

Takabbur and Fakhr in the Qur'an: A Thematic Interpretation of Tafsir Al-Maraghi

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Abstract

Keywords:

Takabbur, Fakhr, Tafsir Al-Maraghi, Thematic Interpretation, Social Media Flexing.

The rapid development of digital communication has transformed social media into a space for self-representation, giving rise to the phenomenon of flexing, which refers to excessive displays of wealth, achievements, or social status to gain recognition and validation. While this phenomenon has been widely discussed from the perspectives of communication and psychology, studies examining it through the lens of Qur'anic interpretation remain limited. This study aims to analyze the concepts of takabbur and fakhr in the Qur'an based on Tafsir Al-Maraghi and to examine their relevance to the phenomenon of social media flexing. This research employed a qualitative library research approach using the thematic (maudhu'i) method of Qur'anic interpretation. Primary data were obtained from the Qur'an and Tafsir Al-Maraghi, while secondary data were collected from scholarly books and journal articles related to Qur'anic studies, Islamic ethics, digital communication, and social media. The findings indicate that, based on the interpretation of Tafsir Al-Maraghi, takabbur is associated with an attitude of arrogance and a sense of superiority, while fakhr is reflected in the tendency to excessively express pride and self-glorification. This distinction represents an interpretive synthesis developed in this study to contextualize the Qur'anic concepts of takabbur and fakhr within the phenomenon of social media flexing. These two concepts provide an ethical framework for understanding the moral dimensions of flexing and distinguishing between self-expression based on gratitude and self-presentation driven by arrogance and excessive pride. This study proposes a Qur'anic Ethical Framework that distinguishes between legitimate self-expression based on gratitude (tahadduth bi al-ni'mah) and unethical self-presentation driven by arrogance and ostentation. The findings contribute to the development of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic digital ethics in responding to emerging social phenomena.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:

Takabbur, Fakhr, Tafsir Al-Maraghi, Tafsir Tematik, Flexing di Media Sosial

Perkembangan media sosial telah melahirkan fenomena flexing, yaitu perilaku mempertontonkan kekayaan, prestasi, atau status sosial secara berlebihan untuk memperoleh pengakuan dan validasi dari orang lain. Meskipun fenomena tersebut telah banyak dikaji dalam perspektif komunikasi dan psikologi, penelitian yang mengkajinya melalui perspektif tafsir Al-Qur'an masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konsep takabbur dan fakhr dalam Al-Qur'an berdasarkan Tafsir Al-Maraghi serta menjelaskan relevansinya terhadap fenomena flexing di media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dan metode tafsir tematik (maudhu'i). Data primer diperoleh dari Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Al-Maraghi, sedangkan data sekunder berasal dari buku dan artikel ilmiah yang membahas tafsir, etika Islam, komunikasi digital, dan media sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan penafsiran Tafsir Al-Maraghi, takabbur berkaitan dengan sikap kesombongan dan rasa superioritas, sedangkan fakhr tercermin dalam kecenderungan mengekspresikan kebanggaan dan membanggakan diri secara berlebihan. Perbedaan tersebut merupakan hasil sintesis interpretatif penelitian ini dalam mengontekstualisasikan konsep takabbur dan fakhr dengan fenomena flexing di

media sosial. Kedua konsep tersebut memberikan kerangka etis untuk memahami dimensi moral flexing serta membedakan ekspresi diri yang didasarkan pada rasa syukur dengan representasi diri yang didorong oleh kesombongan dan kebanggaan yang berlebihan. Temuan tersebut menjadi dasar dalam merumuskan Qur'anic Ethical Framework yang membedakan representasi diri yang dibenarkan sebagai bentuk syukur (tahadduth bi al-ni'mah) dengan perilaku flexing yang mengandung unsur kesombongan dan kebanggaan diri. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperkaya kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir serta memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan etika komunikasi digital berdasarkan nilai-nilai Al-Qur'an.

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Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to patterns of social interaction, particularly through social media. Various digital platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X, no longer function merely as means of communication but have also become spaces where individuals construct their identities, express themselves, and seek social recognition (Goffman, E., 1959; Nasrullah & Rulli, 2015). This development has encouraged various forms of self-presentation in digital spaces, ranging from sharing daily activities and academic achievements to displaying lifestyles and material possessions (Duffy, B.E. & Hund, E., 2015; Khamis, S. et al., 2017). On the one hand, these activities constitute part of the dynamics of communication in digital society. On the other hand, however, they have also given rise to the phenomenon known as flexing, namely the excessive display of wealth, luxury, achievements, or social status with the aim of gaining attention, validation, or recognition from others.

