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DEIFYING DESIRE (*HAWĀ*) IN QUR'AN 45:23: COMPARATIVE EXEGESIS FOR ISLAMIC CHARACTER EDUCATION IN DIGITAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab interpret the deification of desire and explores its implications for Islamic character education. Employing qualitative library research and comparative exegesis (*tafsīr muqāran*), the study examines four commentaries selected for their exegetical authority, historical diversity, interpretive approaches, and relevance to Indonesia. The findings reveal distinct emphases: Ibn Kathīr discusses desire in relation to divine knowledge and guidance; al-Qurṭubī incorporates transmitted reports, linguistic interpretations, and variant readings; Hamka highlights the relationship between desire and reason; and Shihab emphasizes rational control and receptivity to guidance. These insights inform the proposed *Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation* framework, integrating theological orientation, moral discipline, social responsibility, and psychological self-regulation. The framework offers a conceptual basis for reflective moral learning and responsible digital conduct in Islamic Religious Education, while its pedagogical effectiveness requires empirical validation. This study contributes to Qur'anic studies and Islamic Religious Education by developing an integrative conceptual framework that bridges classical and contemporary Qur'anic interpretations of desire with moral self-regulation, thereby offering a novel perspective for strengthening character education in the contemporary digital era.

Keywords: Comparative Qur'anic Exegesis; Digital Ethics; Hawā; Islamic Character Education; Self-Control.

INTRODUCTION

Digital environments expose learners to instant gratification, social validation, impulsive expression, and continuous content consumption. For Islamic Religious Education (IRE), these conditions raise questions about moral awareness, self-control, and responsibility alongside technological competence. Research on impulsivity and social anxiety associates both factors with problematic social media use, while longitudinal evidence also identifies peer relationships, emotions, and family conditions as relevant influences (Bocci Benucci et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024; Pazdur et al., 2025; Poli et al., 2025). These associations justify educational attention without establishing that digital participation causes moral decline. A Qur'anic approach should therefore examine how learners evaluate desires while recognizing the social and psychological circumstances of their choices.

Recent Islamic education scholarship provides several complementary responses. A systematic review identifies contextual pedagogy, curriculum relevance, and teacher digital literacy as recurring concerns; a school case study highlights internalised responsibility, truthfulness, and awareness of divine supervision (Muksin & Afandi, 2025; Hairani & Conermann, 2025). Studies of digital curricula and junior secondary schools show how character values can be embedded in learning activities, whereas curriculum innovation research places this integration within institutional planning (Kulsum et al., 2024; Mahbubi et al., 2025; Shobirin et al., 2025). Together, these studies locate digital ethics in teaching practices and educational environments. They do not, however, establish a comparative exegetical account of the authority assigned to desire in Qur'an 45:23.

Surah Al-Jāthiyah [45]:23, particularly ittakhadha ilāhahū hawāhu, describes taking personal desire as an object of devotion. Here, hawā encompasses inclinations and subjective preferences rather than sexual desire alone. The educational question concerns whether revelation and responsible reasoning guide conduct or whether personal inclination overrides them. Scholarship on self-purification, Qur'anic moral education, and adolescent self-control provides relevant conceptual resources, although thematic readings of other verses do not substitute for analysing this particular passage (Suhartawan, 2025; Kumalla et al., 2025; Ratna & Akbar, 2026; Wahid & Kamils, 2024). Its relevance to digital life consequently requires contextual interpretation rather than attributing modern technological concerns directly to the verse.

Islamic moral psychology frames discipline through the refinement of intentions and accountability before God, while psychological self-regulation examines processes governing goal-directed conduct (Al-Ghazālī, 1995; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Contemporary educational work connects Islamic values with emotional awareness, teacher mentoring, and self-control; studies of digital pedagogy additionally stress institutional traditions and contextual learning (Huda et al., 2025; Hidayah & Neni, 2026; Mujahidah, 2025; Murdianto et al., 2025). These perspectives are complementary but epistemologically distinct. The present study uses their dialogue to explore how moral orientation relates to deliberate action without treating religious commitment as a psychological scale or assuming that awareness reliably produces ethical conduct.

