



SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND DECLINING QANA'AH: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON SELF-ACCEPTANCE

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of social media addiction in shaping self-acceptance (qana'ah) among emerging adults from an Islamic perspective. Given that qana'ah reflects a believer's satisfaction with divine decree, understanding factors that undermine this trait is essential, particularly amid growing social media use. The study adopted a qualitative library research method, relying primarily on the Qur'an and hadith as authentic sources, supplemented by relevant books, journals, and scholarly articles to provide contemporary context. The findings suggest that excessive social media use negatively affects self-acceptance among emerging adults, leading to traits such as envy, ingratitude, and diminished contentment with one's condition. This implies that digital behavior may conflict with spiritual ideals in Islam, especially during formative adult years. While the study is limited to a literature-based analysis without empirical testing, it offers valuable insights into how Islamic teachings can inform responses to modern psychological challenges. This study contributes original value by integrating classical Islamic concepts with current behavioral concerns, emphasizing the importance of qana'ah in the digital age.

Introduction

A survey conducted by the Asosiasi Pengguna Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII) reported that there were 196.7 million active social media users in Indonesia (APJII, 2020). DKI Jakarta recorded the highest number of users among the provinces, totaling approximately 8.9 million. The most widely used platforms include Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Twitter. According to APJII (as cited in Krisnadi & Adhandayani, 2022), early adults constitute the largest group of social media users at 49.52%, surpassing adolescents (16.68%) and late adults (29.54%). These findings align with a study by Handikasari et al. (2018), which identified individuals aged 18–25 as the most frequent users of social media.

Social media offers early adults' various benefits, such as personal branding, networking, and job-seeking opportunities. However, these platforms are often misused,



leading to potentially harmful behaviors. Research indicates that excessive social media use among early adults can result in negative self-evaluation, neglect of real-life responsibilities, addiction, and other maladaptive behaviors (LaRose et al., 2010; Misrawati et al., 2019; Walther et al., 2008). Such behaviors may distance a Muslim from noble character traits or Akhlakul Karimah. Furthermore, social media can increase exposure to crimes such as identity theft, cyberbullying, and even murder (Akhtar, 2020). As Susiatik and Sukoco (2022) suggest, rapid technological development may contribute to moral and ethical decline. A person of good character is expected to embody values such as piety, gratitude, sincerity, and brotherhood (Salsabila et al., 2020). Therefore, social media use during early adulthood has the potential to affect the moral character, particularly the element of gratitude, which is closely related to the concept of qana'ah.

According to Ahya (2019), qana'ah is a virtue that Muslims are encouraged to possess, as it encompasses feelings of contentment and gratitude for what one has. When individuals embrace gratitude and self-acceptance, they are more likely to experience positive emotions. Chamberlain and Haaga (2001) found that individuals with higher self-acceptance reported greater overall well-being and were less likely to experience mood disturbances in response to negative events. However, excessive use of social media may interfere with one's self-perception and sense of gratitude. Thus, to fill this lacuna, it is crucial to explore the Islamic perspective on the relationship between social media addiction and self-acceptance during early adulthood. This is especially important considering that qana'ah reflects a person's contentment with the divine will and destiny as decreed by Allah SWT. Few academic articles have addressed the concept of qana'ah, particularly in the past two years (2023-2024), and none have examined the connection between social media addiction and self-acceptance. Hence, this study aims to fill that gap and serve as a valuable reference for future academic research.