This phenomenon has received increasing attention alongside the growing number of social media users in Indonesia. According to a report by (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025), Indonesia has approximately 212 million internet users, with an internet penetration rate of 74.6% of the total population. Meanwhile, the number of social media user identities has reached approximately 143 million, representing 50.2% of the total population. These data indicate that digital media and social media have become an important part of Indonesian society. Indonesia is among the countries with high levels of social media usage, with daily access exceeding three hours. The high intensity of social media use has created broader opportunities for self-presentation practices while simultaneously increasing the tendency toward a culture of display or flexing. Various cases emerging in society indicate that such behavior is not limited to public figures but is also practiced by ordinary users. In some cases, it has been associated with fraud, illegal investment schemes, and psychological pressure

resulting from a culture of social comparison (Nisar, T.M. et al., 2019; Yang, C.-C., 2016). This condition indicates that flexing has developed beyond a mere digital trend into a social phenomenon that influences patterns of interaction, identity formation, and value orientations in modern society (Miller, D. et al., 2016).

The phenomenon of flexing has been widely examined across various academic disciplines (Lubis & Sazali, 2023; Mardiah Anisatul, 2022; Rizky, T.M., 2025). From a communication perspective, flexing can be understood as a self-presentation strategy used by individuals to construct a particular image in digital spaces. From a psychological perspective, such behavior has been associated with the need for social recognition, enhanced self-esteem, and the pursuit of external validation (Stapleton, P. et al., 2017; Sung, Y. et al., 2016). Several studies have also linked flexing to consumer culture, hedonic lifestyles, and the tendency to engage in social comparison in digital environments (Fatimah & Putri, 2023; Noon et al., 2021). Nevertheless, most existing studies continue to focus on communication, psychology, and social behavior, while studies connecting this phenomenon with moral concepts in the Qur'an through an exegetical approach remain relatively limited (Hayati, M. & Romziana, L., 2025; Nasution, E.S. & Halim, A., 2026).

The Qur'an provides extensive guidance concerning various forms of human behavior related to arrogance, self-glorification, and the misuse of blessings granted by Allah (*Al-Qur'anul al-karim*, ; Kementrian Agama republik Indonesia, 2011). Concepts such as *takabbur*, *fakhr*, *mukhtal*, *riya'*, and *israf* represent ethical values that are relevant to the phenomenon of self-presentation on social media. These values are reflected in various Qur'anic verses, including QS. Luqman [31]: 18, QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 36, QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 23, and QS. Al-Qashash [28]: 76, which illustrate the prohibition of arrogance, excessive pride in blessings, and the use of wealth as a means of establishing superiority over others. Although the term flexing is contemporary, the substance of the behavior is closely related to the moral messages articulated in the Qur'an.

To contextualize Qur'anic values within contemporary social phenomena, this study employs *Tafsir Al-Maraghi* as its interpretive foundation (Al-Maraghi, 1946). The work is known for its *adabi ijtimai* orientation, an exegetical approach that not only explains the linguistic aspects of Qur'anic verses but also emphasizes the relevance of Qur'anic messages to social issues faced by society. This characteristic makes the work relevant for examining flexing as a moral issue in the digital era. Its interpretive approach provides an opportunity to understand Qur'anic ethical values contextually and can therefore serve as a basis for evaluating various forms of self-presentation that develop on social media.

A review of previous studies indicates that flexing has predominantly been analyzed from the perspectives of communication, psychology, and social media ethics in general. Meanwhile, studies in Qur'anic and Tafsir scholarship have extensively examined the concept of *takabbur* and social ethics in the Qur'an (Al-Farmawi & 'Abd al-Hayy, 2002; Awadin, A.P. & Hidayah, A.T., 2023; Helmy, M.I., 2020; Rahmawati, L.E., 2023), yet relatively few studies have specifically integrated the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in *Tafsir* (Al-Maraghi, 1946) to explain the phenomenon of flexing on social media. Consequently, a research gap remains, namely the absence of a Qur'anic ethical framework capable of distinguishing between self-expression as a legitimate form of gratitude for blessings and flexing behavior that reflects elements of

takabbur and fakhr. In this study, the concept of tahadduth bi al-ni'mah is positioned as a supporting interpretive concept for understanding self-expression as an expression of gratitude, rather than as a primary concept derived from Al-Maraghi's interpretation of takabbur and fakhr.

Based on this research gap, the present study offers novelty through the formulation of a Qur'anic Ethical Framework developed from a thematic analysis of the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in (Al-Maraghi, 1946). This ethical framework is expected to provide conceptual parameters for distinguishing positive forms of self-representation from flexing behavior that contradicts Qur'anic values. Thus, this study does not merely describe the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* normatively but also actualizes Qur'anic values in responding to social phenomena emerging in the digital era.

This study employs a library research approach using the thematic (*maudhu'i*) method of Qur'anic interpretation (Ash-Shiddiq.H.A. et al., 2025), focusing on the analysis of verses related to *takabbur* and *fakhr* in the Qur'an based on (Al-Maraghi, 1946). The purpose of this study is to analyze the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in (Al-Maraghi, 1946). and to formulate their relevance to the phenomenon of flexing on social media through the development of a Qur'anic ethical framework. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Qur'anic and Tafsir studies, particularly by presenting a contextual Qur'anic ethical perspective on the dynamics of digital society while enriching the discourse on the ethics of self-presentation on social media.

