

## A Critique of Cancel Culture from a Hadith Perspective: A Study of Islamic Social Ethics in the Digital Era

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### Abstract

The phenomenon of *cancel culture* reflects a disruption of social control mechanisms, shifting from a deliberative process of clarification to instantaneous mass judgement that often disregards the principles of procedural justice and moral proportionality. This study responds to the dominance of sociological analyses by filling the gap in normative Islamic ethical perspectives for examining this phenomenon more comprehensively. Using a qualitative approach through non-participatory observation of the Ahmad Sahroni case and library research on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, this study compares the dynamics of digital interaction with prophetic values that constitute the foundations of Islamic social ethics. The findings indicate that the reactive nature of cancel culture contradicts the Islamic principle of gradualism; conversely, the Hadith tradition offers *tabayyun* (verification), *satr al-'uyūb* (concealing faults), and *islāh* (reconciliation) as constructive ethical antitheses. The study concludes with the urgency of shifting from a punitive culture to a culture of ethical improvement to cultivate a more civilized, inclusive, and restorative digital public sphere.

**Keywords:** *Cancel Culture; Islamic Social Ethics; Hadith of the Prophet; Islāh; Tabayyun*

### Abstrak

Fenomena *cancel culture* merefleksikan disrupsi mekanisme kontrol sosial dari klarifikasi yang seharusnya deliberatif menuju penghakiman massa instan yang sering kali mengabaikan asa keadilan prosedural serta proporsional moral. Penelitian ini merespon dominasi kajian sosiologis dengan mengisi kekosongan perspektif etika Islam normatif dalam membedah fenomena tersebut secara lebih komprehensif. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui observasi non-partisipatif pada kasus Ahmad Sahroni dan studi pustaka (library research) terhadap Sunan Abi Daud, studi ini mengomparasikan dinamika interaksi digital dengan nilai-nilai profetik yang mnejadi fondasi etika sosial Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa reaktivitas *cancel culture* bertentangan dengan prinsip gradualisme Islam; sebaliknya, hadis menawarkan nilai *tabayyun* (verifikasi), *satr al-'uyūb* (menutup aib), dan *islāh* (rekonsiliasi) sebagai antitesis etis yang konstruktif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan urgensi transformasi paradigma dari budaya penghukuman menuju budaya perbaikan untuk mewujudkan ruang publik digital yang lebih beradab, inklusif dan restoratif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Cancel Culture; Etika Sosial Islam; Hadis Nabi; Islāh; Tabayyun*

## INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans have a fundamental need to interact and engage with their surrounding environment. To fulfill this need, communication between individuals becomes highly crucial. In the past, communication was carried out face-to-face through spoken language. However, with the rapid advancement of information technology, the ways people interact and socialize have undergone a significant transformation. Today, communication largely takes place through social media platforms. The use of social media among the public continues to increase and has become difficult to restrain. Various effects—both positive and negative—have begun to emerge. One of the negative consequences is the rise of mass boycotts, commonly known as cancel culture.

The phenomenon of *cancel culture* has become an integral part of contemporary social dynamics, particularly within digital societies connected through social media. The term refers to collective public actions aimed at rejecting, boycotting, or withdrawing support from individuals—whether public figures or ordinary citizens—who are perceived to have violated social norms, ethics, or public morality.<sup>1</sup> Such actions often unfold openly, rapidly, and massively across digital platforms, turning the virtual space into an arena of public judgement that is not always grounded in verified data or an objective process of clarification.

In its early emergence, cancel culture was viewed as a new form of social control that represented the public's capacity to respond to inequality or violations of social norms. However, as it developed, this phenomenon began to exhibit troubling tendencies, including hasty judgement, the absence of mechanisms for forgiveness, and the limited availability of avenues for rehabilitation for individuals who have erred. The rapid flow of information—often unverified—has turned social media into a space where the public simultaneously assumes the roles of judge, prosecutor, and executor.<sup>2</sup> This complexity has become even more powerful in the era of society 5.0 where the integration of technology and humanity is not always accompanied by a strengthened ethical awareness.

Cancel culture affects not only an individual's reputation but also generates profound psychological and social consequences. The fear of expressing opinions, the pressure to conform to the majority view, and the loss of opportunities for personal reform have become deeply embedded realities within the contemporary digital ecosystem. The shift from a culture of

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<sup>1</sup> Novita Ika Purnamasari, "Cancel Culture: Dilema Ruang Publik Dan Kuasa Netizen," *Mediakom : Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 6, no. 2 (2022): 140.