A further research stream concerns the conditions under which digital education changes behaviour. Media-literacy and digital-well-being reviews distinguish learning outcomes from behavioural change, while research on adolescent media use highlights individual differences and context (Cho et al., 2025; Colder Carras et al., 2024; Fassi et al., 2025; Dreier et al., 2025). Reviews and intervention research examine different strategies, including guided engagement and digital self-control tools, without validating a Qur'anic instructional model (Nagata et al., 2025; Skeggs & Orben, 2025; Mikami et al., 2025; Mertens et al.,

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2026; Favini et al., 2024). Islamic digital-ethics studies likewise address ethical communication, adab, verification, teacher modelling, and gaps between values and practice (Mentari et al., 2026; Mukhlis & Cahyadi, 2026; Komalasari et al., 2025; Jannah & Al Ayubi, 2025; 'Izzah & Aisyah, 2025). The research gap is therefore the connection between comparative interpretation of hawā, moral authority, and pedagogical responses, rather than an absence of research on digital ethics.

This study compares Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab, combining classical and Indonesian perspectives. Tafsīr muqāran identifies similarities, differences, and interpretive arguments; the educational orientation of tafsīr tarbawī develops implications for IRE. These functions remain distinct: contemporary pedagogical proposals are the researcher's synthesis, not statements attributed to classical commentators. Contextual interpretation connects textual meaning with contemporary circumstances while preserving that distinction (Saeed, 2014).

The study aims to clarify the Qur'anic conception of hawā through comparative exegesis and formulate its implications for contemporary Islamic educational practices. The proposed contribution is Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation, a conceptual framework linking comparative exegesis with theological orientation, moral discipline, social responsibility, and psychological self-regulation. It foregrounds learners' evaluation of desires and consequences as a basis for reflective moral agency. Its classroom relevance and effectiveness remain questions for empirical research.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative library research with comparative Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr muqāran) as its principal analytical method (Nofitayanti et al., 2022; Wahid & Kamils, 2024). It examines interpretations of Qur'an 45:23 and develops their implications for Islamic character education. A contextual-pedagogical orientation distinguishes historical and textual meanings from contemporary applications (Saeed, 2014). The design is interpretive and conceptual; it does not include classroom participants, behavioural measurement, or an intervention trial.

The primary unit of analysis is Surah Al-Jāthiyah [45]: 23, particularly the expression ittakhadha ilāhahū hawāhu (taking one's desire as one's god). The analysis also considers the surrounding verses (Qur'an 45:18–23) to examine the relationship between divine guidance, knowledge, desire, and moral responsibility. Primary sources comprise four Qur'anic commentaries: Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm by Ibn Kathīr, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Qurṭubī, Tafsir Al-Azhar by Hamka, and Tafsir Al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab. The interpretations of the selected verse constitute the principal textual data, while discussions of related verses,

linguistic expressions, and supporting exegetical arguments are examined as contextual evidence.

The four commentators were selected purposively for exegetical authority, historical diversity, methodological differences, and relevance to Indonesian Islamic education. Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī provide classical perspectives, including transmitted interpretation and linguistic-theological analysis; Hamka and Shihab contribute Indonesian readings attentive to ethical and contextual concerns. These descriptions guide comparison without determining the conclusions in advance. The selection offers a manageable classical–Indonesian design rather than comprehensive coverage of the tafsīr tradition. Excluding al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, Ibn ʻĀshūr, and other influential exegetes does not imply lesser authority.

Secondary literature addresses desire, Islamic moral psychology, comparative exegesis, character education, digital ethics, and self-regulation. During manuscript revision on 28 October 2026, targeted web searches combined terms including hawā, tafsir muqaran, Islamic character education, digital ethics, and social media self-regulation. Publisher and journal pages were consulted to check relevance, abstracts, and bibliographic metadata. The update prioritised publications from 2024–2026; primary commentaries and foundational theories were retained irrespective of year. Duplicate records were removed. This targeted update is a narrative literature review, not an exhaustive database search or a PRISMA systematic review; no unrecorded screening counts are claimed.