Methods

This study is a library research employing a qualitative approach and using the thematic interpretation method (*maudhu'i*) as the analytical approach (Al-Farmawi & 'Abd al-Hayy, 2002). This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to collect, examine, and comprehensively integrate Qur'anic verses related to the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* based on the interpretation presented in Tafsir Al-Maraghi (Al-Maraghi, 1946). Through this method, the study not only seeks to explain the textual meanings of the verses but also to contextualize them within the phenomenon of *flexing* on social media as a form of self-presentation in the digital era.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from the Qur'an and Tafsir Al-Maraghi (Al-Maraghi, 1946). by Ahmad Mustafa Al-Maraghi, which served as the main references in the interpretation process. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained from scientific journal articles, academic books, proceedings, and research findings discussing the concepts of *takabbur*, *fakhr*, social media ethics, digital communication, and the phenomenon of flexing. The selection of secondary sources was based on their relevance to the research theme and the credibility of the publications, with priority given to scientific references published within the last ten years to ensure the currency of the study.

Data collection was conducted through documentation by identifying Qur'anic verses containing the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr*, including QS. Luqman [31]: 18, QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 36, QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 23, and QS. Al-Qashash [28]: 76. The verses were determined by tracing verses that explicitly contain the terms *takabbur* and *fakhr*, as well as terms with related meanings, such as *mukhtal*, *farah*, and *riya'*. From this process, four verses were

selected as the main verses because they have a direct connection to the research focus and provide an illustration of arrogance, self-glorification, and the tendency to display one's superiority. The selection of the verses was based not only on similarities in terminology but also on the semantic relationship and context of each verse. Subsequently, each verse was analyzed based on the interpretation of Ahmad Mustafa Al-Maraghi to obtain an understanding of its meaning and moral message before being contextualized with the phenomenon of flexing on social media. The verses were then classified according to the themes of discussion using the thematic interpretation approach (*maudhu'i*).

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically through several stages. The first stage involved inventorying and classifying verses related to the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr*. The second stage involved analyzing the interpretations of these verses in (Al-Maraghi, 1946). to identify the conceptual meanings contained within them. The third stage involved contextualizing the interpretation findings with the phenomenon of flexing on social media through the study of digital communication and Islamic ethics. The final stage involved synthesizing the overall analytical findings to formulate a Qur'anic Ethical Framework as a conceptual model that distinguishes self-presentation justified as an expression of gratitude (*tahadduth bi al-ni'mah*) from flexing behavior containing elements of *takabbur* and *fakhr*.

Result and Discussion

Results

Classification of Qur'anic Verses Related to *Takabbur* and *Fakhr*

In the thematic interpretation method, this study first conducted an inventory of Qur'anic verses related to the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr*, both through terms that directly indicate the meanings of arrogance and self-glorification and through terms that have semantic associations with these concepts. The investigation was not limited to the use of a single term but also considered several forms of expressions and terms that are semantically related, including *kibr*, *istikbar*, *mukhtal*, *fakhur*, and other terms associated with self-glorification, feelings of superiority, or excessive attitudes toward blessings.

Based on the tracing of Qur'anic terms, the concept of *fakhr* is relatively easier to map based on the root ف خ ر (*f-kh-r*). This root occurs six times in the Qur'an. However, one of its occurrences, namely in QS. Al-Rahman [55]:14 in the form of *al-fakhkhār*, is used in the context of clay or pottery and is not related to the meaning of self-glorification. Therefore, five verses are lexically related to the meaning of *fakhr*, namely QS. An-Nisa' [4]:36 with the term *fakhuran*, QS. Hud [11]:10 with the term *fakhur*, QS. Luqman [31]:18 with the term *fakhur*, QS. Al-Hadid [57]:23 with the term *fakhur*, and QS. Al-Hadid [57]:20 with the term *tafakhur*, which indicates the meaning of mutual self-glorification.

Unlike *fakhr*, the concept of *takabbur* encompasses a broader range of lexical forms. The root ك ب ر (*k-b-r*) occurs in various derivative forms throughout the Qur'an. However, not all occurrences of this root can be directly counted as verses concerning arrogance, because some of its usages convey meanings such as "great," "greater," "to

magnify," or other meanings unrelated to arrogance. In the context of arrogance, the Qur'an employs several related lexical forms, including takabbara/yatakabbaru, istakbara/yastakbiru, mutakabbir, mustakbir, kibr, and istikbar.

These lexical forms can be found in various verses, including QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:34, QS. Al-A'raf [7]:13 and 146, QS. Al-Furqan [25]:21, QS. Al-Qashash [28]:39, QS. Luqman [31]:7, QS. Ghafir [40]:35 and 60, and QS. Fussilat [41]:15. These verses demonstrate that the discussion of takabbur in the Qur'an is not limited to one or two verses but is dispersed across various contexts, including rejection of Allah's command, rejection of truth, feelings of superiority, and arrogance toward other human beings as well as toward Allah.

