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## ETHICS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### Abstrak

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Penelitian ini mengkaji batas etika digital guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di media sosial, dengan fokus pada analisis tegangan antara ruang profesional dan ruang personal dalam ekosistem digital kontemporer. Meskipun lebih dari 76% guru Indonesia telah aktif menggunakan media sosial, regulasi yang mengaturnya masih bersifat pradigital dan tidak operasional; kesenjangan inilah yang menjadi titik tolak penelitian ini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kepustakaan melalui analisis isi tematik terhadap 31 sumber yang dipilih secara sistematis berdasarkan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi yang ketat dari 380 literatur teridentifikasi, penelitian ini menghasilkan tiga temuan utama: (1) ketiadaan panduan operasional yang relevan dengan realitas digital guru saat ini; (2) tipologi pelanggaran etika yang mencakup konten tidak pantas, interaksi tidak profesional dengan siswa, dan penyebaran disinformasi, yang bersumber dari faktor struktural, individual, dan kultural yang saling berinteraksi; (3) tegangan antara kebebasan berekspresi dan tanggung jawab profesi tidak dapat diselesaikan melalui pendekatan regulatif semata, melainkan memerlukan penguatan identitas profesional. Sebagai kontribusi orisinal, artikel ini memperkenalkan Model TAPAK (Tanggung Jawab, Akurasi, Penghormatan, Audiens, Konteks) sebagai kerangka reflektif yang secara eksplisit merespons mekanisme context collapse pada dimensi yang belum diakomodasi dalam model etika digital guru yang ada di dalam maupun di luar negeri.

**Kata Kunci:** etika digital guru, media sosial, batasan profesional-personal, Model TAPAK, kode etik pendidikan, Pendidikan Agama Islam

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### Abstract

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This study examines the boundaries of digital ethics for Islamic Religious Education teachers on social media, focusing on the tension between the professional and personal spheres in the contemporary digital ecosystem. Despite over 76% of Indonesian teachers actively using social media, governing regulations remain pre-digital and lack operational specificity, which represents a research gap that

fundamentally motivates this inquiry. Employing a qualitative library research approach through thematic content analysis of 31 systematically selected sources based on rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria from 380 identified references, this study yields three principal findings: (1) the absence of operationally relevant digital guidelines for teachers; (2) a typology of ethical violations comprising inappropriate content, unprofessional interactions with students, and disinformation dissemination rooted in mutually reinforcing structural, individual, and cultural factors; and (3) the tension between freedom of expression and professional responsibility cannot be resolved through regulatory means alone, but requires the strengthening of professional identity. As an original theoretical contribution, this article introduces the TAPAK Model (Responsibility, Accuracy, Respect, Audience, Context) as a reflective framework that explicitly addresses the context collapse mechanism, a critical dimension consistently overlooked in existing digital ethics models for teachers, both domestically and internationally.

**Keywords:** Teacher Digital Ethics, Social Media, Professional-Personal Boundaries, TAPAK Model, Code Of Ethics In Education, Islamic Religious Education.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed the nature of teacher professionalism. A decade ago, a teacher's personal expressions, political opinions, lifestyle choices, or social commentary remained confined to private, localized settings. Today, a single digital post can instantly reach thousands of audiences, including students, parents, and the broader community, creating an unprecedented and largely ungoverned collision between professional identity and personal freedom. This collision constitutes the central conflict this article addresses: as teachers become involuntary digital public figures, where must the ethical boundary between their professional role and personal life be drawn, and how can that boundary be operationalized in the absence of adequate guidance?

Digital transformation in education extends far beyond classroom technology. It reshapes how teachers are perceived, evaluated, and trusted by society. Data from Hootsuite and We Are Social (2024) indicate that active social media users in Indonesia have reached 139 million, representing approximately 49.9% of the total population. More critically, Sofyan and Albelbisi (2022) demonstrate that Indonesian teachers' adoption of social media accelerated significantly during and after the pandemic, with platform use becoming a structurally embedded feature of professional practice rather than an optional supplement to classroom instruction. These contextual realities reveal a structural reality in which the boundary between "teacher in school" and "teacher in the digital world" has become irrevocably blurred, one that demands ethical frameworks to guide professional conduct in this hybrid space.