<sup>2</sup> Stella Jehovani Ratna Mourina, Triyono Lukmanto, and Agus Naryoso, "Cancel Culture Sebagai Respon Masyarakat Terhadap Pelaku Kasus Perselingkuhan: Kajian Pada Akun Instagram @Arawindak" 11, no. 1 (2019).

clarification to a culture of cancellation signals the emergence of an ethical crisis in responding to mistakes and differences. This phenomenon simultaneously illustrates how the public sphere has experienced an erosion of the values of *tabayyun* (information verification) and *musyawarah* as well as *nashihah* (private admonition). Yet, from the perspective of Islamic social ethics, the principles of *tabayyun* and *nashihah* should constitute the primary foundation for addressing conflicts and errors. Therefore, cancel culture not only creates social pressure but also produces an atmosphere of intolerance that stands in contrast to the dialogical and reconciliatory ethical paradigm upheld within the Islamic scholarly tradition.

The Islamic scholarly tradition has long provided a set of proportional social-ethical principles for responding to individual misconduct or error. Numerous hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) contain moral guidelines that emphasize the urgency of *tabayyun* as a process of information verification, the practice of *nashihah* delivered privately and oriented toward constructive correction, as well as prohibitions against *ghibah*, *tajassus*, and forms of judgement that undermine human dignity.<sup>3</sup> This corpus of hadiths not only offers normative principles but also provides an ethical framework that remains relevant for managing social relations in contemporary society. These values embody an orientation toward protecting individual dignity while also serving as mechanisms for preventing social harm, without closing off opportunities for rehabilitation and reconciliation. Islamic social ethics present a paradigm that balances moral correction with the possibility of improvement—a principle that stands in stark contrast to the pattern of instantaneous cancellation that characterizes cancel culture.

Studies on cancel culture have been widely conducted by previous researchers, indicating substantial academic attention to this phenomenon. For example, the study by Nadia Muharman and her colleagues<sup>4</sup> highlights cancel culture as a new form of social control in digital spaces, particularly on Twitter. Their research demonstrates that the public collectively assumes the role of norm enforcer through digital social sanctions, which may result in the ostracization or career cancellation of an individual. However, as emphasized in a critical study by Puput Tripeni Juniman,<sup>5</sup> this practice creates a serious dilemma between social control and the threat to

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<sup>3</sup> Haidi Hajar Widagdo, “Etika Sosial Dalam Islam (Tinjauan Atas Relasi Nabi Dengan Pihak Non-Muslim),” *Jurnal Akademia* 3, no. 1 (2023): 19.

<sup>4</sup> Nadia Muharman et al., “Cancel Culture Sebagai Bentuk Kontrol Sosial Di Twitter,” *Jurnal Media Dan Komunikasi* 3, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>5</sup> Puput Tripeni Juniman, “Analisis Kritis Fenomena Cancel Culture Dan Ancaman Terhadap Kebebasan Berekspresi,” *Al-Adabiya: Jurnal Kebudayaan Dan Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (2023).

freedom of expression. She warns that public judgement carried out openly can generate fear and restrict the space for healthy dialogue.

In media-based studies, such as the one conducted by Ade Lola Edria et, al.,<sup>6</sup> it is shown that social media accounts like @Areajulid play a significant role in constructing public opinion that ultimately leads to the cancellation of particular figures. This phenomenon is further reinforced by the findings of Khozinatul Asrori, which reveal that cancel culture is often accompanied by patterns of mob mentality, whereby social sanctions are imposed not based on reason or ethical deliberation, but rather driven by emotional impulses and sheer viral momentum. This situation is exacerbated by the weakening of *tabayyun*, or clarification, which should serve as the foundation for forming fair judgements about others.

Furthermore, the study by Liza Dwi Eftiza et.al.,<sup>7</sup> shows that cancel culture has entered the daily lives of students and influences the way they communicate, think critically, and respond to conflict. Fear of expressing differing opinions has become one of the tangible impacts of this collective judgement culture. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Melisa Altamira and Satwika Movementi<sup>8</sup> shows that in Indonesia, cancel culture has rapidly expanded in the post-pandemic period, in tandem with increased social media consumption, and tends to affect urban communities with high levels of digital literacy. On a broader level, Mardeson and Mardesci<sup>9</sup> emphasize that this phenomenon is frequently accompanied by a spirit of “following the crowd” or mob mentality, often without valid information, which ultimately harms the reputation and psychological well-being of its victims.

From the literature, it is evident that most approaches to cancel culture remain focused on sociological, psychological, and communicative dimensions. Although critiques of cancel culture have been widely expressed, there is still a notable gap in studies that examine this phenomenon through the lens of Islamic social ethics—particularly those grounded in hadiths that emphasize the principles of *tabayyun*, *nashibah*, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This gap underscores the need

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<sup>6</sup> Ade Lola Edria et al., “Fenomena Cancel Culture Oleh Pengguna Twitter Dalam Unggahan Akun @Areajulid,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Wabana Pendidikan*, Oktober 9, no. 20 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Liza Dwi Eftiza Khairunniza, Bunyamin Maftuh, and Elly Malihah Setiadi, “Memahami Hubungan Antara Fenomena Cancel Culture Dan Pembentukan Keterampilan Resolusi Konflik Dalam Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan (Media Sosial Sebagai Arena Konflik),” *Kolaborasi Resolusi Konflik* 5 (2023).

