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Beyond Qawlan: Reconstructing Politeness Theory for Digital Ethics from Indonesian Islamic Communication

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ABSTRACT

Although it remains the most important framework in politeness studies, the model's shortcomings can be highlighted in the way that the same type of expressions can be offensive and yet elicit national outrage yet another equally offensive expression can go unmarked, and state downfalls and resignations can result. This article aims to reconstruct politeness theory built based on qawlan concept as depicted in the Qur'ān and experienced and debated in the Islamic communication in Indonesia. It was designed in qualitative interpretive method in which a thematic reading (tafsir mawdu'i) was performed on the verses of qawlans and reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on 19 news reports and official statements from the public on the Internet between November 2024 and August 2026, and complemented by published data on a comment level. It tackles the following five cases: a preacher flogging a street vendor; the 2025 protests; suspension of TikTok LIVE; a ministry's decision on a political video; and a regulation for four hours takedown. The four evaluative criteria found were: respect of the less powerful party (as perceived by the networked bystanders), veracity of contents, direction of the forceful language and amplification of the channel. Only some of these criteria are found in accounts in which the face is covered; they are not ordered as they are in the qawlan tradition. An Accountable Dignity Model is therefore suggested, that organizes the Qur'anic ethics of speech in the following layers: epistemic, relational and consequential, all based on human dignity (karamah). It brings a layer of truth to the concept of politeness, shifts from the hearer to the networked public, and connects politeness with accountability, implications for pragmatics, religious communication and platform governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to detikInet [1], by today there are 235.26 million Internet users, or 81.72% of the population in Indonesia. These users are mostly Muslim and their day-to-day religious practices are now carried out and assessed via social media [2], [3]. A continuous problem of rudeness on the same platforms. Based on the research record of Indonesian studies, insults, sarcasm and dysphemism were found in the comment section of the government policies, politicians and celebrities, resulting in the emergence of bald-on-record [4], [5], [6], [7].

The state has implemented more and more restrictions. In March 2026, Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) has set a deadline for any platform that supports user-generated content to act when it receives takedown orders for disinformation and hate-speech [8]. However, in the past, religious authorities have issued another norm, namely Fatwa No. 24/2017 of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) which prohibits ghibah (backbiting), fitnah (slander), namimah (sowing discord), bullying and hate speech on social media [9].

A theoretical gap is indicated by these advances. Brown and Levinson [10] have developed the most influential pragmatics theory, which is known as face saving model that argues that politeness is seen as a logical means of coping with the face threatening acts (FTAs) to the individual's positive and negative faces. They are perceived as too individualistic in an East Asian (and Arab) context and it is religion and community which determines what is perceived as a threat [11], [12]. Others say that the model is portable [13]. Both are not made for networked publics, and to one will be judged by millions and are cataloged and re-repeated.

In the extreme case, however, that of Indonesia, this division is quite severe. Politeness is part of the national virtues taught in the President, religious community and school curricula in Indonesia since ever. Moreover, common religious education in terms of Qur'anic common good speech [14] consists of politeness as well. Meanwhile, the nation's social media environment is some of the most polarized in Southeast Asia, where the electorate is polarized, “paid buzzers” and what some have dubbed the “freedom to hate” [15] play significant roles. So they do have to undergo the double ethic in a polite rank and formal norm and culture of platform performances in Indonesia which emphasizes speediness, visibility and confrontation. Where these registers intersect, the judgements that come afterwards are seldom of a purely interpersonal nature, as is typical of pragmatic theory. These are the questions of truth, public office, religion and safety of people who are deprived of any platform.

A candidate ought to consider other options to the Islamic scholarship via Indonesia. These six phrases of qur'ān (qawlan sadidan, balighan, maysuran, layyinan, kariman and ma'rufan) are well known in the context of an ethics of speech, which are applied in da'wah and social media [14], [16]. All this literature, however, is normative and catalogue like in that it talks about the six qawlan and recommends them. It seldom questions its significance as a theory that accounts for observed evaluations, nor how it deals with rough speech for a purpose.

This article is truly “beyond qawlan”, in two ways. This will not only explain the principles, but also develop a model and talk about recent and salient cases of Indonesian online communication through the model. This study has three research questions:

RQ1. What evaluative criteria do Indonesian online publics, religious authorities and the state apply when they judge an utterance as (im)polite or unethical?

RQ2. How far do face-based and Qur’anic *qawlan*-based frameworks account for those criteria, including strategic impoliteness?

RQ3. What reconstructed model of politeness best serves digital ethics in this context?