Research Method

This study employed a library research method involving the systematic review of relevant literature (Zed, 2008). The primary data sources were the Qur'an and Hadith, which were regarded as authoritative and authentic within Islamic scholarship. These sources were considered beyond doubt in terms of their truth, based on the belief that Allah—the Creator of life—possesses complete knowledge of His creations. Allah guarantees the Qur'an's authenticity and purity, as affirmed in Surah Al-Hijr verse 9, and the Hadith is also validated in Surah An-Najm verses 3–4 (Mahmudin, 2021). In addition to these primary sources, supporting data were drawn from relevant books, journals, and scholarly articles to enrich the discussion with contemporary perspectives. These materials were carefully reviewed and cited to extract meaningful information, which then formed the basis for the study's conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Social Media Addiction from an Islamic Perspective

Social media is an online platform utilized by individuals to present themselves, build social connections, and discover new things that may not be accessible in real life (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). It offers a wide array of attractive and easily accessible features that allow users to explore various interests. However, these very features can also lead to addictive behaviors. According to Andreassen et al. (2016), social media addiction refers to excessive usage driven by a compulsive urge to engage in online activities. It is

characterized by an uncontrollable motivation to stay connected online, consuming significant time and interfering with important aspects of daily life.

As a form of modern communication, social media is a product of the current Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. Islam, as a religion, provides comprehensive guidance for human life—lifting individuals from backwardness to a more advanced and modern existence (Aksin, 2016). However, people may become overly immersed in modern tools of communication such as social media, leading to excessive use. This behavior can affect various aspects of life, including spiritual well-being. Jahro and Kunaenih (2024) argue that excessive engagement with social media can cause individuals to lose track of time and neglect their religious obligations. In Islam, neglecting acts of worship, particularly prayer (*salat*), is viewed as a serious matter that can bring harm to the individual. The Qur'an addresses the consequences of abandoning prayer in Surah Al-Ma'un (107), verses 4–5, where Allah SWT states: “*So woe to those who pray, but are heedless of their prayer.*”

According to Quthub (2000), the term *heedless (lalai)* in this context refers to those who perform the physical act of prayer but whose hearts are not present and who lack sincerity in their devotion to Allah SWT. When a person becomes easily distracted from essential matters, their actions may become meaningless or void of spiritual value.

Social media exposes users to a wide range of content, which can be either positive or negative. One of the major concerns for Muslims is the consumption of inappropriate or age-incompatible content, such as pornography. As defined by Mutia (as cited in Haidar & Apsari, 2020), pornography involves the explicit display of human bodies or sexual behaviors with the intention of arousing sexual desire. Repeated exposure to such content can lead to violations of Islamic law, as it promotes indecent behavior and can lead to actions resembling *zina* (adultery or fornication) (Sulistyoko et al., 2019). Islam clearly prohibits *zina*, viewing it as a serious moral transgression. This is emphasized in Surah Al-Isra (17), verse 32, where Allah SWT states: “*Do not go near adultery (zina). It is truly a shameful deed and an evil way.*”

Beyond the risk of *zina* stemming from exposure to pornographic content on social media, users may also engage in inappropriate behavior toward others, often driven by differences in opinion. One example is cyberbullying, which involves repeatedly using offensive or harmful language online to attack others (Prabawati, 2013). The motivations behind cyberbullying vary and may include revenge, envy, or even mere amusement. However, Islam teaches its followers to guard their speech and to show respect toward others. This principle is reflected in Surah Al-Hujurat (49), verse 12, where Allah SWT says: “*O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is Accepting of Repentance and Merciful.*” Therefore, based on that verse, it is clear that individuals are prohibited from seeking out the faults of others or engaging in backbiting. This aligns with the Hadith as explained by Imam Nawawi in his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, which emphasizes that Muslims should not harm one another—neither through words nor actions, whether directly or indirectly (Imam, 2014). Consequently, Muslim users of social media are expected to refrain from provoking or making harmful remarks toward fellow users. At its core, Islam teaches mutual respect and the importance of guarding one's speech.