<sup>8</sup> Melisa Bunga Altamira and Satwika Gemola Movementi, “Fenomena Cancel Culture Di Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Literatur,” *Jurnal Vokasi Indonesia* 10, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>9</sup> Epsilody Mardeson and Hermiza Mardesci, “Fenomena Boikot Massal (Cancel Culture) Di Media Sosial,” *Jurnal Riset Indragiri* 1, no. 3 (2022).

for a normative and ethical analysis capable of offering constructive alternatives in responding to a destructive culture of cancellation.

This study specifically aims to offer a reinterpretation of cancel culture through the lens of Islamic social ethics, as reflected in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) concerning interpersonal relations—particularly within the context of companionship, community interactions, and neighbourly life. Through an examination of relevant hadiths, this research seeks to construct an ethical critique of the destructive aspects of cancel culture and to formulate more humanistic, just, and civilized corrective principles. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to contribute a foundation that is not only normative for restructuring the culture of social criticism within contemporary Muslim communities but also to provide an ethical framework that remains relevant for managing social relations in contemporary society.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. The approach adopted is socio-religious in nature, positioning Islamic teachings not merely as theological doctrines but also as a living social value system that governs communal behaviour. This approach enables a critical analysis of the phenomenon of cancel culture through the lens of Islamic social ethics, as reflected in the teachings and exemplary conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Data were collected through non-participatory observation and library research. The non-participatory observation was conducted to examine public responses to Ahmad Sahroni's statement regarding parties allegedly seeking to dissolve the House of Representatives (DPR). The observation took place on the TikTok platform by analyzing a video uploaded by *tempo.co* that featured the statement. The observation focused on patterns of public judgement, the intensity of criticism, the structure of conversations, and the direction of collective discourse emerging in the comment section. All dynamics of public interaction were systematically documented through digital field notes containing relevant comment excerpts, dominant conversational themes, and patterns of user interaction. In parallel, the library research involved examining authoritative hadith compilations and contemporary literature with thematic relevance, including works from the hadith tradition as well as modern sociology and communication studies.

The primary data of this study consist of public comments on the TikTok platform and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) contained in authoritative hadith collections such as *Sunan Abi Dāwūd*, along with their commentaries, which provide explanations of the social dimensions of the hadiths. The selection of hadiths was based on three main criteria. First, the relevance of the hadiths' social context to Islamic social-ethical values related to interpersonal relations. Second, the degree of authenticity of the hadiths, determined through analyses of the chain of transmission (*sanad*) and textual content (*matan*) in classical literature. Third, the potential of the hadiths to offer a normative foundation for analyzing cancel culture within the context of digital society. While, the secondary data consist of literature on the sociology of religion, scholarly articles on cancel culture, and academic studies on the digital public sphere and media society behaviour, all of which serve to enrich the understanding of the phenomenon and strengthen the interpretive framework.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive–analytical method. The analytical process began with an examination of the public discourse that emerged within the digital conversations surrounding Ahmad Sahroni's statement. This observation aimed to identify the characteristics of cancel culture manifested in the public discourse, particularly the tendency toward emotional reactions and collective judgement without proper clarification. After the observation and documentation stages were completed, the analysis proceeded through three main steps. The first step involved identifying hadiths related to social ethics, especially those addressing proper conduct in interpersonal relations. The second step consisted of contextual interpretation of the selected hadiths by considering their socio-historical background and the circumstances surrounding their emergence. The third step linked the Islamic social-ethical values contained in the hadiths with the findings from the digital observation of cancel culture directed at Ahmad Sahroni.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Dynamics of Cancel Culture as a Mechanism of Collective Punishment in Digital Spaces*

*Cancel culture* is a social phenomenon that has emerged alongside the increasing use of social media as a space for public expression. In this process, communities often engage in moral judgement, condemnation, and even boycotts against individuals or groups perceived to have

violated social norms.<sup>10</sup> These mechanisms of censure typically unfold virally, allowing perceived wrongdoing to be produced and circulated on a massive scale. This phenomenon functions as a form of informal social control that operates without strict regulation, thereby transforming into a mechanism of collective punishment devoid of due process and offering no space for clarification on the part of the targeted individual.