The urgency of this issue is substantiated by documented evidence. Between 2019 and 2023, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2023) recorded at least 47 cases involving educators on digital platforms, including inappropriate content, unprofessional interactions with students, and content related to ethnicity, religion, and race. At the international level, Fox and Bird (2017) document that teachers in professional contexts consistently struggle to separate personal and professional identities on social media, with

boundary violations representing one of the most commonly cited triggers for institutional disciplinary review. Critically, these violations continue to multiply precisely in the absence of clear, context-specific operational guidance, creating a regulatory vacuum that transforms individual lapses into systemic risk.

Ironically, while violations multiply, the regulatory framework remains static and pre-digital. The Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics (PGRI, 2013) was formulated before the social media era and provides no specific guidance on digital use. Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 and its amendment through Government Regulation No. 19 of 2017 do not explicitly address teacher conduct in digital spaces. This gap between a dramatically changed reality and a stagnant regulatory framework is not merely an administrative oversight; it is a structural condition that places individual teachers in an ethically ambiguous position without adequate institutional support (Carpenter et al., 2019; Trust et al., 2016).

Prior research on teachers' digital ethics exhibits three significant gaps. First, existing Indonesian studies (Krutka et al., 2017; Carpenter et al., 2019) are descriptive-normative, articulating what ought to be done without offering frameworks that teachers can apply in practice. Second, international studies (Prestridge, 2019; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014) are grounded in Anglo-American individualistic-rights perspectives incompatible with Indonesia's relational educational values. Third, the mechanism of "context collapse" (Boyd, 2014), the structural collapse of audience boundaries on social media, has not been incorporated into any existing digital ethics model for teachers, despite being the most critical mechanism in documented violation cases. This article fills these three gaps by introducing the TAPAK Model as an operationalizable reflective framework that directly addresses the context collapse mechanism.

Based on the above, this article poses three main research questions: (1) What ethical boundaries should teachers adhere to in their social media activities? (2) What forms do ethical violations take, and what structural, individual, and cultural factors drive them? (3) What strategies are most effective for strengthening teachers' digital ethics in the Indonesian context? The objectives are: (1) to critically analyze ethical boundaries from theoretical and regulatory perspectives; (2) to identify forms of violations, their causal factors, and impacts; and (3) to formulate contextually relevant reinforcement strategies, including the TAPAK Model as the article's primary theoretical contribution.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative library research (*kepustakaan*) design using critical thematic content analysis. This methodological choice is appropriate given the research questions, which require systematic synthesis of theoretical concepts, empirical findings, and regulatory texts to construct an analytical argument. As Snyder (2019) notes, the literature review, as a research methodology, is a rigorous scholarly process that, when conducted systematically, produces original theoretical contributions rather than merely summarizing existing knowledge. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) affirm that a systematic literature review constitutes an active process of constructing arguments through the convergence and divergence of existing findings.

The data sources in this study consist of two main categories. Primary sources include regulatory and policy documents: Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008, the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics (PGRI, 2013), and digital ethics guidelines from national and international educational institutions. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles obtained from Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and the SINTA-accredited national journal portal.

Data collection was conducted in three systematic stages. The first stage was identification, involving structured keyword searches such as "teacher ethics social media," "digital identity teacher," "professional boundaries educator," and Indonesian equivalents, which yielded approximately 380 sources. The second stage applied explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria: inclusion criteria comprised (a) publication within 2015–2024 for empirical articles; (b) Indonesian or English language; (c) relevance to teacher digital ethics, professional identity, or education policy; and (d) peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, WoS, or SINTA 1–3. Exclusion criteria comprised non-peer-reviewed sources, pre-2015 empirical articles unless seminal, and studies irrelevant to the Southeast Asian context. This process yielded 68 sources for full-text reading, from which 31 were retained based on theoretical centrality, methodological quality, and direct relevance to the research questions. The third stage involved systematic extraction of key concepts, empirical findings, and policy implications from each source.

The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach guided by the research questions, organizing data into four clusters: (1) professional-personal boundary concepts; (2) forms and factors of violations; (3) value tensions between freedom and responsibility; and (4) reinforcement strategies. Validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing findings across journal articles, regulatory documents, and institutional reports, and theoretical triangulation, integrating normative ethics, social role theory, and digital communication theory. Analytical memos were maintained throughout to document interpretive decisions and ensure transparency in the reasoning process.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Teachers' Role as Public Figures on Social Media

Digital transformation has fundamentally shifted the role of teachers from localized community figures to digital public figures. This shift has profound implications for how professional ethics must be understood and governed, as teachers are now subject to continuous and asymmetrical public scrutiny.