The negative behaviors mentioned earlier illustrate the consequences of excessive social media use. A study by Hakim and Raj (2017) found that, on average, participants spent up to 10 hours per day on social media and struggled to stop due to their habitual engagement with multiple platforms. Such overuse often leads to tendencies associated with social media addiction. Islam advocates for balance in fulfilling human needs—not

too little or too much (Kusuma, 2023). As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf (7:31), Allah SWT says: *"Indeed, Allah does not like those who are excessive."*

This verse affirms that Allah SWT dislikes excessive behavior. Adi et al. (2023) further argue that if someone deems something forbidden as permissible—or vice versa—such as justifying excessive behavior, it is considered a transgression in Islam. Moreover, Islam also warns against extremism in religious practice, as it may cause harm to both the individual and others. Qardhawi (2020) notes that excessive religious zeal can lead to discord within the Muslim community. This is echoed in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Maidah (5:77), where Allah SWT states: *"Say (O Muhammad), 'O People of the Book, do not go to extremes in your religion beyond the truth, and do not follow the whims of people who went astray before and led many astray and who strayed from the straight path.'" This verse clearly indicates that religious extremism driven by unchecked desires is misguided. One consequence of such excess is the emergence of fanaticism—where an individual rigidly adheres to a specific belief, claims sole correctness, and imposes their views on others (Suhartawan, 2021). Hence, Islam prohibits even excessive behavior in religious matters, let alone in activities such as social media use, which are not obligatory in Islam.*

In conclusion, as highlighted in Surah Al-A'raf (7:31) and Surah Al-Maidah (5:77), humans are advised against excess in their daily lives, for Allah SWT does not favor those who are excessive. Social media, therefore, should be used in moderation and guided by proper etiquette. When used appropriately, it can bring benefits. The purpose of instilling *adab* (proper conduct) in social media use is to prevent harmful behaviors such as neglecting prayer due to excessive engagement, consuming inappropriate content, and participating in online bullying (cyberbullying).

In Islam, understanding and applying *adab* (etiquette) is a fundamental principle that should precede any action. The embodiment of *adab* in a person's behavior is seen as a mark of dignity and sincerity, elevating a true Muslim in the sight of Allah SWT and His Messenger (Hanafi, 2017). In the context of social media, observing proper *adab* is essential to prevent harmful behavior and ensure that one's online presence aligns with Islamic values. According to Hakim (2018), users are encouraged to view content that is appropriate for their age and to guide others in doing the same. They should engage with media promoting goodness and enhancing their relationship with Allah SWT, such as religious lectures or educational content contributing to personal growth. Social media should also be used purposefully, for instance, to support online business activities, share beneficial religious knowledge, or extend help to those in need, including victims of natural disasters. Users are advised to respond with kindness and discretion when encountering inappropriate content, such as by sending a private message to address the concern. Most importantly, when it is time to perform religious duties, users are expected to step away from digital platforms, turn off their devices, and focus on worship and other meaningful responsibilities.

Based on the discussion of social media addiction from an Islamic perspective, it can be concluded that excessive use of social media is not permissible. In Islam, any action undertaken by a Muslim must be carried out in a balanced manner, in accordance with prescribed limits, and should not be excessive. When an individual reaches the point of addiction, one of the appropriate responses is to understand and apply the proper *adab* (etiquette) in using social media. Practicing such ethical guidelines is expected to be effective in preventing risky behaviors associated with social media addiction. Ultimately, this encourages individuals to become more mindful and responsible users in their daily lives, avoiding excessive use that may negatively affect their character and way of thinking.