One of the central characteristics of cancel culture is the absence of any formal structure in the process of public judgement.<sup>11</sup> There is no authority that verifies the accuracy of information before symbolic punishment is imposed. The rapid, anonymous, and emotion-driven nature of social media enables users to assume the role of moral authorities without the obligation to examine context. This condition triggers a shift from substantive critique to personal attacks and gives rise to collective behaviours that resemble mob mentality.<sup>12</sup>

This phenomenon is clearly observable in the case of Ahmad Sahroni, who referred to supporters of dissolving the House of Representatives (DPR) as “the dumbest people in the world.” The statement triggered a wave of public condemnation, as observed through non-participatory observation on the TikTok account of *tempo.co*. Public responses did not merely critique his statement but escalated into an intense and emotionally charged form of collective punishment. The digital sphere functioned as an arena for the formation of a homogeneous and high-pressure public opinion. The empirical findings are summarized in the following table:

Analysis Aspects	Key Findings
Patterns of Public Judgement	The pattern of public judgement was harsh and personal. Sahroni and the DPR were labelled “stupid,” “useless,” “a burden on the nation,” “rats,” “thieves of public money,” and various other forms of insult. The attacks targeted not only Sahroni’s political stance but also personal aspects such as his educational background, lifestyle, and even past incidents involving the looting of his house. Attempts to defend Sahroni or the DPR did not survive, as they were immediately met with accusations of being “buzzers” or mocked with dismissive remarks such as “ <i>preect.</i> ”

<sup>10</sup> Muharman et al., “Cancel Culture Sebagai Bentuk Kontrol Sosial Di Twitter,” 125.

<sup>11</sup> Purnamasari, “Cancel Culture: Dilema Ruang Publik Dan Kuasa Netizen,” 138.

<sup>12</sup> Puji Rianto, Khumaid Akhyat Sulkhan, and Nurhana Marantika, “Budaya Pembatalan : Mempromosikan Keadilan Ataupun Penindasan?,” *Ettisal: Journal of Communication* 8, no. 2 (2023): 9.

Intensity of Criticism	The intensity of the criticism was extremely high, approaching a level of 9.5 out of 10. Public critique had transformed into collective anger accompanied by real actions, including the looting of Sahroni’s house, which circulated widely on TikTok. Calls for boycotts, legislative abstention in 2029, and tax refusal became dominant discourses. Aggressive and vulgar language permeated the conversation, revealing a significant escalation of public emotion.
Structure of Conversation	The structure of the conversation developed hierarchically through core comments that received thousands of interactions and became the focal points of discussion. The conversation expanded through chains of homogeneous collective reinforcement, with more than 95% of comments supporting a boycott or delegitimization of the DPR. Sub-threads of ridicule proliferated and drowned out neutral or pro-DPR comments.
Direction of Collective Discourse	Public discourse shifted from anger to coordinated collective action. An informal consensus emerged in favour of legislative abstention in 2029, accompanied by the narrative that the state could function without the DPR. Acts such as damaging ballot papers or marking all candidate options to render the ballot invalid became widely accepted strategies of resistance.

**Tabel 1.** Key Findings from the Non-Participatory Observation of the Ahmad Sahroni Case

These findings indicate that cancel culture operates as a mechanism of social exclusion that eliminates any space for clarification. Public criticism transforms into collective anger that leads to mob mentality, causing the conversation to lose its dialogical dimension.<sup>13</sup> Public judgement unfolds without verification or due process, creating the potential for injustice as well as social and psychological harm for the targeted individual.

Understanding the dynamics of power relations in this phenomenon can be examined through Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The discourse that emerges does not stand alone; rather, it is closely tied to the public’s collective memory of declining trust in political institutions. The aggressive expressions observed reflect the use of language as a tool for constructing a morally superior identity while simultaneously functioning as an instrument of

<sup>13</sup> Jasmin Jannatania et al., “Pengaruh Penggunaan Media Sosial Twitter Terhadap Partisipasi Online Budaya Pengenyahan (Cancel Culture) Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Mutakallimin : Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 5, no. 2 (2022): 128.

delegitimization. These representations construct a hegemonic discourse that gains legitimacy through the sheer volume of interactions. Within the CDA framework, language serves as an instrument for producing power that shapes configurations of social perception.<sup>14</sup> The homogeneity of the discursive structure reinforces power imbalances between the dominant digital community and the individual subjected to public attack.

From a prophetic ethical perspective, these dynamics reveal a lack of balance between moral critique and the principle of justice. Prophetic ethics emphasize verification, caution, and the provision of space for correction, consistent with the principles of *tatsabbut* and the prohibition against exposing people's faults.<sup>15</sup> *Cancel culture* disregards these principles because it is oriented more toward punishment than restoration. judgement based on unverified fragments of content risks becoming a form of collective wrongdoing. Ethical critique should encourage moral transformation, not permanent exclusion.