To understand why teacher ethics on social media have become such a sensitive issue, we must first examine how teachers' social roles have changed. Veletsianos (2013) describes this as the emergence of "hybrid educator practices" in which the boundaries between professional and personal roles become increasingly fluid. In the Indonesian context, this fluidity carries additional weight: teachers bear the historically rooted expectation of being moral exemplars (*teladan*) whose integrity extends beyond institutional boundaries, a cultural expectation now amplified and made permanently visible by digital platforms.

Hashim and Carpenter (2019) find that teachers are motivated to engage with social media by a range of personal, professional, and social incentives, yet this engagement

simultaneously creates identity tensions as digital audiences, including students and parents, observe teachers' conduct beyond the classroom, shaping public trust in their professional credibility. This dynamic simultaneously reveals a "surveillance culture" (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2015), an asymmetrical digital oversight that, if unaddressed, risks generating self-censorship and undermining teachers' professional autonomy and pedagogical creativity. This analysis distinguishes the present article from descriptive accounts (Krutka et al., 2017; Carpenter et al., 2019) that document the phenomenon without critically examining its structural implications.

## **2. The Boundaries Between Teachers' Professional and Personal Lives on Social Media**

The professional-personal boundary on social media is not a rigid line but a contextually negotiated space. Its management demands principled frameworks rather than prohibitive rules, especially considering the structural phenomenon of context collapse.

A teacher's professional sphere, which encompasses digital activities conducted in their capacity as educators, including educational content, school-related communications, and participation in professional communities, is relatively well-defined. The personal sphere, by contrast, represents a constitutional right that cannot be wholly appropriated by professional obligations: teachers possess constitutional freedoms to express political views, document personal experiences, and engage in social discourse. The problem lies not in the existence of these two spheres but in the structural inability of social media platforms to maintain their separation (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

This structural problem is most acutely captured by Boyd's (2014) concept of context collapse, which refers to the flattening of distinct social contexts into a single undifferentiated audience stream. A teacher's sense of humor appropriate for peer interaction may be interpreted as cynicism by a parent; a private vacation photograph may be read as inappropriate affluence by economically disadvantaged students. This is not a failure of professionalism but a structural feature of the medium requiring systematic, principle-based responses rather than individual blame.

To navigate this gray zone, three operational principles are proposed: (1) contextual appropriateness, that is, whether the content is suitable for all audiences who might realistically encounter it within the teacher's professional context. (2) social responsibility, that is, whether the content could negatively affect students or communities under the teacher's care? (3) measurable public impact, that is, whether the content could, if decontextualized, undermine public trust in the teaching profession? (Ess, 2014). These principles align with Indonesian relational educational values over Anglo-American individual-rights orientations (Ribble, 2015).

## **3. Forms of Ethical Violations by Teachers on Social Media**

Ethical violations are categorized into three types, influenced by mutually reinforcing structural, individual, and cultural factors. This multi-level causation, which prior studies haven't systematically integrated, reflects the complex nature of ethical violations.

The first category involves explicitly inappropriate content: sexually explicit material, content demeaning ethnic, religious, or racial groups, or content glorifying violence. KPAI (2023) data indicate this accounted for 34% of teacher disciplinary cases in 2019–2023. This is broadly consistent with the findings of Fox and Bird (2017) in the United Kingdom, who document that teachers navigating personal-professional identity boundaries on social media frequently encounter institutional scrutiny when content is perceived as contextually inappropriate, reflecting a global pattern in which ethical boundaries are culturally constituted. The variation across contexts may reflect context-specific definitions of "inappropriate content" itself, evidence that ethical boundaries are culturally constituted, and reinforce the need for context-sensitive frameworks.

The second category, unprofessional interactions with students, carries the most severe child protection implications. UNESCO (2019) underscores that teacher-student digital interactions pose a substantial risk to child protection. Social media platforms are eroding institutional boundaries in ways that existing safeguarding frameworks were not designed to accommodate. This contrasts with earlier optimistic perspectives (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014). The Indonesian context further intensifies this concern. WhatsApp, as a quasi-official communication platform, structurally blurs public-private boundaries in ways that existing guidelines prior to its emergence do not address.

The third category of information dissemination carries distinctive ethical weight. Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012) demonstrate that educators who participate in networked digital environments exercise amplified epistemic influence because their institutionally sanctioned professional identity substantially increases the credibility attributed to their shared content, meaning that unverified or misleading claims from teacher accounts inflict disproportionate epistemic harm, a responsibility dimension entirely absent from existing Indonesian teacher ethics literature.