There are three contributions to the article. In its empirical application, it chronicles the public evaluation of public speech in the context of a series of salient and recent events in Indonesia and provides a single analysis that unites public response, religious norms, and the action of the state. It is theoretically indicative of the inadequacy of theory of face oriented communication and it is also an orderly and testable model for the principles in the Qur'ān which is indicated communication ethics based on the catalogue theory of Islam. It's a guideline for preachers, platforms and regulators in practice, without compromising the rules of civility to the rules of censorship.

1.1. Politeness theory and its critiques

The corrective measure of face threatening acts according to Brown and Levinson model is politeness which depends on social distance, power status, ranking of the imposition. It has been called into question for 40 years. In the aspect of weightiness, formula, the religious, environmental and gestural needs should be taken into account as mentioned by Arab-context work [11]. In the case of Indonesian applied linguists, the theory has been requested to be “appropriated” rather than imported in full-fledged by Indonesian applied linguists [12]. But a redo of the study in Japan revealed that the weightiness formula is a viable formula for the content of messages [13], and a

cross-cultural analysis of criticism demonstrated that (im)politeness is not a cultural feature but rather a feature emerging in the process of interaction [17].

This now has been whittled down to two closely related questions: The first question is whether people want politeness – is it a prescription? Another hypothesis that arose prior to the researchers finding that the strategic recipe is applicable to Japanese utterances is that many of these acts of politeness are not strategic, but rather the result of "discernment" as postulated by the Japanese scholars [13]. The second question would be "Who is the "face" (person or group). Moreover, religious context criticism thinks that religious identity is one of the factors that influences the definition of a face threat, e.g., when the comment is related to religion or family honour [11]. Indonesia is important in both the aspect of how words are received from the level of speech, and also differing norms of religion and kinship.

There is support for culture sensitive reading in Indonesia. Local values are not only represented in the face model, but also in the negotiation strategy used in the negotiation process in eastern Indonesia [18]. The review of Leech's maxims shows that the Friday sermons were performed in Aceh are in line with his maxims and at the same time the Friday sermons in Aceh violate his maxims depending on the moral goal of the preacher [19], and the politeness of Aceh Indonesian speech varieties is related to kinship and religious hierarchy [20].

1.2. Impoliteness and Cyberpragmatics in Indonesian context

Currently, Culpeper's impoliteness super-strategies (bald on record, positive and negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, withheld politeness) are the norm of observing Indonesian online data [6], [21]. Another dimension to the context, which is not visible to readers, is constructed by them in the Internet, says Cyberpragmatics [22]. In later literature Culpeper also delineates two kinds of impoliteness: affective impoliteness is anger; and coercive impoliteness is when you assert the power over your target. In Indonesian data, insults in the context of policies are frequently used to air discontent towards the authority, whereas insults of celebrities are often intended to amuse followers [4], [6]. The same trend was observed in previous studies involving elections [21] and government policy [23] conducted on Twitter and YouTube comments where mockery and impoliteness towards the public figures was found to be positive. The result of the latest study that has been done in Indonesia is summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1. Recent studies of (im)politeness in Indonesian online communication

Study	Data	Framework	Key finding
Ginanjar et al. [7]	24 Sundanese comments on X and Instagram, Mar–Aug 2025	Allan & Burridge dysphemism; speech acts	Animal comparison, body-shaming, mental-disability slurs and taboo sexual terms used for public shaming
Saragi et al. [6]	YouTube comments on the Finance Minister and the Whoosh rail project	Culpeper	604 strategies; positive impoliteness 37.1%, bald on record 10.76%
Santoso, Nurhayati & Margana [5]	Comments on the mosque loudspeaker guideline	Leech; Yus	Deviations: tact 42.5%, politeness 27.5%, agreement 15%, sympathy 15%
Fatmawati & Ningsih [24]	2,509 comments on @detikcom; 511 expressive acts	Leech; cyberpragmatics	Impolite on tact, approbation and agreement; polite on modesty and sympathy
Aslinda et al. [25]	Instagram comments on government policy	Pragmatic politeness	Causes: inconsistent leaders, anonymity, fake accounts, laws seen as unfair
Suganda et al. [4]	Swear words on three popular Instagram accounts	Culpeper; Wijana	Swearing marks positive, negative and mock impoliteness
Rosidi et al. [26]	Preachers' social-media content during COVID-19	Islamic communication ethics	Some preachers used rude, sarcastic language on worship restrictions

Two gaps stand out. Almost all research classifies strategies without elaborating on how different levels of public perception of the same strategy might occur. They also know some aspects of religious rules, although the latter are mentioned explicitly in many comments. In the same manner, previous studies on Twitter also show that incivility is not universal but rather tends to focus around events and targets [27], and the previous studies on cyber-conflict in Indonesia suggest that politeness can be used to de-escalate [23], [28].