Self-Acceptance (Qana'ah) from an Islamic Perspective

In psychology, self-acceptance refers to a realistic belief that allows individuals to grow by eliminating negative self-judgment, accepting external evaluations without rejection, and using those evaluations constructively for self-reflection (Dryden & Bond, 1994). In Islam, the concept of self-acceptance is known as *qana'ah*. Linguistically, *qana'ah* is derived from the Arabic root *qana'a* – *qana'an*, *wa qanaa'atan*; *radhiya*, which means being content with what one has and willingly accepting one's share (Al-Munawwir, as cited in Fabriar, 2020). Allah SWT affirms this value in Surah Al-Hajj (22:36), where He describes those who are satisfied with what they receive, even without asking, as among those who are grateful. The verse encourages sharing with both those who are content and those who ask, as a reminder of gratitude and humility in provisions granted by Allah. According to Abu Ja'far At-Thabari, as cited in Rahmawati and Putri (2023), the term *al-qani'* in this verse refers to a person who practices *qana'ah*—accepting what they have without begging or seeking from others. Meanwhile, *al-mu'tar* refers to someone who approaches others with a request. The concept is further reinforced in a hadith narrated by Muslim, in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW stated, “*Truly fortunate is the one who embraces Islam, is provided with sufficient sustenance, and is granted qana'ah (contentment) by Allah with what he has been given.*”

Drawing from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Arabic lexicons, *qana'ah* can be defined as a state of sincere acceptance and satisfaction with what one possesses and has achieved in life. In essence, *qana'ah* and self-acceptance are interconnected concepts. Before a person can fully accept themselves, they must first go through the process of cultivating *qana'ah*. According to Ellis (1965), many individuals feel worthless because they constantly judge themselves negatively, even though every person inherently has value. Recognizing this value begins with practicing gratitude for everything that Allah SWT has decreed. Ramadhanty (2023) argues that applying *qana'ah* in one's life can help address psychological issues, such as feelings of inferiority. Through *qana'ah*, individuals learn to be thankful and accept Allah's provisions, which in turn helps them understand and appreciate their own capabilities. A person who lives with *qana'ah* is more likely to realize their strengths and believe in their ability to face life's challenges. The wisdom gained from practicing *qana'ah*, according to Ramadhanty (2023), includes living with a deep sense of gratitude, finding inner peace, developing resilience, and trusting in Allah's plan while remaining patient in pursuit of one's goals.

Qana'ah is also considered a form of intelligent behavior, as it enables individuals to accept what befalls them without haste or despair in dealing with worldly affairs (Fabriar, 2020). Hamka, as cited in Andriani and Mz (2019), outlines five essential elements of *qana'ah*: willingly accepting what one already has; praying to Allah SWT for the rightful increase while striving through effort; patiently accepting divine decrees; placing full trust in Allah; and avoiding deception by worldly temptations.

In the course of life, individuals are inevitably confronted with circumstances that may either facilitate or hinder their progress. These outcomes often depend on their efforts to strive toward their goals. However, Islam teaches that human effort should be accompanied by *tawakkul*—placing trust in Allah SWT. In Surah At-Talaq (65:3), Allah SWT states: “*And whoever relies upon Allah—then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.*” This verse emphasizes that when people sincerely entrust their affairs to Allah, their needs will be fulfilled, and their path will be made easier. Those who practice *tawakkul* believe that whatever has been divinely decreed for them will not change, and they accept that what is not meant for them will not come to pass (Nurmiati et al., 2021). Therefore, individuals

need to strive earnestly while maintaining trust in Allah's plan, as this combination leads to success and ease in their endeavors.

In addition to entrusting their affairs to Allah, individuals are encouraged to engage in righteous actions toward themselves and others. This principle is reflected in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:112), where Allah SWT states: *"But yes, whoever submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."* Within the context of *qana'ah*, this verse suggests that those who live righteously and surrender to Allah will be rewarded and shielded from fear and sorrow. Thus, *tawakkul* is crucial in cultivating a peaceful and meaningful life. Imam al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, explains that a person who relies upon Allah in times of calamity will remain firm and composed, entrusting their situation entirely to Him (Setiawan & Mufarihah, 2021).