Analysis follows five stages. First, the verse and its immediate context are examined, focusing on ilāh, hawā, ʻalā ʻilm, khatama, and ghishāwah. Transmitted explanations and reading variants are considered where they affect meaning. Second, the four interpretations are organised in a comparative matrix. Third, recurring themes are identified: desire, normative authority, knowledge, guidance, and responsibility. Fourth, similarities and differences are compared through the textual evidence and interpretive reasoning offered, without attributing them automatically to historical background. Fifth, the findings are synthesised into theological and ethical principles. Claims depending on a particular edition remain subject to checking against that edition, especially the Indonesian commentaries identified in Table 1.

Contextual-pedagogical analysis then relates the synthesis to digital moral agency. Following Saeed's distinction between textual context, ethical principles, and contemporary relevance (Saeed, 2014), the analysis considers impulsive posting, social validation, attention management, and consequences for others. Psychological studies inform possible mechanisms and educational needs; they do not determine the theological meaning of hawā. Conversely, exegetical interpretation supplies a normative perspective without replacing empirical

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explanations. Proposed learning activities are therefore reasoned applications rather than findings about students' actual behaviour.

Interpretive credibility depends on traceability and conceptual restraint. Exegetical descriptions, comparative synthesis, and educational inferences are kept distinguishable. Alternative explanations of ‘alā ‘ilm are retained rather than collapsed into consensus. The tables make the comparison and proposed applications explicit, while limitations identify where source verification or empirical testing is still required. The study makes no claim of independent double coding, an exhaustive search, or an empirically validated measurement instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The Qur'anic Concept of Hawā and Its Textual Context

Surah Al-Jāthiyah [45]: 23 presents a fundamental theological and ethical question concerning the relationship between human desire and divine guidance. The central expression, *ittakhadha ilāhahū hawāhu* (اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ), describes the elevation of personal desire to a position of authority that properly belongs to divine guidance. This expression occurs within a broader passage (Qur'an 45:18–23) that addresses the relationship between revealed guidance, knowledge, human conduct, and accountability.

The verse contains several interconnected concepts: *hawā* (desire or subjective inclination), *ilāh* (deity or object of ultimate devotion), *'alā 'ilm* (in relation to knowledge), *khatama* (sealing), and *ghishāwah* (covering or veil). These terms indicate that the moral problem addressed by the verse extends beyond the existence of natural human desires. The more fundamental concern is the elevation of subjective inclination above moral and religious guidance.

Nevertheless, the interpretive tradition does not offer an entirely uniform explanation of every expression in the verse. Differences emerge particularly concerning the referent of *'ilm*, the historical circumstances associated with the verse, and the linguistic interpretation of *ghishāwah*. These variations are important because they influence how the relationship between desire, knowledge, divine judgement, and moral responsibility is understood.

Ibn Kathīr: Desire, Moral Judgement, and Divine Knowledge

In *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Ibn Kathīr explains the expression *ittakhadha ilāhahū hawāhu* as referring to a person whose actions are governed by personal desire. He states:

"إِنَّمَا يَأْتَمِرُ بِهَوَاهُ"

Innamā ya'tamiru bi-hawāhu.

This statement indicates that the individual acts according to personal inclination. Ibn Kathīr further explains that such a person acts upon what appears desirable and abandons what appears undesirable. His interpretation therefore

highlights the displacement of authoritative moral guidance by subjective preference (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, Vol. 7, p. 268).

A particularly important finding concerns Ibn Kathīr's interpretation of *wa aḍallahu Allāhu 'alā 'ilm*. Rather than presenting only one explanation, he explicitly recognises two interpretive possibilities: first, that God allows the person to go astray with divine knowledge of the person's deserving such an outcome; and second, that misguidance occurs after knowledge and sufficient evidence have reached the individual. Ibn Kathīr considers these explanations related but not logically identical.

This distinction complicates an interpretation that exclusively associates the verse with deliberate disobedience after receiving knowledge. His commentary also addresses the relationship between divine knowledge, accountability, and the individual's response to guidance. Therefore, the theological dimension of Ibn Kathīr's interpretation cannot be reduced to the simple proposition that a person knowingly rejects the truth.