In addition, in the latest research, impoliteness has been considered as the source of strength rather than weakness; Santoso, Baroroh and Wajiran [29] describe the rude and self-deprecating speech of the popular Indonesian online preachers as impoliteness strategies in building the solidarity of the audience (lay) of the preachers.

1.3. The tradition of "qawlan" and digital ethics

The vocabulary of good speech can be found in Qur'an in another manner. The Qur'an mentions six forms of speech, which are qawlan sadidan, qawlan balighan, qawlan maysuran, qawlan layyinan, qawlan kariman and qawlan ma'rufan, respectively meaning truthful and straight speech, speech to the heart, easy and gentle speech when one cannot give, soft speech even to a tyrant, noble speech to parents, and fitting and customary speech. The verse of Surah al-Hujurat supports what has been reported about the news (tabayyun) and forbids mockery, name-calling, suspicion and backbiting (Q 49:6, 49:11-12).

The emphasis of Indonesian exegesis and teaching for each term varies. Sadidan states that the speech must be accurate and honest, straight and to the point. Balighan is connected with effectiveness – speech must be delivered to the intended recipient and be within his/her ability. Maysuran politely begs you to do so even if you aren't willing. The word layyinan (between Moses and Aaron) is translated as "to be gentle even towards the strong and towards the enemy. Kariman says that there is honorable speech for the listener and ma'ruf is worthy speech according to the norms of the community [16], [31]. Literature on these, however, deals primarily with them as a series of equal virtues and so cannot state which of them is paramount when they come into conflict, for instance where the truthful criticism of a leader is unwelcome.

These principles have been translated to the field of teaching [31], Sundanese proverb [16], Qur'anic pragmatic issues of sensitive topics [32] and da'wah through social media [14]. In addition, the ethnographic study on the Muslims of Indonesia indicates that the phenomenon of riya' (piety expression in interaction online) is also a concern of the Muslims in Indonesia. Riya' is related to the problem of visibility [2].

The same goes for general digital ethics. Floridi and Taddeo argue that the analysis of individual acts should be replaced by the analysis of data, algorithms and practices that magnify these acts as part of an ethical analysis. [33] The interaction between users and algorithms results in “algorithmic enclaves” which benefit out-groups in Indonesia [15]. Thus, a theory of politeness for digital ethics is needed to take into account audiences, amplification, accountability. But it is not done yet even in the face model or catalogue style literature on the qawlan.

Table 2. Core assumptions of the face model and the *qawlan* tradition

Dimension	Face model	*Qawlan* tradition (as commonly taught)
Unit of analysis	Speaker–hearer dyad	Speaker, addressee and the community of believers
What is protected	Individual positive and negative face	Truth, dignity, harmony and the good of the addressee
Role of truth	Not a condition of politeness	Central (*sadidan*; *tabayyun*)
Role of effect on hearers	Indirect, through the weight of the face threat	Explicit (*balighan*; *maysuran*)
Treatment of rough speech	Impoliteness as face attack	Generally discouraged; strategic uses rarely theorised
Ordering of principles	Weightiness formula (distance, power, imposition)	Usually listed without ranking

1.4. Research gap

There are three areas of omission in this review. The first is careful categorisation in the study of Indonesian (im)politeness, but not so much focused on explaining the reasons why there are differences in public verdicts on similar strategies. Secondly, Islamic communication ethics has an ample supply of normative terms that are not included in an explanatory and sequential model. Third, neither tradition has been interested in the concept of networked publics, platform features and state regulation, now so important to the assessment of speech. This study tackles all three questions by identifying the criteria that are used in the recent episodes in Indonesia and reorganising the qawlan principles around the identified criteria.

2. METHOD

2.1. Design

The study is of a qualitative nature, and is characterized as a two-text-in-dialogue interpretive design or study. The first one is normative which includes six verses of qawlan in Surah Hud, fatwa released by MUI No. 24/2017 concerning the conduct of the people in social media, and fatwa released by MUI No. 23/2017 concerning the prohibition of mockery in social media, with the verses of anti-mockery in Surah al-Hujurat. [34]. Thematic reading (tafsir mawdu'i) was the method used to read these as done in Indonesian research on Qur'an ethics [16]. The second, empirical, is common news reports from the Internet available to the public and official statements which document how Indonesian public and religious figures and the state see the specific statements. The categories were face-based and qawlan-based and evaluations that did not explain well were sought.