Islamic social ethics likewise orient public communication toward equitable resolution. Critique that is delivered without emotional restraint can produce social harm greater than the initial wrongdoing that triggered it.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Sahroni, attacks on personal aspects illustrate how cancel culture frequently exceeds acceptable ethical boundaries. The digital sphere—ideally a space for deliberation—shifts into an arena of moral impeachment. This condition necessitates the strengthening of ethical literacy so that practices of injustice are not continually reproduced.

It can be concluded that cancel culture warrants serious attention due to its impact on social relations and political stability. On the one hand, the phenomenon reflects public aspirations for moral accountability. On the other hand, mass punishment without mechanisms of verification can undermine the quality of democratic discourse. The Sahroni case demonstrates how digital discourse can rapidly escalate from critique to disproportionate punishment. If left unchecked, cancel culture carries the potential to generate extreme polarization and erode spaces for rational discussion.

### **The Configuration of Social Values in Hadith and Cancel Culture**

The phenomenon of cancel culture has transformed into an inseparable element of the contemporary digital sociological landscape. Originating as a collective mechanism of social

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<sup>14</sup> Fairclough Norman, "Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language" (New York: United States Of America, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> M Mukharom Ridho, "Etika Profetik Dalam Persepektif Al-Qur'an," *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Al-Qur'an (STIQ) Ijy Karima Karanganyar*, 2011, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Abdullah and Dwi Lin Kahina, "Etika Komunikasi Islam Dalam Media Sosial" 1, no. 2 (2022): 8.

control to demand moral accountability, this cultural practice has undergone a significant paradigm shift—from an advocacy-oriented pursuit of justice to a form of mass punishment devoid of measured procedures. This ambivalence generates complex social consequences, wherein the desire to enforce norms often culminates in the permanent destruction of an individual's reputation. In responding to this disruption of social ethics, a reassessment of the principles of social control within the Islamic tradition becomes necessary. Methodologically, this study employs *matan* analysis (content analysis) combined with a socio-historical approach to interpret the hadith texts in light of contemporary challenges in digital ethics. As the analytical foundation, this study examines the Prophet Muhammad's hadith concerning neighborly conflict, narrated by Abu Hurairah in *Sunan Abi Dawud*:

حَدَّثَنَا الرَّبِيعُ بْنُ نَافِعٍ أَبُو تَوْبَةَ حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ حَيَّانَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَجْلَانَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلًا إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَشْكُو جَارَهُ فَقَالَ اذْهَبْ فَاصْبِرْ فَأَتَاهُ مَرَّتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثًا فَقَالَ اذْهَبْ فَاطْرَحْ مَتَاعَكَ فِي الطَّرِيقِ فَطْرَحَ مَتَاعَهُ فِي الطَّرِيقِ فَجَعَلَ النَّاسُ يَسْأَلُونَهُ فَيُخْبِرُهُمْ خَبْرَهُ فَجَعَلَ النَّاسُ يَلْعَنُونَهُ فَعَلَّ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَفَعَلَ وَفَعَلَ فَجَاءَ إِلَيْهِ جَارُهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ ارْجِعْ لَا تَرَى مِنِّي شَيْئًا تَكْرَهُهُ<sup>17</sup>

*“Narrated to us by Ar-Rabi’ ibn Nafi’ Abu Taubab, who said: Sulaiman ibn Hayyan narrated to us from Muhammad ibn Ajlan, from his father, from Abu Hurairah that a man came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to complain about his neighbor. The Prophet said, “Go and be patient.” The man returned to the Prophet two or three times, and the Prophet then said, “Go, and put all your household belongings out into the street.” The man followed this instruction, placing all his belongings in the street. People asked him about this action, and he explained the situation he had experienced. Thereupon, they invoked a curse upon his neighbor, saying, “May Allah punish him and bring him harm.” Subsequently, the neighbor approached the man and said, “Return home; you will no longer see anything from me that you dislike.”*

Socio-historically, this hadith reflects the social structure of Madinah society, which upheld a form of mechanical solidarity.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the rights of neighboring were not merely spatial ethics but constituted a theological obligation. The narrative demonstrates a configuration of social control that unfolds in gradual stages. In the initial phase of the complaint, the Prophet's directive to “be patient” signifies a mechanism of suspension of judgement, indicating that premature condemnation is discouraged. Islamic ethical teaching prioritizes a persuasive approach grounded in the values of *ṣabr* (patience) and *tabayyūn* (verification), providing the

<sup>17</sup> Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Azdī Al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, 3rd ed. (Bayrut: Dār al-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 1396), 1394.

