

MODESTY, PRIVACY, AND FAMILY PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE



INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, technology has become deeply embedded in daily life, shaping how families communicate, share experiences, and interact with society. Social media platforms, messaging applications, and online spaces now function as extensions of personal and family life. While these technologies offer convenience and connectivity, they also raise growing concerns related to modesty, privacy, and family protection. Traditional boundaries between what is private and what is public have become increasingly blurred, especially as children and young people are exposed to digital content without fully understanding its long-term consequences.

Parents and guardians often find themselves struggling to guide responsible digital behaviour in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. These challenges do not only affect individual households but also influence wider social values, trust, and respect. As such, addressing modesty, privacy, and family protection is essential for preserving dignity, strengthening family relationships, and fostering a safer and more ethical digital culture.

MODESTY (HAYĀ') AS A FOUNDATION OF DIGITAL CONDUCT

In Islam, modesty (*hayā'*) is a core value that governs behaviour, interaction, and self-restraint. The Qur'an instructs believers to lower their gaze and safeguard their private matters, as stated in Quran:

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do.” (Surah An-Nur, 24:30)

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not to display their adornment except what is apparent thereof...” (Surah An-Nur, 24:31)

Classical scholars such as Ibn Kathir and al-Sa'di explain that these verses emphasise not only physical modesty but also the protection of dignity and personal boundaries.

Within the context of social media, these teachings serve as a reminder for Muslims to exercise caution in what they share online. Posting personal images, family moments, or private details without reflection can compromise dignity and expose individuals to unnecessary risks. In an era where oversharing has become normalised, Islamic guidance encourages mindful and ethical engagement with digital platforms.

WHEN SHARING BECOMES A RISK

Today, oversharing personal experiences, emotional struggles, and family issues on social media is increasingly common. Often driven by trends, peer validation, or the pursuit of online attention, such practices blur the line between public and private life. What was once considered confidential is now openly displayed, sometimes without consideration of future implications.

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of the digital world, including cyberbullying, online harassment, grooming, and exposure to inappropriate content. Cyberbullying has become more pervasive due to anonymity and constant online access, allowing harm to follow victims beyond physical spaces. Adults, too, may unintentionally expose their families to data breaches, harmful attention, or privacy violations through careless online sharing.

From an Islamic perspective, these risks threaten the preservation of honour (*hifz al-'ird*), one of the higher objectives of Shariah (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*). Islam encourages resolving family matters with discretion, patience, and consultation rather than public disclosure. Maintaining privacy is therefore not merely a personal choice but a moral responsibility.

STRENGTHENING FAMILY PROTECTION THROUGH ETHICAL DIGITAL PRACTICES

Guided by the objectives of Shariah, families and communities can adopt practical strategies to uphold modesty and privacy in digital spaces. Parents play a crucial role in educating children about responsible online behaviour, including the concept of *hayā'* in posting and interaction. Establishing family guidelines, such as limiting screen time and monitoring shared content, can help create healthier digital habits.

Individuals are encouraged to reflect before posting online by asking whether their content aligns with Islamic values of modesty, humility, and respect. Adjusting privacy settings, avoiding sensitive disclosures, and engaging positively on social media are practical steps toward safer digital engagement.

At a broader level, mosques, schools, and community organisations can organise awareness programmes that combine Qur'anic guidance with real-life digital challenges. Open communication between parents and children should be fostered so that young people feel safe discussing their online experiences without fear or judgement.

CONCLUSION

As technology continues to evolve, the challenge of balancing connectivity with ethical responsibility becomes increasingly important. By grounding digital practices in Islamic principles such as modesty, privacy, and the preservation of honour, individuals and families can navigate online spaces more safely and meaningfully.

Ultimately, increased awareness, ethical reflection, and digital literacy empower families to benefit from technology without compromising their dignity. Upholding these timeless values allows modern Muslim society to foster responsible digital behaviour, stronger family bonds, and a respectful online environment that aligns with the objectives of Islam.

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