When a person combines effort with *tawakkul*, it is still possible to face trials that test their patience and sincerity. Individuals' level of patience and acceptance depends on how they perceive their challenges and whether they include Allah in their response. Such challenges may arise in various aspects of life, including social and economic domains. From a social perspective, human beings seek interactions to fulfill relational needs. As described by Fahri and Qusyairi (2019), social interaction is the process through which individuals orient themselves toward the words and actions of others. Within the framework of self-acceptance, one of the indicators that a person has fully accepted themselves is the ability to objectively perceive others' evaluations, whether criticism or praise (Sheerer, 1949). Thus, patience becomes essential in responding to external judgments. When receiving criticism, individuals are encouraged to remain patient and view such feedback as an opportunity for self-improvement. This is supported by Surah Ash-Shura (42:43), where Allah SWT declares: *"But indeed, if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an affair of great resolution."*

In moments of discomfort caused by criticism, a Muslim should prioritize patience and forgiveness, even if these responses are not easy. Such behavior reflects the core of Islamic teachings. Human patience is closely linked to the strength of one's faith (*iman*) and belief in the divine will of Allah SWT (Miskahuddin, 2020). Moreover, life presents not only social but also economic challenges. People are tested through their wealth, occupations, social positions, and other worldly matters. These trials can significantly affect one's life, making the virtue of patience all the more necessary. In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:155), Allah SWT states: *"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient."* It is evident that Allah SWT tests human beings with fear, hunger, and the loss of wealth and life. However, He also promises a just reward for those who remain patient in the face of such difficulties. Shihab (2002) elaborates that these trials, in essence, are minor compared to the immense rewards that Allah SWT has prepared for those who endure them. Every individual who faces a test has the opportunity to succeed if they prepare themselves well and adhere to divine guidance. Therefore, challenges in life are inevitable and serve as a means of testing both patience and faith in the Creator. Through patience, Allah SWT assures believers of His abundant blessings and rewards.

Moreover, without the application of *qana'ah* (contentment), individuals are at risk of falling into deception. In Arabic, deception is referred to as *talbis*, which denotes Satan's manipulation of the truth—convincing people that wrongful acts are acceptable and masking falsehoods as truth (Al Fiqri et al., 2020). In relation to Satan's deception, Allah SWT states in Surah An-Nisa (4:120): *"Satan promises them and arouses desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion."* This verse makes clear that Satan's promises

are nothing more than illusions. Abbas (2009), in his book *Talbis Iblis*, explains that Satan's method of deceiving humans involves exploiting their desires, especially when their faith in Allah is weak. While striving for worldly goals, individuals are not uncommonly consumed by their desires and become negligent of *tawakkul* (trust in Allah). One manifestation of this is greed—a condition driven by dissatisfaction with what one possesses. When individuals prioritize self-interest excessively and disregard the well-being of others, it leads to greed (Zaroni, 2012).

Al-Bazzar narrates a marfu' hadith from Anas in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW stated: *"There are four characteristics that lead to misery: the dryness of the eye, the hardness of the heart, long ambitions, and greed for worldly matters."* According to the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Abdullah, 2005), this hadith highlights that greed for material possessions is a path toward hardship and suffering. Consequently, greed—fueled by unrestrained desires—can have detrimental effects on an individual's life.

In conclusion, the discussion on *qana'ah* affirms that contentment must be integrated into every aspect of a person's life. This begins with a sincere effort to achieve goals and is accompanied by *tawakkul*, who entrusts the outcomes to Allah SWT. When faced with trials—be they economic or social—individuals are expected to remain patient and sincere, continue fulfilling their religious duties, and be grateful for what they already possess. Contentment with one's current blessings is a central element of *qana'ah*, and without it, individuals are at risk of falling into misery brought about by greed and spiritual dissatisfaction.