<sup>18</sup> Burhān ad-Dīn bin Ḥamzah al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥanafī ad-Dimašqī Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Kamāl ad-Dīn bin Aḥmad bin Ḥusayn, *Al-Bayān Wa at-Ta‘rīf Fī Ashbāb Wurūd Al-Ḥadīṡ As-Ṣarīf* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1431).

perpetrator with space for introspection without external pressure. This measured approach stands in sharp contrast to the reactivity characteristic of cancel culture, where collective impulsivity frequently precedes any factual verification (see literature on digital mass impulsivity).

Escalation of action is permitted only when private, conciliatory approaches reach an impasse. The Prophet's instruction to "place the household belongings in the public road" carries a hermeneutical implication of *tashbir*—the public disclosure of wrongdoing—functioning as a legitimate mechanism to expose injustice and demand the restoration of rights. Within the hadith's socio-historical setting, the roadway operates as a public sphere where communal opinion is formed and negotiated. This symbolic act invites communal attention and catalyzes a form of moral intervention. The social sanction expressed through public censure or *la'nah* serves as a measured form of social shock therapy, aimed specifically at halting the wrongdoing rather than permanently foreclosing the wrongdoer's possibility of social rehabilitation.

A comparative analysis between this hadith-based mechanism and contemporary cancel culture reveals a fundamental divergence in their underlying teleology. Social control within the hadith tradition is oriented toward the principles of *al-iṣlāḥ* (rectification) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion), as evidenced by the conclusion of the narrative in which social sanctions cease immediately once the offender repents. In contrast, modern cancel culture tends to operate within a vindictive and repressive logic. The relative permanence of digital records often eradicates opportunities for rehabilitation, transforming a single transgression into an enduring identity label. Whereas Islam envisions public sanction as a corrective measure intended to facilitate social reintegration, cancel culture frequently deploys it as an instrument of exclusion that effectively annihilates one's moral and social character.

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the Prophet's approach further underscores the primacy of *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (the protection of human dignity) and *satr al-'ayūb* (the concealment of faults). Public exposure in the hadith operates symbolically and avoids vulgarity or personal humiliation. This stands in stark contrast to contemporary cancel culture, which frequently violates privacy through practices such as doxxing (the unauthorized disclosure of personal data). The ideal of transparency within cancel culture is often misconstrued as unrestricted informational nakedness, transgressing ethical boundaries and triggering severe psychological trauma as well as unproductive social polarization

The configuration of social control in Islam ultimately offers a paradigm that balances individual rights and collective order. Society is entrusted with the mandate to enact social correction (*amr ma'rūf naby munkar*), yet its implementation must be guided by the principle of justice (*'adl*). The hadith demonstrates that public sanction is not an end, but an exceptional mechanism intended to compel renegotiation toward reconciliation. Accordingly, contemporary manifestations of cancel culture must be deconstructed and realigned with prophetic ethics by promoting a model of criticism that is firm yet humane, one that opens the door to repentance and aims at restoring social harmony.

### **Social and Psychological Impacts of Cancel Culture**

Cancel culture has evolved into a critical dynamic within contemporary social media interactions, as vividly illustrated in the case involving Ahmad Sahroni, a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives. The incident began with Sahroni's controversial statement referring to supporters of the proposal to dissolve the parliament as "the dumbest people on earth," a remark that immediately triggered widespread public backlash. Based on non-participant observation of the TikTok account *tempo.co*, the public response was not limited to discursive correction but escalated into an intense mechanism of collective punishment. The digital sphere—ideally a conduit for civic expression—was transformed into a high-pressure arena producing homogenized opinion streams that cornered the subject. In this regard, the Sahroni case exemplifies how a communication misstep by a public official can incite a destructive snowball effect in the absence of balanced clarification.

Analysis of the conversational structure on social media reveals patterns of judgement that are harsh, personal, and dehumanizing. Commenters labeled Sahroni and the parliamentary institution with pejorative expressions such as "parasite of the nation," "rats," and "state thieves," demonstrating the erosion of boundaries separating substantive criticism from defamatory assault. These verbal attacks extended beyond the political domain to target personal aspects, including Sahroni's educational background and lifestyle—hallmarks of *ad hominem* tendencies typical of cancel culture.<sup>19</sup> Attempts at defense within the comment section were swiftly dismissed with accusations of being "buzzers" or met with derisive mockery, resulting in a *spiral of silence* in which alternative or more objective narratives were drowned out by dominant waves of collective anger.

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<sup>19</sup> Purnamasari, "Cancel Culture: Dilema Ruang Publik Dan Kuasa Netizen."