Therefore, the verse inventory in this study is not intended to suggest that only a certain number of verses discuss takabbur and fakhr. Rather, the inventory was conducted to map the verses that have lexical or semantic relevance to the two concepts. Based on this mapping, the verses were subsequently selected according to their semantic proximity, context, and relevance to the research focus on arrogance, feelings of superiority, self-glorification, and pride in possessions and blessings.

From all the identified verses, this study selected four verses as the main verses, namely QS. Luqman [31]:18, QS. An-Nisa' [4]:36, QS. Al-Hadid [57]:23, and QS. Al-Qashash [28]:76. The selection of these four verses was based on the consideration that they have the most direct relevance to the research focus and provide an illustration of the characteristics of *takabbur* and *fakhr* within the context of this study.

Other verses that have lexical or semantic relevance were retained as part of the thematic mapping process and as supporting material in the analysis. Thus, the selection of four verses in this study does not mean that only four Qur'anic verses are related to *takabbur* and *fakhr*. Rather, these four verses are positioned as the main verses based on their semantic and contextual relevance to the research focus.

Table 1. Inventory of Qur'anic Verses Related to *Takabbur* and *Fakhr*

No.	Concept	Verse	Term/Keyword	Meaning/Description
1	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 34	أَسْتَكْبَرُ	The arrogance of Iblis and his rejection of Allah's command.
2	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 13	أَسْتَكْبَرُ	Arrogance and rejection of the truth.
3	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 172	أَسْتَكْبَرُ	Arrogance in the relationship between human beings and Allah.
4	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. Luqman [31]: 18	مُخْتَالٍ	Prohibition against behaving arrogantly and boasting.
5	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 23	مُخْتَالٍ	Prohibition against arrogance and boasting about one's possessions.
6	<i>Fakhr</i>	QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 36	فُخُورًا	Prohibition against boasting.
7	<i>Fakhr</i>	QS. Hud [11]: 10	فُخُورُ	An attitude of boasting after obtaining prosperity.
8	<i>Fakhr</i>	QS. Luqman [31]: 18	فُخُورٍ	Prohibition against boasting.
9	<i>Fakhr</i>	QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 20	تَفَاخُرُ	Mutual boasting in worldly life.
10	<i>Fakhr</i>	QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 23	فُخُورٍ	Prohibition against boasting about what one has acquired.

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the analysis of Qur'anic terms and verse contexts.

Based on this inventory, it can be seen that verses related to the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* are dispersed across various lexical forms and contexts of discussion. Therefore, this study does not limit the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* to only four verses. The identified verses are used as part of the thematic mapping process and as supporting material for understanding the concepts under investigation.

Subsequently, this study selected four verses as the main verses to be analyzed in depth using Tafsir Al-Maraghi. The selection was based on the relevance of the meanings and contexts of the verses to the research focus, particularly regarding arrogance, feelings of superiority, self-glorification, and the tendency to display personal advantages in social life. Thus, the four main verses are not intended to represent all Qur'anic verses discussing *takabbur* and *fakhr*, but rather constitute the verses selected as the primary focus of the analysis in this study.

Table 2. Main Verses Analyzed for *Takabbur* and *Fakhr*

No	Main Concept	Qur'anic Verse	Indikator Teks Utama
1.	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. Luqman [31]: 18	Prohibition against turning one's face away (<i>tusha'ir</i>) and walking arrogantly (<i>marahan</i>).
2.	<i>Takabbur</i>	QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 36	Prohibition against being arrogant (<i>mukhtalan</i>) and boastful (<i>fakhura</i>).

- | | | | |
|----|-------|----------------------------|--|
| 3. | Fakhr | QS. Al-Hadid [57]:
23 | Prohibition against rejoicing excessively (tafrahu) over what has been given by him. |
| 4. | Fakhr | QS. Al-Qashash
[28]: 76 | Prohibition against exulting/boasting over wealth (la tafrah), as demonstrated by Qarun. |

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the inventory and thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses.

Characteristics of *Takabbur* According to *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*

Ahmad Mustafa Al-Maraghi, in his work (Al-Maraghi, 1946). provides an in-depth explanation of the characteristics of takabbur when interpreting QS. Luqman [31]:18 and QS. An-Nisa' [4]:36.

Manifestation of Physical Arrogance:(Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains that the phrase *wa la tusha'ir khaddaka li al-nas* in QS. Luqman [31]:18 refers to the act of turning one's face away from others because of looking down on them and considering oneself superior. Linguistically, (Al-Maraghi, 1946). relates this expression to the condition of *sa'ar*, a disease affecting camels that causes the neck to become stiff and inclined to one side.

The Tendency to Belittle Others: (Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains that the attitude of takabbur is manifested in walking arrogantly (*marahan*) and viewing others as inferior to oneself. Based on this interpretation, this study identifies the tendency to belittle others as one of the characteristics of takabbur. Within the context of this analysis, such a tendency may have implications for the disruption of healthy and egalitarian social relationships.