2.2. Corpus

Episodes were purposively selected based on three criteria: (a) the episodes were covered at least in two outlets; (b) there was an explicit public or institutional verdict related to the ethics of speech; and (c) the episodes took place between November 2024 and August 2026. Information was retained for each episode if it talked about the utterance, the reaction or official reason. The final corpus includes 19 documents in four episodes (Table 3) and a fifth, the 'secondary' episode, was extracted from published data, at the comment level. Reports were excluded if they repeated information or opinion that was already published elsewhere, opinion columns if there was no reported reaction and social media posts if they were not reported by a news outlet. The size and shape of the Indonesian online audience was reported based on the survey conducted by APJII on the Indonesian population age 13 and more in 38 provinces in Indonesia from 1 February – 15 March 2026, with a margin of error of 1.1% [1].

Table 3. Data corpus (all sources freely accessible online)

Episode	Period	What happened	n	Sources
E1. Preacher mocks a street vendor	Nov–Dec 2024	A presidential envoy and preacher insulted an iced-tea seller at a religious gathering; the video went viral and he resigned	6	[35]; [36]; [37]; [38]; [39]; [40]
E2. Protests and TikTok LIVE suspension	Aug–Sep 2025	Amid violent protests, TikTok suspended LIVE in Indonesia for about three days; the ministry had summoned platforms over provocative content	5	[41]; [42]; [43]; [44]; [45]
E3. Political video ruled hoax and hate speech	Apr–May 2026	The ministry declared a senior politician's video about the President a hoax, slander and hate speech, and ordered takedown	3	[46]; [47]; [48]
E4. State governance of speech	Mar–Aug 2026	Four-hour takedown rule, Eid cyber-patrols, deepfake framed as a national-security risk, appeals before an August demonstration	5	[8]; [49]; [50]; [51]; [52]
E5. Regional-language dysphemism (secondary)	Mar–Aug 2025	Sundanese insults aimed at a former governor and a woman in an alleged-affair scandal	24 comments	Ginanjar et al. [7]

Context figures on internet use come from the 2026 APJII survey as reported online [1], [53].

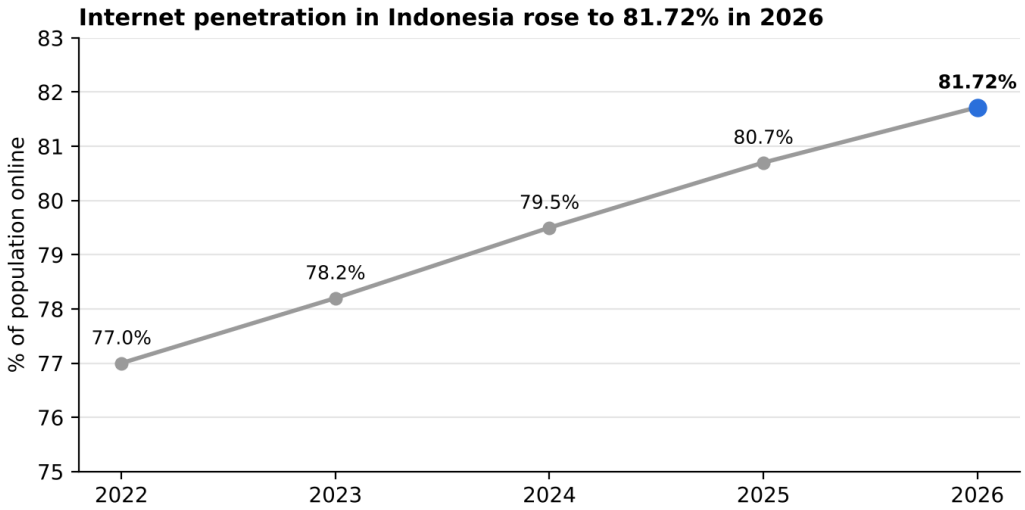


Figure 1. Internet penetration in Indonesia, 2022–2026. Source: APJII Survei Profil Internet Indonesia 2026, as reported by detikInet [1] and Bisnis.com [53].

As can be seen from Figure 1, the number of users of online speech continues to rise, and will reach 235.26 million users in 2026, thus increasing the stakes for each public speech analysed below.