The intensity of public criticism in this case reached an extreme level, surpassing the limits of digital interaction alone. Empirical findings indicate that online outrage did not remain confined to verbal hostility but manifested in physical action, including the looting of Sahroni's private residence by a crowd. This escalation—from online hate speech to real-world anarchic behavior—demonstrates that cancel culture possesses tangible destructive power over individuals' physical safety and property. The looting incident represents the culmination of eroded social restraint, aggravated by the algorithmic amplification of provocative content.<sup>20</sup> This phenomenon underscores the fragility of the boundary between democratic critique and criminal action within an unregulated digital ecosystem.

Institutionally, the impact of public pressure also materialized in the form of Sahroni's six-month suspension from parliament. Although this sanction may be framed as political accountability, it is inseparable from the overwhelming mass opinion demanding tangible consequences for his controversial statement.<sup>21</sup> Public discourse even escalated into broader delegitimization of the institution itself, with calls for a "Legislative Abstention Movement 2029" and narratives claiming that the state could function without a parliament becoming an informal consensus among netizens. This indicates that an individual controversy can trigger a broader erosion of public trust toward state institutions. In such contexts, cancel culture not only punishes individuals but also undermines the legitimacy of democratic representation.

On the psychological level, the aftermath of the incident appears to have had profound effects on Sahroni. Following the controversy, disciplinary sanction, and looting incident, he withdrew from public visibility and ceased participating in open political activities. His absence from media coverage suggests symptoms of anxiety and deep-seated fear of re-engaging with the public sphere. Such conditions are common among victims of large-scale cyberbullying, who often experience diminished self-worth and a loss of personal security. In this case, cancel culture effectively "shut down" Sahroni's social participation through sustained psychological pressure.<sup>22</sup>

From the explanation above, the Sahroni case demonstrates that cancel culture frequently operates without mechanisms for restoration or proportional justice. Although Sahroni's initial statement was perceived as unethical, the retaliatory responses—in the form of physical anarchy

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<sup>20</sup> Novali Panji Nugroho, "Rumah Ahmad Sahroni Digeruduk Massa: Harta Benda Dijarah Dan Dirusak," *Tempo.co*, 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Purnamasari, "Cancel Culture: Dilema Ruang Publik Dan Kuasa Netizen," 140.

<sup>22</sup> Xin Yuan, "The Psychological Implication of Cancel Culture," *Academic Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (2023): 150.

and total character destruction—contradict fundamental humanistic values and Islamic social ethics. Islam emphasizes *tabayyun* (verification) and *islah* (reform), positioning moral correction as a constructive process rather than punitive annihilation of one’s dignity or psychological well-being. This case thus serves as a critical reminder that the enforcement of social norms in the digital age requires collective maturity to avoid descending into barbaric forms of persecution. A reorientation of public communication ethics is needed to prevent similar social tragedies from recurring.

### **Transforming a Culture of judgement into a Culture of Reform in Islamic Perspective**

In contemporary social dynamics, a culture of judgement has intensified alongside the expanding use of digital technologies and social media. This phenomenon reveals a growing tendency for individuals to conduct moral evaluations publicly and rapidly—often without any process of clarification or effort to understand situational complexity.<sup>23</sup> Such conditions produce a repressive social climate, deepen polarization, and hinder opportunities for personal transformation or moral improvement. Given these destructive consequences, revisiting Islamic Social Ethics—as reflected in the teachings and exemplars of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)—provides an alternative paradigm for addressing social misconduct.

Islam does not disregard the importance of correcting deviant behavior. However, such correction is oriented toward *islah* (reform), not mere punishment. The Prophet’s approach prioritizes cultivating moral awareness, restoring social relationships, and safeguarding individual dignity.<sup>24</sup> These principles not only preserve justice within the community but also strengthen social solidarity and uphold noble human values. Thus, the shift from a culture of judgement to a culture of reform in Islamic perspective rests on core ethical foundations.

One of the central principles in Islam is *tabayyun*—the verification of information before taking action or making judgements. This principle is emphasized in the Qur’anic verse, Surah al-Hujurat (49:6):

*“O believers, if an evildoer brings you any news, verify ‘it’ so you do not harm people unknowingly, becoming regretful for what you have done.”*

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<sup>23</sup> Vincent Adeyemi, “The Psychological Impact of Cancel Culture : Anxiety , Social Isolation , and Self-Censorship,” *Premier Journal Of Psychology*, 2025, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Silvira Hardiyanti et al., “Analisis Sunnah Nabi Muhammad Saw Sebagai Pedoman Etika Dan Moral Bagi Umat Islam,” *Meriva: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (2025): 129.

This principle demands caution to prevent society from engaging in actions that harm others based on ignorance or prejudice. The principle of *tabayyun* has been incorporated into the presumption of innocence within the Indonesian criminal justice system. Culturally, it is reflected in various customary deliberation mechanisms, where clarification is a prerequisite before social sanctions are imposed.