The Role of Social Media Addiction in Self-Acceptance among Emerging Adults from an Islamic Perspective

According to Pedalino and Camerini (2022), the use of social media—particularly Instagram—exacerbates issues related to body image and self-satisfaction among individuals aged 18 to 35. This is largely due to the tendency for users to engage in self-comparison. When individuals compare themselves to others on social media, they may view themselves negatively, judge their appearance according to others' standards, and experience dissatisfaction with their identity. Islam teaches that individuals should regard themselves positively, as Allah SWT is the best of creators. In Surah At-Tin (95:4), Allah SWT declares: *"Indeed, We created man in the best of stature."* This verse affirms that humans were created in the finest form, both physically and psychologically. As Pratiwi and Mubarak (2022) explain, this verse signifies that Allah SWT has endowed human beings with excellent physical and mental attributes, and thus, believers are expected to protect and develop these gifts as an expression of gratitude to the Creator. A person who expresses gratitude for Allah's blessings ultimately benefits themselves. This is supported by Surah Luqman (31:12), where Allah SWT says: *"Indeed, We granted Luqman wisdom, [saying], 'Be grateful to Allah.' And whoever is grateful—his gratitude is only for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever denies [His favor]—then indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy."*

On social media platforms, it is common for users to post about their achievements. Such content often triggers feelings of envy and inadequacy among viewers. In Islamic teaching, this feeling is known as *hasad*, which refers to resentment toward others' blessings (Habibah, 2022). When someone harbors *hasad* toward fellow Muslims, they depart from the virtue of *qana'ah*, as a person who embodies *qana'ah* relies upon Allah SWT in striving to achieve their goals—whether in education, career, or marriage.

In the field of psychology, emerging adults are also found to experience relational pressures, particularly in romantic contexts. Research by LeFebvre (2018) reveals that

the highest usage of dating applications like Tinder is concentrated among individuals aged 18–30. However, Islam prescribes that Muslims pursue marriage through the process of *ta'aruf* (a respectful and faith-based courtship). Seeking a partner through dating applications often leads to harm (*maḍarat*), especially when not aligned with Islamic principles. As Ahdini et al. (2023) note, using such platforms without adhering to religious boundaries can pose risks, including data theft or even abduction, particularly when initial communication occurs online.

Another concern among emerging adults on social media is the tendency to engage in self-presentation through manipulation. As Ellison et al. (as cited in Amanda & Sumaryanti, 2021) noted, this age group often modifies their profile photos to create a certain impression, usually to gain social advantages or attract attention. However, manipulation—whether of images or narratives—amounts to deception, which is strictly prohibited in Islam. According to Yulianti and Caniyago (2022), frequent self-manipulation, such as altering skin tone or body appearance, may ultimately harm one's spiritual relationship with Allah. Such behavior contradicts the principle of *qana'ah*, as a Muslim who sincerely accepts what has been bestowed upon them by Allah SWT is less likely to fall into worldly deceit.

When individuals become addicted to social media, they become increasingly vulnerable to its harms, losing gratitude for what they have and falling prey to illusions of worldly success. Addiction can damage a person's self-control and interfere with important aspects of life (Young, as cited in Freeman, 2008). Therefore, cultivating *qana'ah* is crucial for Muslims, enabling them to live peacefully with a heart full of gratitude, free from harm. Fabriar (2020) explained that *qana'ah* contributes positively to mental health by helping individuals regulate their desires, control excessive impulses, and reject harmful inclinations. A Muslim who possesses *qana'ah* lives with a sense of calm, without fear of what may or may not happen, as they are content, sincere, and fully reliant upon Allah SWT.

Conclusion

The tendency toward social media addiction negatively influences self-acceptance (*qana'ah*) among emerging adults from an Islamic perspective. Excessive use of social media can lead to adverse effects, particularly for Muslims who have reached the age of maturity (*baligh*). These effects include the development of envy (*hasad*) when one feels unhappy about others' achievements, a lack of gratitude for the blessings granted by Allah SWT due to constant comparison with others, engaging in deception or false representation to enhance one's image, and even falling into immoral acts such as *zina* through social media in the pursuit of a life partner. This suggests that higher levels of social media use are associated with lower self-acceptance (*qana'ah*) levels in early adulthood, as viewed through an Islamic lens. Therefore, nurturing the value of *qana'ah* is essential for Muslims to lead a peaceful life grounded in gratitude and protected from various forms of moral decline.

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