2.3. Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the data and the researcher's interpretative process was used as a resource, not as a filter to remove bias from the analysis [54]. It was a six phases process: familiarisation, coding, initial themes, review of themes, definition and naming themes, writing up. Each document was then coded for (a) the specific utterance/content being assessed, (b) who was assessing the content (bystanders, target, religious officials, state, platforms), (c) the basis for the assessment (content, style, tone, bias, religious belief), and (d) what was happening after the assessment (apology, resignation, takedown, legal action). Reasons were then mapped both towards categories (positive or negative face threat, Culpeper's super-strategies) and towards categories of qawlan and al-hujarat. Codes that didn't fit either of the maps stayed in the "residuals" category, and were the main stuff of the reconstruction of theory. Themes were vetted with the whole corpus, as well as the normative texts, before being given names. Table 4 summarises the coding frame.

Table 4. Coding frame

Code family	Question asked of each document	Examples of codes
Object	What utterance, content or feature is being judged?	Insult, false claim, live stream, video
Evaluator	Who passes the verdict?	Bystanders, target, preacher, ministry, platform
Reason	What reason is given for the verdict?	Humiliation of the weak, hoax, slander, provocation
Direction	At whom is the rough talk aimed?	Self, peer, superior, weaker party
Remedy	What response is demanded or taken?	Apology, resignation, takedown, legal action, feature suspension
Framework fit	Which framework explains the reason?	Face threat, *qawlan* principle, residual

2.4. Trustworthiness and ethics

Each episode was triangulated using at least two sources and for E5, along with an analysis that was peer reviewed, to establish the credibility of each episode. An audit trail of codes and memos was also kept and negative cases were actively sought using the criteria of Nowell et al. [55]. The researcher is known in the field as someone who is familiar with pragmatics and Islamic studies and is not a neutral stance. Only public figures' names are listed (where the public role is the one that is evaluated), following the ethical guidelines of AoIR [56] and not the names of ordinary users.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses resulted in four themes. Judgements about speech were based on degradation (speaker or others), accuracy or inaccuracy of speech, whether the rough talk was amplified upwards or downwards by the channel, and on how much it was amplified, in all 5 episodes. Table 5 presents evidence read by the face model, evidence read by the qawlan framework and what neither read.

3.1. Theme 1: Bystanders are the judges and The stakes are the dignity of the weaker party

The speech was given to one of the crowd (E1) and the millions of viewers made the judgement. Reports said there was a lot of anger across the nation, with a demand from the President to the preacher for a resignation on 6 December 2024 [39], [40]. Within days, the preacher got forgiven by the vendor, but this situation was causing pressure from the people [39]. The actions of the preacher were compared to a singer who was kind to a similar vendor who was the recipient of over 20 thousand comments [36]. The anger was shared across the globe: Malaysia's Prime Minister cited the incident as a case of lessons to be learned in his own country [38].

The series of events illustrates an audience evaluation. In October 2024, the preacher was appointed as a special envoy of President Joko Widodo for religious harmony, a few months ago [35]. The clip was then disseminated and later he received a reprimand from the Cabinet Secretary and visited the vendor at his Magelang home on 4 December to apologize [36]. Another video recorded his insult by a girl entertainer, who is older than him, was shared two days later and a call to his dismissal was issued [39]. On his retirement, he expressed his resignation from a religious perspective, which was a result of his prayer and self-examination [40].

In the face model, it seems that a request for apology/reconciliation is intended to be resolving the issue. It did not. It was not a certain way of the vendor's face that the public deplored, but the dignity of the poor worker in general—the integrity of the religious office. This is in line with the Qur'anic prohibition of mocking another group (Q 49:11) and the the principle of qawlan kariman. In the same way, if a woman, the Sundanese dysphemism compared her to animals and attacked her body, a powerful man in the scandal got more political insults than physical insults [7]. The same study also proposes that the slur the preacher uses in E1 signifies a dysphemism and is a way of pathologising intellect, and that the two episodes are linked by the shared vocabulary of degradation.

In face cases there is partial solution: insults have negative effect on positive face and apology has positive effect on positive face. It does not tell us, however, why the evaluation went on after redress, why it was conducted by outsiders to the target, or why it focussed on social position. None of the focus on dignity and none of the ban on mocking others focuses on these aspects.

3.2. True is a prerequisite to polite (Theme 2)

The point of E3 was political correctness, and the ministry didn't care a bit about the tone of the politician. It has declared that it is not a hoax, deceptive, slanderous, hateful and acceptable that the video be removed from the Internet, in view of the responsibility of this space to be an arena for healthy contests of ideas, not an arena for attacks on the dignity of others [46]. The motivations given were for the defamation and hate speech aspects of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law [48]. The 2026 document essentially merged the concepts of disinformation and hate speech as public order offenders and the minister viewed hoaxes and deep fakes as an enemy to national unity [8], [50].