Once the truth is verified through *tabayyun*, the next ethical step is the protection of dignity via *satr al-'uyub*, which entails concealing the faults of others. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ<sup>25</sup>

*“Narrated to us by Abu Bakr ibn Abu Shaybah, who said: Abu Mu’awiyah narrated to us from Al-‘A’masb, from Abu Shalih, from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and in the Hereafter.”*

This principle aims to safeguard personal honor and curb the tendency to publicly shame others. In the Indonesian cultural context, this is echoed in traditional proverbs such as *“buruk muka jangan di khalayak”* (don’t show a bad face publicly), which encourage resolving personal matters privately.

The transition toward reform is conducted through the approach of *nashibah*, meaning advice delivered gently, compassionately, and in a private setting.<sup>26</sup> Numerous hadiths exemplify how the Prophet corrected individuals without embarrassing them publicly. One illustrative case involves a Bedouin man urinating in the mosque, where the Prophet exercised restraint and provided guidance privately afterward. The *nashibah* model emphasizes fostering reflection and repentance rather than open denunciation, which often provokes resistance.

The final pillar is *islāh*, emphasizing that social correction must culminate in restoration and reconciliation. Allah says in Surah An-Nisa (4:128):

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<sup>25</sup> Ibn Mājah Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin Yazīd Al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Arab: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kitāb, 1431), 622.

<sup>26</sup> Hardiyanti et al., “Analisis Sunnah Nabi Muhammad Saw Sebagai Pedoman Etika Dan Moral Bagi Umat Islam,” 132.

*“If a woman fears indifference or neglect from her husband, there is no blame on either of them if they seek ‘fair’ settlement, which is best. Humans are ever inclined to selfishness. But if you are gracious and mindful ‘of Allah’, surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”*

The principle of “fair settlement, which is best” directs society not to stop at identifying wrongdoing, but to move toward constructive efforts to restore social relationships and rehabilitate individuals.<sup>27</sup> In the Indonesian context, the principle of *islāh* is reflected in various customary dispute resolution mechanisms. The restorative justice approach, which has recently begun to be adopted within Indonesia’s judicial system, also aligns with this value of *islāh*.

The configuration of Islamic social ethical values reflects an orientation that rejects instant and public judgement. Values such as *tabayyun* (careful verification of information), *satr al-‘uyūb* (concealment of faults), *naṣīḥah* (providing advice in an appropriate manner), and *islāh* (reconciliation efforts) serve as crucial instruments for building a more just and humane social order. Consequently, Islamic social ethics offers a constructive critique of cancel culture practices that disregard an individual’s right to personal reform. The implementation of these principles in character education, social media regulation, and broader societal praxis constitutes an integral strategy for fostering a society that is just, harmonious, and humane.

Applying these values in the Indonesian context—through national legal instruments as well as the revitalization of local cultural norms—demonstrates their strategic relevance in transforming a culture of judgement into a culture of reform. Integrating *tabayyun* into legal principles, strengthening the culture of *satr al-‘uyūb* in media ethics, revitalizing *naṣīḥah* in social relations, and applying *islāh* in conflict resolution are key strategies to cultivate a just, harmonious, and humane society.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the hadith concerning neighborly conflict, narrated by Abu Hurairah, provides a framework of social control that is gradual, corrective, and oriented toward restoration. Through a hermeneutic and comparative approach, the research illustrates that principles such as *as-ṣabr* (patience), *at-tabayyun* (verification), *satr al-‘uyūb* (concealment of faults), and *al-islāh* (reform) establish social regulatory mechanisms that delay judgement, minimize public

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<sup>27</sup> Muhamad Hasanudin, Lutfan Muntaqo, and Ahsin Wijaya, “Konsep Perdamaian Perspektif Al-Qur’an (Analisis Deskriptif Penafsiran At-Tabari Dan Sayyid Qutb),” *Al-Muntaba: Jurnal Kajian Tafsir Dan Studi Islam* 2, no. 2 (2020): 122.

exposure of faults, and create space for reconciliation. These findings expand the academic discourse on the relationship between prophetic ethics and digital space dynamics, while also offering a theoretical contribution by introducing the Islamic social control paradigm as an alternative to the reactive patterns of public punishment prevalent in contemporary digital culture.

The study's implications include normative relevance for the development of media ethics, the necessity of restorative practices in handling online conflicts, and the potential for formulating digital platform policies that prioritize verification, privacy protection, and reputation rehabilitation. The findings underscore the importance of designing digital governance frameworks that not only curb deviant behavior but also preserve dignity and social cohesion. Future research could deepen the empirical dimension by investigating how Islamic social control principles are applied in real-world social media cases or by developing evaluative models for digital platforms to test the effectiveness of prophetic value-based restorative approaches in mitigating the destructive impacts of cancel culture.

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