The Attitude of Considering Oneself Superior: In his interpretation of QS. An-Nisa' [4]:36, (Al-Maraghi, 1946). interprets *mukhtalan* as a person who is deceived by the image of his own greatness (*mutakhayyil*). This interpretation indicates an attitude of considering oneself superior or more honorable than others. In this study, this finding is understood as one aspect associated with the internal dimension of *takabbur*.
 Rejection of Truth: (Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains that one form of arrogance is associated with an unwillingness to accept the truth from someone who is considered inferior. This interpretation indicates that *takabbur* is not only related to how a person perceives oneself but also to one's attitude toward accepting the truth.

Characteristics of *Fakhr* According to *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*

While takabbur is more oriented toward feelings of superiority, the concept of fakhr or fakhur is associated with the tendency to boast about oneself and highlight one's possessions or advantages. Based on QS. Al-Hadid [57]:23 and QS. Al-Qashash [28]:76,(Al-Maraghi, 1946). provides explanations that serve as the basis for identifying the characteristics of fakhr in this study as follows.

Boasting and Repeatedly Mentioning One's Advantages: (Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains the meaning of *fakhr* as a tendency to boast about and repeatedly mention the advantages one possesses. In this study, this interpretation is analyzed as a form of self-pride that can be manifested through the representation of one's advantages before others.

Attachment to Material Possessions: In his interpretation of QS. Al-Hadid [57]:23 (li kayla ta'saw 'ala ma fataakum...), (Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains that a person may experience excessive sadness when losing something and excessive joy when obtaining something. This interpretation indicates an emotional attachment to the acquisition and loss of material possessions that is associated with the tendency toward *fakhr*.

Pride in the Possession of Wealth: In his interpretation of QS. Al-Qashash [28]:76 concerning the story of Qarun, (Al-Maraghi, 1946). emphasizes the danger of *farah* (excessive joy). In this study, the characteristic of *fakhr* is understood through the behavior of accumulating wealth, displaying it publicly (*fi zinatih*), and claiming that such success was obtained "solely because of the knowledge I possess" ('ala 'ilmin 'indi).

The Use of Wealth as a Means of Self-Glorification: (Al-Maraghi, 1946) interpretation of the story of Qarun indicates that wealth can become a source of excessive pride when a person uses it as a basis for boasting before others. In this study, this finding is understood as a tendency to use material possessions as a means of constructing social status and self-pride.

Based on the analysis of the relevant verses and the interpretation presented in *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, this study identifies several characteristics associated with the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr*. *Takabbur* is associated with arrogance, feelings of superiority, the tendency to belittle others, and rejection of those considered inferior. Meanwhile, *fakhr* is associated with the tendency to boast about and highlight one's advantages, particularly in terms of possessions and achievements.

Based on these findings, this study subsequently develops an interpretive synthesis that distinguishes *takabbur* as a tendency of inner attitude associated with feelings of superiority, and *fakhr* as a tendency to actualize pride through expression or behavior. This distinction is a result of the interpretive construction developed in this study to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between the two concepts and the phenomenon of *flexing* on social media, rather than a terminological categorization explicitly established by Al-Maraghi.

Discussion

Relevance of *Takabbur* Characteristics to the Phenomenon of *Flexing*

When applied to the contemporary digital environment, the characteristics of *takabbur* described by (Al-Maraghi, 1946). can be used to examine the psychological motives underlying certain practices of *flexing*. (Al-Maraghi, 1946). explains that

takabbur begins with the act of turning one's face away (*tusha'ir*) as a result of looking down on others. In the context of social media, this characteristic can be observed in forms of self-presentation accompanied by attempts to demonstrate superiority, such as displaying luxury while belittling certain social groups or presenting narratives that are discriminatory toward others.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research of (Fadli, 2025). which concludes that the phenomenon of flexing on social media is not only related to digital communication behavior but also reflects deviations from Qur'anic ethical values, particularly the moral message contained in QS. Luqman [31]:18-19 concerning the prohibition of arrogance and conceit. The study emphasizes that social media should serve as a means of disseminating virtuous values rather than as a space for displaying personal superiority. Nevertheless, the present study differs fundamentally in that it does not merely examine the prohibition of arrogance through Abdullah Saeed's contextual interpretation approach, but also analyzes the concept of takabbur based on (Al-Maraghi, 1946). and relates it to the concept of fakhr in order to develop a Qur'anic Ethical Framework as an ethical model for self-presentation on social media.

The *mutakhayyil* ego (being deceived by the image of one's own greatness) described by (Al-Maraghi, 1946). is also relevant to the theory of *social comparison* in digital communication studies. Individuals who engage in *flexing* tend to construct selective digital realities in order to create an impression of having a higher social position than others (Mujiwati, Y. & Hanifah, H.F., 2026). This condition may contribute to various psychosocial effects, such as a tendency toward social comparison, the emergence of social envy, and increased psychological pressure (*digital anxiety*) among social media users who are continuously exposed to similar content (Festinger, L., 1954). Thus, *takabbur* from the perspective of (Al-Maraghi, 1946). is not merely understood as an issue of individual morality but also has broader implications for the quality of social interaction in digital spaces.