In E3 the ministry said that the video contained personal attacks with no foundation and, that the video was followed by a legal move against those that created and shared it [46]. It recommended that the public should not spread the content of this and that the defamation, hatred clause on ethnicity, religion, race and inter group relation in the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (2026) should be applied. The minister said that the takedown was a part of the legal procedure in the jurisdiction of the ministry [47]. They are identified as a threat within the 2026a decree on "disinformation and hate speech" adopted on 13 March that calls for urgent action. The ministry announced in its press release that it is going to implement a three-part strategy to develop digital literacy, rapid detection and blocking, and law enforcement [49] ahead of Eid holidays, and also plans to enforce identity verification on local platforms and local offices in foreign platforms in May [50]. In all instances truth takes precedence over tone.

The face model can not have a truth value and an ideal respectful lie would pass that model. In the corpus, however it is the lie that is the dirtiest of all discourtesies. This occurs on the following

order: qawlan sadidan and tabayyun (Q 49:6) and in the MUI fatwa, hoaxes are part of the group of slander and backbiting.

3.3. Theme 3: Strategic impoliteness can only be achieved to the other person or up to

E1 speaking style is not good and funny, listeners may perceive it as intimacy. In response, he insisted that it was a joke, “niatnya guyon” [36]. The more rough the building of the solidarity, the lower the speaker's place in the hierarchy as a man, or the more powerful is teased; in this case, the speaker's voice was lowered, by a slur upon a working vendor with his wares upon a stage, he was placed in a high status. Solidarity was reversed and faced attack. The preacher also thanked the netizens for giving him time to think as it was the people who created the situation rather than the preacher [37].

This episode is significant because prior to this, the style of the preacher was something that was popular, and not criticized. The target, and setting, not the register are what changed. The preacher occupied the top spot; he was on stage with the microphone, and the official title of "preacher," while the vendor was working within the crowd. The self-deprecation or teasingly play between equals, therefore, apparently could not have been interpreted as “the rude jibe.” As witnessed in the videos, the Netizens made a comparison of the actor's act with a person who treated the vendor well and decided upon the act on the basis of the action, not the words. [36]

The boundary is similar to the one obtained from other studies based on comments. Both minister and policies were attacked by the netizens in the direction of the upward of both their words and gestures of baldness and positive impoliteness in the corpus according to the netizens of Saragi and his colleagues [6] and Santoso and his colleagues [5]. The Netizens' words and gestures of balancing upward were not as much sanctioned as the down-balancing words and gestures in the corpus. Studies on the policy comment have been conducted to reveal its status as a result of dismay and lack of social control over digital communication [6], [25]. It does suggest that criticism of the weakest, or misinformation to the public was the most significant in the corpus.

3.4. Theme 4: Politeness as an attribute of channels

Not a word but rather a feature, it was in E2. The company said that it received a call from the ministry to suspend controversial content on the platform and stopped its LIVE feature across the entire country to ensure the app is "safe and civil". Then it was said to be censorship by a digital rights activist [41] and it was shown again around three days later due to its importance to small business owners [45]. One year later [51] the ministry once again advised users to not provoke and take precautions in using social media during the demonstration.

The protests started in Jakarta on 25 August 2025, protesting the lack of transparency on legislators' allowances [44] and intensified by the death of a man who was hit by a police vehicle [43]. There were reports of 29 outages, which increased to 174 in just three hours as users realized that TikTok had implemented its new policy [43], [44]. The platform itself has decided to re-open the feature on 2 September after the concern of selling through live streams by small businesses [45]. In 2026, civil-society organisations requested a more active role for the ministry in dealing with slander and propaganda, while the ministry stated that moderation should not be an affront to the right to freedom of expression, except in the case of slander, disinformation or hate speech [52].

The language of civility is used in reaching, speed and live amplification in this. This is better explained with the principles of qawlan balighan and maysuran which relate to the effect of speech on people. In addition, there is an episode risk in that the same words can be used to draw up general restrictions that affect on legitimate speech and livelihoods.