Al-Qurṭubī: Interpretive Diversity, Desire, and Normative Authority

Al-Qurṭubī's interpretation in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* provides a broader account of the expression *ittakhadha ilāhahū hawāhu* through reports from earlier authorities, linguistic explanations, and theological discussions. Among the explanations he records is the interpretation attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, al-Ḥasan, and Qatādah:

"ذَلِكَ الْكَافِرُ اتَّخَذَ دِينَهُ مَا يَهْوَاهُ"

Dhālika al-kāfiru ittakhadha dīnahu mā yahwāhu.

The report describes an unbeliever who makes personal preference the basis of religious conduct (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, Vol. 16, p. 155–156). Al-Qurṭubī also records explanations associated with 'Ikrimah and Sa'īd ibn Jubayr that connect the verse with pre-Islamic practices of selecting objects of worship according to personal preference. These reports preserve the historical and theological dimensions of the verse and caution against interpreting it exclusively as a general psychological statement about desire.

His discussion of *wa aḍallahu Allāhu 'alā 'ilm* also presents interpretive alternatives. The knowledge mentioned in the verse may refer to divine knowledge or, according to another explanation, the knowledge possessed by the individual who follows a false object of worship. Al-Qurṭubī further discusses the grammatical relationship between *'alā 'ilm* and the subject or object of the expression. In addition, al-Qurṭubī identifies a reading variation involving *ghishāwah*, noting the reading *ghashwah* associated with Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'ī. Although both expressions are associated with covering or veiling, the existence of this variation illustrates the importance of linguistic analysis within comparative exegesis.

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Hamka: Desire and Socio-Ethical Responsibility

Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar is read in this study as highlighting the relationship between hawā and ʻaql (reason): desire becomes problematic when it dominates judgement and displaces divine guidance (Hamka, 1982). This Indonesian socio-ethical perspective supports examining personal inclinations through rational and moral reflection. Its extension to egoism, social responsibility, or digital gratification is the present study's analytical development. The exact passage and pagination in the stated edition require author confirmation, as recorded in Table 1.

M. Quraish Shihab: Desire, Rational Control, and Moral Awareness

Shihab's Tafsir Al-Mishbah is read as emphasising desire, rational control, and receptivity to divine guidance (Shihab, 2002). The manuscript's account associates hawā with inclinations that escape rational evaluation, and reads the sealing imagery in relation to diminished receptivity to guidance. The precise wording and pagination require confirmation against the stated edition. Accordingly, the earlier translated direct quotation is presented here as a paraphrase, and no independent verification of its wording is claimed.

Shihab's account also draws attention to the possibility that knowledge and ethical acceptance do not coincide. This offers a point of comparison with the classical alternatives concerning ʻalā ʻilm, while the wider interpretive tradition prevents reducing the expression to a single psychological mechanism. The educational relevance concerns reflection on knowledge and action; it does not establish that Shihab formulated a model of digital self-regulation.

Comparative Exegetical Analysis

The comparative findings indicate a shared concern regarding the elevation of personal desire above authoritative guidance. However, this commonality should not obscure differences in interpretive evidence, theological reasoning, and emphasis. Ibn Kathīr explicitly discusses the relationship between subjective judgement, divine knowledge, and the possibility of misguidance after receiving evidence. Al-Qurṭubī provides a more extensive presentation of transmitted interpretations, linguistic possibilities, theological considerations, and canonical reading variants. These differences illustrate distinct exegetical procedures within the classical tradition.

The Indonesian commentaries add a contemporary contextual dimension to the comparison. Their provisional emphasis on reason and moral awareness complements the classical attention to transmitted reports and theological alternatives. However, these contrasts should remain qualified by the passage-verification requirements in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Exegetical Matrix of Qur'an 45:23

EXEGETE	DOCUMENTED INTERPRETIVE EMPHASIS	IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION
Ibn Kathīr	Desire as a guide to conduct; divine knowledge and knowledge reaching the individual	Explicitly gives two interpretations of ʻalā ʻilm
Al-Qurṭubī	Transmitted reports on desire and worship; linguistic and theological analysis	Includes alternative readings and explanations of ʻalā ʻilm
Hamka	Potential socio-ethical interpretation of desire	Requires confirmation from the relevant passage of Tafsir Al-Azhar
M. Quraish Shihab	Potential relationship between desire, awareness, and moral judgement	Requires confirmation from the relevant passage of Tafsir Al-Mishbah

Towards a Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation Framework

The central theoretical contribution of this study is the development of a Qur'an-based framework of moral self-regulation. The framework begins by distinguishing between desire as a natural human inclination and the elevation of desire into an overriding source of moral authority. Drawing on the comparative analysis of Qur'anic interpretations by Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab, the framework conceptualizes moral self-regulation through four interrelated dimensions: theological orientation, moral discipline, social responsibility, and psychological self-regulation.