Relevance of *Fakhr* Characteristics to the Phenomenon of *Flexing*

The phenomenon of flexing may be related to the characteristics of fakhr as explained in Tafsir Al-Maraghi, particularly when the representation of possessions or achievements is excessive and directed toward self-display (Kholiska, R.K. et al., 2026). The exhibition of blessings through displays of wealth, such as unboxing luxury goods, showing bank account balances, or displaying private jets, may resemble the behavioral pattern of Qarun described in QS. Al-Qashash [28]:76, particularly when luxury is displayed excessively as a means of emphasizing social status and self-pride. However, similarities in the form of content do not automatically determine the ethical status of a post. Its evaluation still needs to consider the motive, context, purpose, and impact of the self-representation.

In (Al-Maraghi, 1946). interpretation, the characteristic of fakhr is associated with the tendency to boast about what one possesses and to seek recognition through one's

advantages. In the context of social media, this tendency may be transformed into the pursuit of validation through public responses, such as the number of likes, views, shares, and comments. When the desire to obtain praise becomes the primary purpose of displaying wealth or achievements, such self-representation may indicate a tendency toward fakhr. Thus, the relationship between fakhr and flexing in this study is understood as an interpretive contextualization rather than a direct equation between the two.

Digital Self-Presentation from a Critical Perspective

Are all forms of self-presentation on social media automatically categorized as reprehensible flexing? Based on the analysis of (Al-Maraghi, 1946). and the interpretive synthesis developed in this study, there is room to distinguish between self-representation based on gratitude and self-representation driven by arrogance or excessive pride. Islam does not prohibit people from displaying their blessings; however, the concept of tahadduth bi al-ni'mah used in this study needs to be positioned as an interpretive framework supported by Qur'anic verses and should not be presented as a category explicitly formulated by Al-Maraghi in his discussion of takabbur and fakhr.

In this study, one of the distinguishing points is the internal motive (intention) and the manner of presentation (content). When a user uploads an academic achievement or business success with the intention of providing motivation, education, creating employment opportunities, or expressing gratitude, without any tendency to belittle others (takabbur) or demand praise (fakhr), such a post should not automatically be categorized as problematic flexing. Conversely, when self-representation is directed toward emphasizing status, seeking recognition, or belittling others, it may indicate tendencies associated with the characteristics of takabbur and fakhr identified through the analysis in this study.

Thus, within the framework of this study, a post should not be categorized as problematic flexing solely based on the form of its content. Rather, its motive, manner of presentation, context, purpose, and impact need to be taken into consideration.

Qur'anic Ethical Framework of Social Media Self-Presentation

Self-Control Strategies in Digital Self-Presentation

The Qur'anic ethical framework in this study is not only used to identify tendencies toward *takabbur* and *fakhr*, but can also serve as a reflective guideline for social media users to control their behavior before uploading content. This process of self-control involves evaluating several aspects, namely motive or intention, purpose, content, manner of presentation, context, and potential impact.

First, users need to evaluate their intentions before uploading content. Users should ask themselves whether the content is created to provide information, education, motivation, or serve professional purposes, or whether it is instead driven by a desire to display personal advantages and gain recognition from others.

Second, users need to control the manner in which content is presented. Sharing achievements, wealth, or success does not automatically constitute *takabbur* or *fakhr*. However, when such presentation is accompanied by an emphasis on status, excessive pride, or the belittling of others, it may indicate tendencies relevant to the characteristics of *takabbur* and *fakhr*.

Third, users need to evaluate the social impact of the content they intend to publish. Content that has the potential to reinforce a culture of social comparison, demean certain groups, or encourage excessive validation-seeking should be reconsidered before publication.

Thus, self-control in the use of social media can be practiced through the principle of “**pause-evaluate-control-then post.**” This principle places intention, content, manner of presentation, context, and impact as ethical filters before engaging in self-presentation in digital spaces. Through this process, users are expected to be able to distinguish between self-expression with positive purposes and self-presentation that has the potential to lead to *takabbur* and *fakhr*.

As a novel contribution of this study, a **Qur'anic Ethical Framework** is formulated based on an interpretive synthesis of the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in (Al-Maraghi, 1946). and their relevance to the phenomenon of *self-presentation* on social media. This framework is used to map ethical tendencies in digital self-presentation activities by considering motive or intention, the form of representation, context, and manner of presentation. Thus, a post is not automatically categorized as *takabbur* or *fakhr* solely based on the form of its content, but should be evaluated based on the moral characteristics accompanying the representation.