The factors driving these violations operate across three interconnected levels. Structurally, the absence of digital-era operational guidelines creates a regulatory vacuum constituting institutional failure. At the individual level: a deficit in critical digital literacy leaves teachers unaware of algorithmic amplification, context collapse, and legal implications. At the cultural level, social pressure to maintain digital presence creates a speed-versus-reflection tension. The interaction among these levels, rather than any single factor, determines digital behavior in practice (Krutka et al., 2017; Carpenter et al., 2019).

#### **4. Critical Analysis: The Tension Between Freedom and Responsibility**

The tension between freedom of expression and professional responsibility cannot be resolved solely through regulatory mandates. Instead, an integrated ethical framework is needed. This framework should establish absolute limits, manage contextual ambiguity, and cultivate professional character.

At the root of all debates about teacher ethics on social media lies an unresolved tension between individual rights and professional responsibilities. Three normative ethical traditions offer complementary resources. The deontological tradition (Kant, in Beauchamp & Childress, 2019) establishes categorical prohibitions: certain actions, such as demeaning students' dignity, are absolutely prohibited regardless of context. The consequentialist tradition directs attention

to actual impacts: a political post must be assessed within its specific audience context. The virtue ethics tradition (Noddings, 2013) poses the most fundamental question: not "what is permitted" but "what does a teacher of good character do?"

When read as complementary, these three traditions provide a comprehensive framework: deontology establishes inviolable red lines, consequentialism governs gray-zone navigation, and virtue ethics builds the character foundation, making ethical action natural rather than coercive. An effective digital ethics program cannot consist solely of prohibition lists but must address character formation as its primary foundation. Kimmons and Veletsianos (2015) confirm that ethical professionalization frameworks operating simultaneously on all three levels produce more durable behavioral change.

From a more critical perspective, social media serves as one of the few accessible spaces for many Indonesian teachers to navigate power imbalances with administrators and influential parents and to find professional voice and solidarity. Overly restrictive regimes risk deepening power asymmetries while eliminating social media's legitimate potential as a professional development space (Veletsianos, 2013; Prestridge, 2019). This tension must be acknowledged rather than prematurely resolved through prohibitive regulation.

The Javanese concept of teacher as *teladan* demands consistency between classroom teaching and public conduct, not because surveillance demands it, but because integrity is constitutive of professional identity (Mulyasa, 2021). This relational-integrity dimension, rooted in Islamic educational tradition (*tarbiyah*), provides culturally grounded motivation for ethical digital conduct that Western individual-rights frameworks cannot adequately capture.

## 5. Strategies for Strengthening Teachers' Digital Ethics

At the individual level, the critical need is the development of critical digital literacy, not mere platform competence, but the capacity to understand algorithmic amplification, context collapse mechanisms, legal implications of digital content, and long-term digital footprint consequences. Krutka et al. (2017) demonstrate that professional learning networks structured around intentional reflection and collaborative engagement enable teachers to develop more critical digital awareness than passive information-delivery approaches alone.

At the institutional level, schools need participatory social media policies co-developed with teachers rather than top-down mandates. Trust et al. (2016) find that professional learning communities built around collaborative, participatory norms produce more consistently responsible digital behavior because collectively negotiated norms become internalized values. This preventive approach consistently outperforms punitive frameworks (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2015).

At the national policy level, Indonesia urgently requires comprehensive, specific, and regularly updated digital ethics guidelines for teachers, developed collaboratively among Kemendikbudristek, PGRI, teacher representatives, ethics experts, and technology specialists (Carpenter et al., 2019). These guidelines must explicitly address platform-specific realities, such as WhatsApp group management, TikTok content creation, and Instagram identity presentation, that current regulatory documents entirely ignore.

As the primary contribution of this article, the TAPAK Model (*Tanggungjawab/Responsibility, Akurasi/Accuracy, Penghormatan/Respect, Audiens/*

Audience, *Konteks/Context*) is proposed as a reflective framework to help teachers navigate the ethical complexities of social media use. Unlike normative approaches that emphasize lists of prohibitions or formal compliance with regulations, TAPAK is positioned as a tool for cultivating a *digital ethical habitus*—an internalized, reflective disposition through which ethical conduct becomes an inherent expression of teachers’ professional identity.