Theological orientation refers to the recognition that personal preferences should not supersede divine guidance as the ultimate foundation of moral judgment. Moral discipline concerns the capacity to evaluate desires in accordance with ethical principles rather than responding merely to immediate impulses. Social responsibility extends moral evaluation beyond individual interests by considering the consequences of personal decisions for others and the wider community. Meanwhile, psychological self-regulation involves the reflective capacities required to recognize impulses, delay gratification, and critically evaluate alternative courses of action. These four dimensions collectively illustrate how Qur'anic moral principles can be translated into an integrated framework for developing ethical awareness and responsible decision-making. The conceptual relationships among these dimensions and their respective contributions to moral self-regulation are illustrated in Figure 1.

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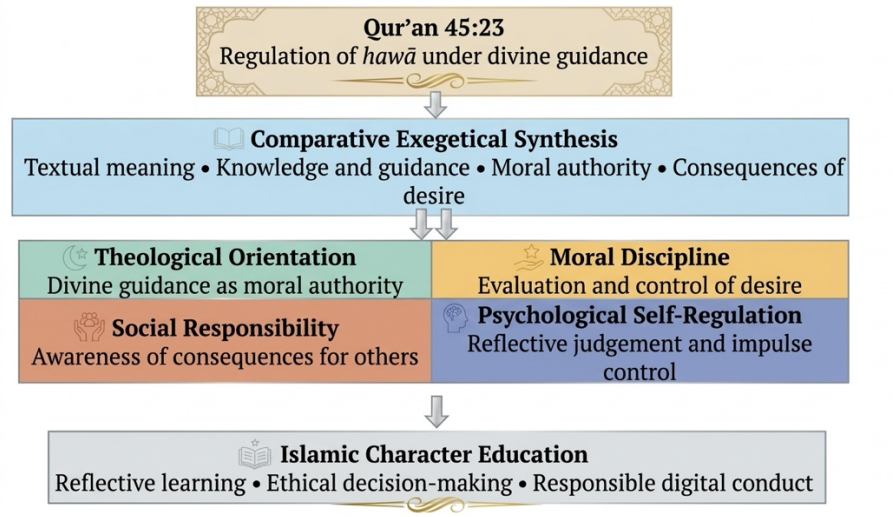


Figure 1. Proposed Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation Framework

The proposed framework provides a conceptual foundation for translating Qur'anic moral values into educational practices, particularly within Islamic Religious Education. Each dimension represents a complementary aspect of character development, ranging from the internalization of divine guidance to the cultivation of responsible social behavior. In pedagogical contexts, these dimensions can be operationalized through reflective learning activities that encourage students to critically assess their intentions, regulate impulsive behavior, consider the consequences of their actions, and develop greater awareness of their digital habits. Such activities are particularly relevant to contemporary digital environments, where immediate responses, unrestricted information sharing, and online interactions frequently require ethical judgment and self-control. The relationship between each dimension, its corresponding educational objective, and illustrative learning activities is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposed Pedagogical Implications Framework

DIMENSION	EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE	ILLUSTRATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY
Theological orientation	Evaluate decisions against Islamic moral principles	Reflective analysis of a digital ethical dilemma
Moral discipline	Delay impulsive responses	Practising response pauses before posting or sharing
Social responsibility	Recognise the consequences of online actions	Case discussion on cyberbullying and misinformation
Psychological self-regulation	Identify desires and evaluate alternatives	Reflective journaling about social media habits