Table of Ethical Tendencies Matrix in a Research Framework

Activity Type			Main Motive/Intention	Content Presentation	Content Ethics Status Trends
Upload Business	Sales /		Business, making a living, product education	Product specifications, testimonials, objective price	Functional and beneficial self-representation, as long as it is not accompanied by fraud, arrogance, or manipulation
Upload Curry's	Prestacy /		Motivating, <i>professional personal branding</i>	The process of struggle, the result of hard work, education	Acceptable self-representation, as long as it is not directed to demean or boast excessively
Upload of Gratitude	Expressions		Acknowledgment of the mercy of Allah SWT	Narrative based on hamdalah, not comparing	Acceptable, as long as it does not contain elements of <i>takabbur/fakhr</i>

Upload to Praise	Seeking validation, thirst for public flattery	Content focuses on self-aggrandizement intensely	Potentially contains elements of <i>Fakhr</i>
Upload Wealth	Affirming high social class status	Showing off wealth, showing excess luxury	Potentially containing elements of <i>fakhr</i> if accompanied by self-pride and excessive status prominence
Activity Type	Main Motive/Intention	Content Presentation	Content Ethics Status Trends
Upload Sales / Business	Business, making a living, product education	Product specifications, testimonials, objective price	Functional and beneficial self-representation, as long as it is not accompanied by fraud, arrogance, or manipulation
Upload Prestacy / Curry's	Motivating, <i>professional personal branding</i>	The process of struggle, the result of hard work, education	Acceptable self-representation, as long as it is not directed to demean or boast excessively
Upload Expressions of Gratitude	Acknowledgment of the mercy of Allah SWT	Narrative based on hamdalah, not comparing	Acceptable, as long as it does not contain elements of takabbur/ <i>fakhr</i>
Upload to Praise	Seeking validation, thirst for public flattery	Content focuses on self-aggrandizement intensely	Potentially contains elements of <i>Fakhr</i>
Upload Wealth	Affirming high social class status	Showing off wealth, showing excess luxury	Potentially containing elements of <i>fakhr</i> if accompanied by self-pride and excessive status prominence
Insulting/Demeaning Uploads	Showing superiority, underestimating netizens	Circus content, comparing economic castes	Potentially reflecting <i>takabbur</i> when there is an attitude of underestimation and feeling superior to others

Digital Ethical Cognitive Flow Model

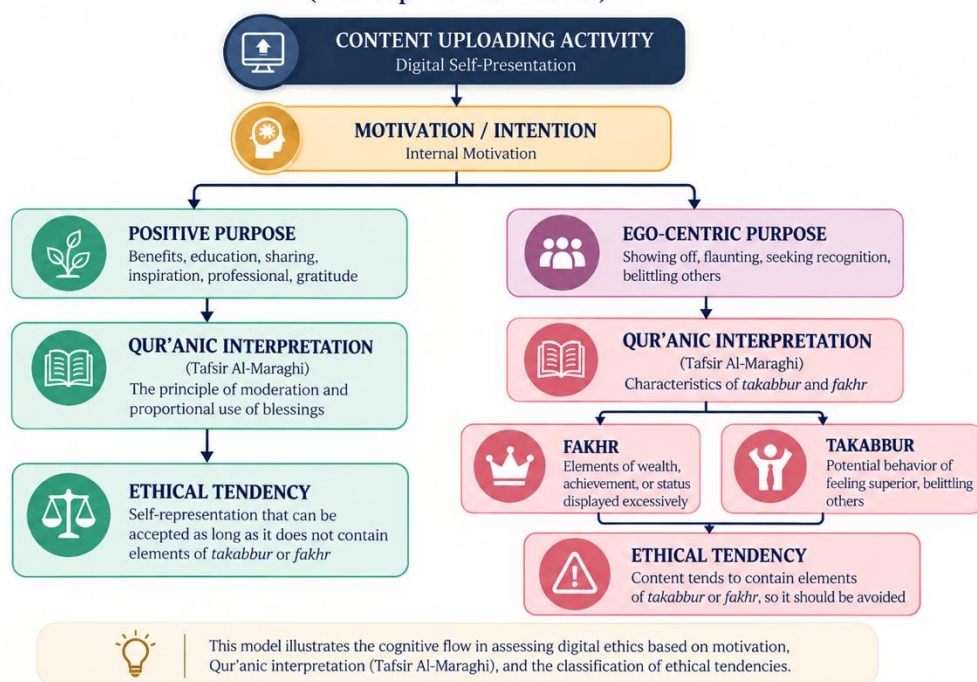
The following model of the cognitive flow of digital ethics is a conceptual construction of the researcher which is compiled based on the synthesis of the results of the interpretation of Tafsir Al-Maraghi on the concepts of takabbur and fakhr as well as the results of contextualization with the phenomenon of self-representation on social media. This model illustrates that content uploading activities cannot be

assessed solely based on the form of content, but needs to be seen through motivation or intention, purpose, form of presentation, context, and impact.