Table 5. How the two frameworks read the evidence

Theme	Face-model reading	*Qawlan* / al-Hujurat reading	Residual (explained by neither as catalogued)
1. Bystanders judge dignity	Threat to the hearer’s positive face; closed by apology	*Qawlan kariman*; ban on mockery (Q 49:11)	Sanction continues after the target forgives; harm is collective and cross-border
2. Truth precedes politeness	Not addressed: no truth condition	*Qawlan sadidan*; *tabayyun* (Q 49:6)	The state, not only the community, enforces the norm
3. Direction of strategic impoliteness	Mock or bald impoliteness, intent decides	Coarse talk tolerated as solidarity	Audience, not speaker, fixes the frame; downward aim cancels solidarity

4. Channels carry politeness	Not addressed: dyadic unit	*Qawlan balighan*, *maysuran*: effect on hearers	Amplification and feature-level governance; risk of over-restriction

The episodes in the four themes imply a sequential order. The state was most stringent in judging truth claims. Publics were the strongest supporters of the dignity of weaker parties. A familiar style of speech was granted or reprimanded depending on the direction of the rough speech. The reach of a channel determined whether it was a single utterance or an entire feature that was the target of governance.

3.5. From the face to accountable dignity

The findings directly answer RQ1 and RQ2. Speech was assessed by four criteria by the online publics, religious community and the state in Indonesia: dignity of the weaker party, truth, direction of rough talk and amplification. The face model only contains the first and partial third model. As a list, the qawlan tradition expects all four, but as a tradition, it cannot explain why a forgiven insult is still sanctioned, nor even rank them.

This study provides an answer to RQ3, by proposing the Accountable Dignity Model (Figure 2). It preserves the Qur'ani principles but presents them in an orderly manner, such that karamah (the dignity of all the children of Adam, Q 17:70) is used instead of individual face.

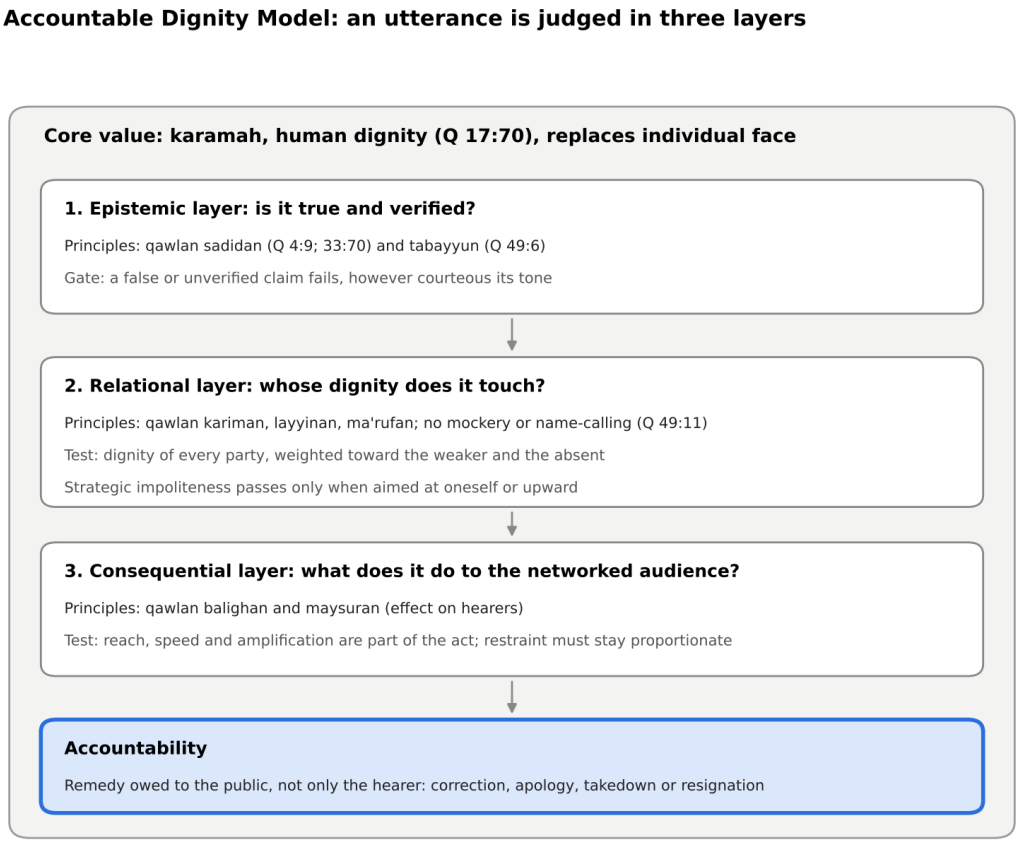


Figure 2. The Accountable Dignity Model, derived from the four themes.

The order matters. The ministry in E3, and the MUI fatwa believe in the same things: Hoaxes, slander, etc., because if there is any truth, it will come first; and if it is a polite lie, it is a bad one, that will harm anyone who does it! There is no dignity second, and it's weighted down towards the weak and the missing; which is why E1 and E5. Consequence is third, because even though the same words have different meanings in E2 at one time (on the internet) than at another (in a private chat or during a live stream), it is also because it is what is being discussed. It is a notion in keeping with Floridi and Taddeo's [33] concept of ethics being directed towards practices and infrastructures, rather than acts.

