporary moral education must guide the younger generation to produce positive content that enlightens the intellect and touches the conscience (Abuddin, 2015).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on moral education are strongly relevant in addressing moral challenges in the contemporary social media era. Digital problems such as flexing, cyberbullying, and the spread of hoaxes are fundamentally rooted in an imbalance in the trilogy of human spiritual powers. The dominance of lust breeds a thirst for validation, uncontrolled anger triggers cyber conflict, and a weakened rational mind results in the loss of a filter against false information.

Implementing the concept of the "Middle Way" (al-wasath) is a crucial solution for social media users to achieve moderation in their interactions. A balance between these three spiritual powers under the control of reason will not only improve individual behavior in virtual public spaces but also lead them to true happiness (as-sa'adah), which is internal and substantial, rather than merely a superficial pleasure dependent on digital metrics. Thus, Miskawaih's classical ethics can be transformed into an adaptive ethical guide for the 21st-century digital society.

5. REFERENCES

- Abuddin, N. (2015). *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Achmadi. (2014). *Ideologi Pendidikan Islam: Paradigma Humanisme Teosentris*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Ansari, M. A. (1964). *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawayh*. Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press.
- Hamed, N. (2013). The Concept of Character Education in Miskawayh's Thought. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(10), 1-12.
- Miskawaih, I. (2011). *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq [Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak]* (H. Hamzah, Trans.). Bandung: Mizan. (Karya asli diterbitkan tahun 1067).
- Nasrullah, R. (2017). *Media Sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sositologi*. Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media.



- Pavlika, K. (2019). Digital Ethics: The Impact of Social Media on Character Development. *Journal of Cyber Psychology*, 12(3), 45-58.
- Sahrin, A. (2020). Relevansi Konsep Akhlak Ibnu Miskawaih di Era Disrupsi. *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 6(2), 112-125.
- Sudirjo, E., & Alif, M. N. (2018). *Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Motorik: Konsep Perkembangan dan Pertumbuhan Fisik dan Gerak Manusia*. Sumedang: UPI Sumedang Press.
- Zaroug, A. H. (1999). Ethics from an Islamic Perspective: Basic Issues. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 16(3), 45-63.
- Nasrullah, R. (2017). *Media Sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sositologi*. Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Pavlika, K. (2019). Digital Ethics: The Impact of Social Media on Character Development. *Journal of Cyber Psychology*, 12(3), 45-58.
- Sahrin, A. (2020). Relevansi Konsep Akhlak Ibnu Miskawaih di Era Disrupsi. *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 6(2), 112-125.