Implications for Islamic Character Education in Digital Society

Educational application requires distinguishing the verse's historical meaning from its contemporary use. Qur'an 45:23 is not a direct account of social media addiction. Its concern with normative authority instead offers a lens for examining how learners evaluate immediate preferences. Psychological evidence can inform this contextual application without equating behavioral difficulty with spiritual difficulty. For Islamic Religious Education, the comparative exegetical

synthesis suggests several pedagogical directions. Theological orientation may be cultivated through reflective discussion concerning the sources of moral authority and the relationship between personal preference and religious responsibility. Moral discipline may be strengthened through learning activities that require students to evaluate online choices against ethical principles. Social responsibility may be developed by examining the consequences of online communication, disinformation, and harmful interactions. Psychological self-regulation may be encouraged through reflective exercises that help learners recognize impulses, consider consequences, and practice deliberate decision-making before responding to digital stimuli.

Table 3 translates the framework into illustrative activities and indicators. Tabayyun enters through the distinct, intertextual foundation of Qur'an 49:6 rather than being attributed directly to 45:23. Assessment should examine reasons, alternatives, evidence, and consequences; reflective journals should remain voluntary and private. Neither account surveillance nor scores purporting to measure sincerity are warranted by this conceptual model.

Table 3. Proposed Operational Framework for Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation in Islamic Religious Education

VALUES	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES / ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT INDICATORS
Theological orientation	Students distinguish between personal preferences and Islamic moral principles	Analysing QS. 45:23 and discussing digital ethical dilemmas	Identifies relevant moral principles and justifies decisions
Moral discipline	Students evaluate impulses before acting	Reflective journaling and simulated response-delay exercises	Explains triggers, alternatives, and possible consequences
Social responsibility	Students recognise the impact of online behaviour on others	Collaborative case analysis of cyberbullying and harmful communication	Demonstrates empathy and explains responsibilities toward others
Psychological self-regulation	Students identify strategies for managing digital distractions	Setting voluntary digital-use goals and evaluating progress	Identifies realistic strategies and reflects on their application
Information verification (*tabayyun*)	Students assess information credibility before sharing	Fact-checking simulations based on QS. 49:6	Verifies source credibility, examines evidence, and avoids unsupported claims

DISCUSSION

The analytical significance of hawā lies in normative authority rather than a diagnosis of impulse control. Classical discussions concern devotion and guidance; moral psychology adds a vocabulary of discipline, while contemporary work on

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self-purification clarifies its spiritual orientation (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964; Al-Ghazālī, 1995; Suhartawan, 2025; Saeed, 2014). Hawā, shahwah, and nafs therefore should not be used interchangeably, nor should behavioural difficulty automatically imply hidden associationism. Contextualisation is defensible when it asks how preferences are evaluated; it becomes overextended when it identifies clinical or developmental problems with the religious condition described by the verse. This boundary protects both theological precision and educational fairness.

The proposed contribution concerns the justification of moral choices rather than another catalogue of digital rules. Islamic education studies describe internalised values, contextual learning, and curriculum integration, whereas research on Muslim cyber ethics identifies a gap between stated commitments and online practice (Muksin & Afandi, 2025; Hairani & Conermann, 2025; Mahbubi et al., 2025; Kulsum et al., 2024; Jannah & Al Ayubi, 2025). Read together, they suggest that ethical knowledge requires opportunities for reasoned application. The present framework adds an exegetical question, what authority guides a decision when preference conflicts with responsibility? without claiming superior outcomes. Its novelty remains a particular conceptual connection between Qur'an 45:23 and moral agency, not the first integration of Islam and digital character education.

Individual responsibility must be examined alongside the conditions shaping choice. Platform design, peer relationships, emotional needs, and differing mental-health profiles complicate explanations centred on personal restraint (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2024; Pazdur et al., 2025; Poli et al., 2025; Fassi et al., 2025; Skeggs & Orben, 2025). This evidence qualifies an individualistic application of hawā: entertainment and social recognition can meet ordinary needs, while harmful engagement can reflect several interacting influences. IRE should consequently combine reflective judgement with discussion of persuasive features, peer pressure, and supportive environments. Institutions share responsibility for those environments; exhorting learners to control themselves cannot by itself explain or address every barrier to responsible participation.

Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation connects moral evaluation with the capacity to enact decisions. Studies of Islamic digital literacy and reflective teaching indicate compatible educational directions, while intervention research and media-literacy synthesis caution against assuming that understanding automatically becomes behaviour (Mentari et al., 2026; Mukhlis & Cahyadi, 2026; Favini et al., 2024; Cho et al., 2025; Mertens et al., 2026). The model's four dimensions are therefore interdependent analytical categories, not independently established causal variables. Theological orientation supplies normative direction; discipline and self-regulatory practices may support enactment; social responsibility broadens evaluation to others. Whether these dimensions form a coherent instructional or

measurement model requires development and validation rather than inference from thematic compatibility alone. Implementation should create assessable opportunities for ethical reasoning. Teacher mentoring, contextual character education, and digital-well-being research support considering dilemmas, guided reflection, and collaborative inquiry, but their findings cannot validate the specific programme proposed here (Hidayah & Neni, 2026; Komalasari et al., 2025; Mujahidah, 2025; Colder Carras et al., 2024; Mikami et al., 2025).

The comparison is limited to four commentators and does not represent the whole exegetical tradition. Exact wording and pagination in the Indonesian commentaries require confirmation; the relevant claims remain provisional. Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation is a researcher-developed synthesis, and the study provides no primary empirical evidence of educational effectiveness. These boundaries limit the conclusions to a conceptual proposal.

Interpretive scope and transferability remain the principal limitations. Comparative methodology supports disciplined textual comparison, while recent educational and intervention literature shows that contexts, outcomes, and delivery arrangements vary (Wahid & Kamils, 2024; Ratna & Akbar, 2026; Murdianto et al., 2025; Huda et al., 2025; Nagata et al., 2025). Extending the comparison to other exegetes may challenge the synthesis; confirming the Indonesian passages may refine particular emphases. Classroom feasibility, behavioural effects, and durability cannot be inferred from this literature alone. Future studies should distinguish moral reasoning from clinical outcomes, test age-appropriate activities, and consider family circumstances, access, and platform exposure. These qualifications preserve a conceptual contribution while leaving its empirical adequacy open to investigation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The comparative analysis of Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Hamka, and M. Quraish Shihab on Qur'an 45:23 demonstrates that the central ethical concern of *hawā* lies in the elevation of personal desire above divine guidance, while revealing differences in their theological, linguistic, and socio-ethical interpretive emphases. These findings provide a conceptual foundation for the proposed *Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation* framework, comprising four interconnected dimensions theological orientation, moral discipline, social responsibility, and psychological self-regulation which may inform Islamic character education through reflective learning, ethical decision-making, and responsible digital conduct. Although this framework contributes to connecting comparative Qur'anic exegesis with contemporary educational discourse, its conclusions remain interpretive and conceptual because the study is limited to four exegetes and does not empirically examine its effectiveness in educational settings.

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Future research should expand the comparative analysis to include other influential exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, and Ibn ʻĀshūr, to examine alternative interpretations and strengthen the framework's exegetical foundation. Islamic Religious Education teachers are encouraged to explore the framework through contextual learning activities, including digital ethical dilemmas, guided reflection, collaborative discussions, and information-verification exercises, while assessing students' moral reasoning and responsible decision-making. Subsequent studies should conduct interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, develop and validate instructional modules, and employ classroom-based or quasi-experimental designs to evaluate the framework's feasibility and educational effectiveness while accounting for technological, social, and contextual influences on students' digital behaviour.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

E.F.: Conceptualization, methodology, literature collection, comparative exegetical analysis, development of the Qur'anic Moral Self-Regulation framework, and writing the original draft. M.J.K: Supervision, critical review of the methodology and interpretation, and writing review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. There are no financial or other interests that could inappropriately influence the conduct, interpretation, or reporting of this research.

DECLARATION OF AI

During manuscript preparation, the authors used Scite (scite.ai) to assist in checking journal references and examining how the cited publications were supported, contrasted, or discussed in the scholarly literature. Scite's outputs were treated as supporting information rather than definitive evidence of source validity. ChatGPT (OpenAI) was also used to assist with manuscript revision and the drafting of acknowledgments and disclosure statements. The specific versions

of these tools were not recorded. The authors remain fully responsible for verifying all AI-assisted content and references and for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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