The flow of the model starts from the activity of uploading content as a form of digital self-representation, then is directed to the stage of identifying motivation or intention. In the next stage, the user can evaluate the purpose of the upload. If the purpose and presentation are positive and do not contain a tendency to demean or boast excessively, then the content can be understood as a self-representation that does not show the characteristics of takabbur and fakhr. On the other hand, if there is a tendency to show superiority, demean others, or boast excessively of material and achievements, then the content is related to the characteristics of takabbur and fakhr as the results of the research analysis.

This model is used as a conceptual tool to demonstrate the process of ethical screening before a person performs self-representation in the digital space.

✦ Model of the Cognitive Flow of Digital Ethics ✦ (Conceptual Flowchart)



Source: The researcher's conceptual construction is based on the synthesis of Tafsir Al-Maraghi and the results of the research analysis.

Comparison with Previous Research

This research places itself in the discourse on digital ethics and the actualization of Qur'anic values on social media phenomena through dialogue with a number of previous studies. The findings of this study have similarities with the research (Mardiah Anisatul, 2022) and (khairatul, 2023) which concludes that the phenomenon of flexing is related to riya' behavior and consumptive culture that is contrary to Islamic moral values. Both studies show that social media can be a space for the reproduction of show-off behavior oriented towards the search for social recognition.

On the other hand, this research is also related to the research (Fadli, 2025) which examines the ethics of social media through Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Tafsir approach to QS. Luqman [31]: 18–19. The research emphasizes that the values of simplicity, humility, and Qur'anic communication ethics can be a solution to the phenomenon of flexing on social media. However, the focus of (Fadli, 2025). research is more directed at the contextual reinterpretation of verses through Abdullah Saeed's approach, so his analysis has not specifically elaborated on the conceptual relationship between *takabbur* and *fakhr* as two different moral categories.

This research is also related to the research (khairatul, 2023) which examines the phenomenon of flexing on social media from the perspective of the Qur'an with the maudhu'i approach. The study mapped a number of Qur'anic concepts that are related to the phenomenon of flexing, including *riya'*, *takabbur*, *'ujub*, *hubb al-dunya*, *israf*, *tabdhir*, and *takatsur*. In contrast to this study, this study focuses on the concept of *takabbur* and *fakhr* through the study of Tafsir Al-Maraghi, then synthesizes the two concepts in relation to the phenomenon of flexing on social media.

Based on this comparison, this study offers a new contribution in the form of the formulation of the Qur'anic Ethical Framework, which is built through an interpretive synthesis of the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* based on (Al-Maraghi, 1946). This conceptual framework not only explains the phenomenon of *flexing* from the perspective of interpretation, but also offers ethical parameters for reading self-representation on social media by considering motives or intentions, the form of content, context, goals, and impacts. Thus, a form of self-representation is not automatically categorized as *takabbur* or *fakhr* only based on the appearance of its content, but needs to be analyzed based on the moral character that accompanies it.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in Tafsir Al-Maraghi show moral characters that are relevant to reading the phenomenon of flexing on social media. *Takabbur* in Al-Maraghi's interpretation is related to the attitude of feeling superior, underestimating others, and the tendency to display self-superiority, while *fakhr* is related to excessive self-pride towards favors, possessions, or achievements. Both concepts are related to the phenomenon of flexing when self-representation not only functions as a conveyance of information, but is also accompanied by a tendency to self-prominence, excessive pride, or condescension towards others.

This study also shows that the phenomenon of flexing cannot be judged solely based on the form or type of content uploaded. Representations of wealth, achievements, careers, or business activities cannot automatically be categorized as *takabbur* or *fakhr*. Ethical judgment needs to consider motives or intentions, goals, context, and the way the content is presented. Thus, the moral character that accompanies a self-representation is an important aspect in determining its relevance to the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr*.

As a contribution to the research, this study formulates the *Qur'anic Ethical Framework* which can be used as a conceptual framework to read the ethics of self-representation on social media based on an interpretive synthesis of the concepts of *takabbur* and *fakhr* in *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*. The framework places motives or intentions, forms of representation, context, purpose, and way of presentation as aspects that need to be considered in assessing the ethical tendencies of content. This research thus expands the study of thematic interpretation by connecting the concept of morality of the Qur'an with the issue of self-representation in contemporary digital space.

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Ethical Statement

Ethical approval was not required for this study because it was based exclusively on library research and textual analysis of the Qur'an, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, and other published scholarly sources. The study did not involve human participants, personal data, or animal subjects.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Statement

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI) tools only for limited language-editing purposes, including improving grammatical accuracy, clarity, and readability of the manuscript. AI was not used to select Qur'anic verses, conduct thematic interpretation, analyze *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, formulate the *Qur'anic Ethical Framework*, or generate the research findings and conclusions. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

Author Contributions

Alki Nadia contributed to the conceptualization, literature investigation, data collection, thematic analysis, interpretation, and preparation of the original manuscript. Anisatul Fikriyah Aprilianti contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, validation of the interpretation, literature review, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the formulation of the *Qur'anic Ethical Framework*, reviewed the final manuscript, and approved the version for publication.

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The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct, interpretation, or publication of this study.

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