The model is grounded in the need to move beyond mere *platform competence* toward critical digital literacy, which includes understanding the fundamental dynamics of digital environments, such as *algorithmic amplification*, *context collapse*, the legal implications of online content, and the long-term consequences of digital footprints. In this regard, TAPAK serves as a practical *pre-posting reflective checklist* that teachers can use before sharing content on social media.

Operationally, each dimension of TAPAK guides reflective decision-making as follows:

a. Responsibility (T)

This dimension invites teachers to consider their professional responsibilities toward students, parents, institutions, and the wider community. The guiding question is whether the content aligns with the educator’s role as a public figure and moral agent. It emphasizes *professional accountability* within digital spaces.

b. Accuracy (A)

This component highlights the importance of information verification within a digital ecosystem prone to misinformation. Teachers are encouraged to ensure that shared content is accurate, credible, and properly sourced, thereby avoiding the spread of misleading information.

c. Respect (P)

This dimension underscores the ethical obligation to uphold the dignity of individuals and groups, particularly students and marginalized communities. Reflection focuses on whether the content could potentially harm, discredit, or reinforce stereotypes.

d. Audience (A)

As one of the model’s key innovations, this dimension urges teachers to consider not only the intended audience but also unintended audiences emerging from *context collapse*. It acknowledges that boundaries between personal and professional spheres are fluid and often uncontrollable in digital environments.

e. Context (K)

Complementing the audience dimension, this aspect emphasizes that meaning is always shaped by diverse interpretive frameworks. Teachers must consider how different social, cultural, and situational contexts influence how content is understood by various audiences.

Theoretically, TAPAK integrates three key perspectives: digital communication ethics (Ess, 2014), Zerubavel’s (1991) boundary theory, and Noddings’ (2013) ethics of care. This synthesis produces an approach that is not only normative but also contextual and relational.

In terms of novelty, TAPAK extends the widely used North American THINK framework by explicitly incorporating the Audience and Context dimensions, which directly

address the phenomenon of *context collapse*—the breakdown of distinct audience boundaries often overlooked in prior models. This makes TAPAK particularly relevant for today's complex, multi-platform social media ecosystems.

Importantly, TAPAK is not intended as an external control mechanism but as an internal reflective tool that supports the development of an ethically conscious professional culture. In the long term, the model can serve as a bridge connecting individual critical digital literacy development, collective practices within professional communities, and more adaptive institutional and national policy frameworks responsive to digital realities.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This article addresses three research questions through a systematic thematic analysis of 31 carefully selected sources. The central finding is that ethical challenges for teachers on social media cannot be resolved through regulatory approaches alone; their deepest root lies in a deficit of professional identity, teachers' incomplete internalization of the continuity between their classroom role and digital public presence. This reframing, from "rule violation" to "professional identity deficit," demands responses centered on character development and professional community-building rather than merely code enforcement.

In response to research question one, ethical boundaries cannot be universally fixed but must be operationalized through three principles: contextual appropriateness, social responsibility, and measurable public impact. The TAPAK Model operationalizes these principles into a practically applicable reflective framework. Its theoretical distinctiveness lies in (1) the integration of normative ethical traditions with Indonesian and Islamic educational values, and (2) the explicit inclusion of Audience and Context dimensions responding directly to context collapse, which prior models have not adequately addressed.

In response to research question two, violations range from explicit (inappropriate and SARA content) to subtle (unprofessional interactions, inadvertent disinformation), driven by structural, individual, and cultural factors that interact and reinforce one another. Effective responses must operate simultaneously across all three levels. In response to research question three, strengthening teachers' digital ethics requires a multi-level strategy: critical digital literacy at the individual level, participatory social media policies at the institutional level, and comprehensive revised ethical guidelines at the national policy level.

The most significant finding is the confirmation that the ethical issue among teachers on social media is fundamentally a professional identity issue, not merely a legal or regulatory one. The recommendations are directed at three actors: teachers (apply the TAPAK Model and periodic digital self-auditing), schools (develop participatory digital ethics policies updated annually), and the government (collaboratively develop comprehensive Teacher Digital Ethics Guidelines through Kemendikbudristek, PGRI, academics, and technology practitioners).

For future research, three directions are opened: (1) empirical validation of the TAPAK Model through structured training interventions measuring behavioral change; (2) a comparative study of teacher digital ethics policies across ASEAN countries; and (3) survey-based or digital ethnographic research capturing Indonesian teachers' lived experiences of ethical boundary negotiation, bridging the normative framework proposed here with field realities.

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