This is also a restatement of the definition of karamah in the model. In the case of the face, dignity is a claim that individuals make of themselves and a negotiation that takes place between individuals. The Accountable Dignity Model sees dignity as ‘way of being' – it is a place, a space, and one that can be inhabited when the individual is not around and one that can be claimed by others when the individual is not around. This is why the answer for the comments was not sufficient to resolve this issue in E1 and why even the woman in E5 was wronged if she didn't reply to the comments.

3.6. The strategic line of impoliteness

This is consistent with the result from the literature study which indicates that impoliteness can be a conscious exercise of authority in the sphere of religion and is not a lack. Based on their finding, it shows that positive impoliteness can serve as a way to get the civic voice as suggested by Saragi et al. [6] and Aslinda et al. [25] from netizens to the officials. If it's the speaker's face that's lowered, then it's solidarity, if it's the face of the powerful it's immodesty. A high-status speaker degrades a lowly person is arrogant, and the audience online is not the speaker's target, but rather the frame is set by the audience online. There is an impoliteness in being delicate, but not in being dignified (kariman).

3.7. Research work in the field of politeness

The model is part of the ongoing discussion surrounding the universal nature of face called up by Alabdali [11] and Kiyama et al. [13]. It's a truth condition, which is not included by Brown and Levinson nor Culpeper. Secondly, it places the evaluator in the networked public rather than the hearer, furthering the cyberpragmatic level description of layered context [22]. Third, it relates politeness to accountability; thus, it provides an explanation for remedies as well as strategies, like resignations and takedowns. The moves are of Islamic origin, and have been generalised into the general language, thus can be experimented in other religious and secular publics.

3.8. Additional experiments that can be done

The model generates four propositions which can be tested using other data. P1: Tone of a statement is not a determinant of the intensity of a public or institutional punishment for a false statement indicated. P2: Graduating from the severity of the sanctions based on how rough the speech is towards the weaker/absent party. Sanctions are reduced at P3, when there is degradation of a social group or public office or an apology is given to the direct target and a reconciliation has occurred. The greater the speed of the channel and its reach, the greater the chance that governance will become a part of the channel and the greater the chance that proportionality will be raised as a challenge to the feature level governance.

3.9. The policy and practice implications are discussed

The model is a useful tool to use when deciding to post before it goes out to anyone else – for preachers and religious organisations: check the dignity of, and the reach of the channel. It urges platform and regulators to refrain from taking the “civility” discussion as an excuse to close platforms in general. The LIVE suspension in E2 was called censorship and failure to meet the proportionality measure of the consequential layer, impacting small traders. Appeals and criteria have to be clear and take down time should be 4 hours. In the digital-literacy programmes, it is recommended to integrate the learning of tabayyun and dignity, because the propagation of hoaxes and insults is going hand in hand.

4. CONCLUSION

It's impossible to fool the Indonesian online publics about their faces. The verdicts were decided by the truthfulness of a fall of a preacher, the size of takedowns, a decision on the ministry's hoax and its closure during the protest era. The criteria are anticipated in the principles as stated in the Qur'an, namely: epistemic gate, relations test (karamah), consequential test (amplification), and accountability test (towards the public). It also limits the strategic impoliteness that can lead to solidarity when insulting the person and/or the powerful.

Limitations. The evaluations are not an attempt to create a corpus of evaluations, but rather a purposive one from journalistic reports, that is, the evaluations are presented as they are evaluated by the media and not as they are evaluated as by users. Primary comment threads were not coded in

the study and E5 uses other team's published data. All episodes are from national media that covers the entire country and are Java-centred and from 2024-2026.

Future research. Three directions follow. Like the failure of strategic impoliteness, evaluation of the model predictions could be performed on a large number of comments and on the computational stance detection. Secondly, a comparative study can be carried out in Malaysia, the Gulf and the secular publics to see if the three layers are found in Islamic contexts. Third, it is possible to study the question of how transparent and proportional these criteria of truth and proportionality are, and how they result in less over-restriction under the rules, like the four-hour takedown decree.

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Data availability. All primary sources analysed are dated and publicly accessible at the URLs listed in the References. Scholarly sources are available through their DOIs where these exist.

Ethics. The study analysed published documents and scholarship only and did not involve human participants or personal data, so no ethics approval was required.

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