

The Social Ethics of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3: A Double-Movement Analysis of Sexual Commerce, Marriage, and Human Dignity

Agus Mafrudi^{1*}, Masruhan²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

Article Info

Article History:

Received: 09 December 2025

Revised: 15 August 2026

Accepted: 29 September 2026

Published: 30 September 2026

Corresponding Author:

Name: Agus Mafrudi

Email: mafrudiagus@gmail.com

Keywords

Abstract

The practice of body commodification has persisted from the pre-Islamic era to the digital age, frequently reducing human dignity to a mere transactional instrument. The Qur'an addresses this issue not solely through legal rulings, but also by establishing an ethical foundation for social relations. This study aims to reveal the dimension of social criticism in the prohibition of marrying fornicators (QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3) through historical-contextual analysis and the re-actualization of its universal moral values to address contemporary challenges. This research uses a qualitative method with a Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory. Primary data includes Al-Wahidi's *Asbab al-nuzul*, supported by Fazlur Rahman's works and contemporary social studies as secondary data. The analysis suggests that the verse can be read not only in juridical terms but also as articulating ethical concerns regarding sexual conduct, marriage, and human dignity. These ethical concerns are subsequently extended, with appropriate qualifications, to contemporary forms of sexual commodification. The first movement of the theory reveals the verse as a moral response to poverty and the objectification of women in the Jahiliyah era. The second movement re-actualizes the principles of human dignity (*karāmah*) and social justice to critique the commodification of the body in the digital age, such as through OnlyFans and sugar dating. This prohibition offers a progressive social ethic centered on human dignity. The double movement theory demonstrates the timeless relevance of the verse as a tool for moral reform, with implications for anti-exploitation policies and value education in contemporary society.

Body Commodification; Digital Exploitation; Double Movement; Human Dignity; Social Criticism.

Abstrak

Praktik komodifikasi tubuh telah ada sejak masa pra-Islam hingga era digital, yang kerap mereduksi martabat manusia menjadi instrumen transaksional. Al-Qur'an merespons persoalan ini tidak hanya melalui ketetapan hukum, tetapi juga dengan memberikan landasan etis bagi relasi sosial. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana konteks sosio-historis QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 membentuk prinsip moralnya, dan bagaimana prinsip-prinsip tersebut dapat direkontekstualisasi secara kritis untuk menafsirkan bentuk-bentuk komodifikasi seksual kontemporer. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengaplikasikan metode penafsiran tematik-hermeneutis melalui teori *double movement* Fazlur Rahman. Sumber teks primer meliputi *Asbab al-nuzul* karya al-Wāḥidī, karya tafsir klasik pilihan, dan tulisan Fazlur Rahman mengenai hermeneutika Al-Qur'an. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 bukan sekadar larangan fikih, tetapi kritik sosial terhadap sistem ekonomi yang mengeksploitasi tubuh. Gerak pertama teori mengungkap ayat sebagai respons moral terhadap kemiskinan dan objektifikasi perempuan di era Jahiliyah. Gerak kedua mereaktualisasi prinsip kehormatan (*karāmah*) dan keadilan sosial untuk mengkritik komodifikasi tubuh di era digital seperti *OnlyFans* dan *sugar dating*. Larangan ini menawarkan etika sosial progresif yang berpusat pada martabat manusia. Teori *double movement* membuktikan relevansi abadi ayat sebagai alat reformasi moral, dengan implikasi bagi kebijakan anti eksploitasi dan pendidikan nilai dalam masyarakat kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Double Movement; Eksploitasi Digital; Komodifikasi Tubuh; Kritik Sosial; Tafsir Kontemporer

INTRODUCTION

The revelation of Surah Al-Nūr [24]: 3 establishes a profound ethical standard regarding marital relations by prohibiting marriage to fornicators or adulterers. Rather than emerging in a vacuum, this verse was a direct moral response to a specific socio-economic reality in early Medinan society. Economic vulnerability has been identified as one factor associated with prostitution in particular historical contexts, where marginalized individuals faced severe survival pressures (Ibrahim, 1982). In Medina, this economic inequality posed a moral dilemma for the impoverished Muhajirun who had recently arrived without any possessions or stable income.

According to classical exegetical accounts particularly from Al-Wahidi and Al-Tabari, some poor Muhajirun considered marrying financially stable prostitutes primarily for economic sustenance, as these women were recognized as the wealthiest inhabitants of the city (Al-Ṭabarī, 1995). Specific historical cases cited in these exegeses include the story of Ummu Mahzūl, who stipulated she would financially provide for any Muslim man willing to marry her, and Marthad bin Abi Marthad, who sought permission to marry a wealthy Meccan prostitute named ‘Anaq. The revelation of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 effectively intercepted these pragmatic intentions, framing the prohibition not merely as a juridical constraint but as an intervention to safeguard the sanctity of marriage from purely transactional motives.

This pattern of socio-economic disparity influencing relational ethics can be interpreted as a recurring historical challenge, raising critical questions about how Qur’anic moral principles address the commodification of human intimacy. Ibn ‘Asyur, in his exegesis *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, emphasizes that this verse functions as a strict legislative boundary intended to distance Muslims from the moral degradation and transactional intimacy characteristic of the Jahiliyyah era. The pre-Islamic context facilitated an environment where women’s bodies were reduced to objects of transaction in publicly known brothels (*mawakbir*). These practices masked the exploitation of human beings, creating injustices that systematically excluded vulnerable groups from social protection. The Qur’an explicitly addresses this marginalization by restoring the dignity of the oppressed (*mustad’afīn*) (Lubaba & Niamillah, 2026).

In contemporary society, a parallel challenge emerges as economic inequality continues to force vulnerable groups into transactional relationships. Rather than traditional institutions, digital platforms can facilitate new forms of monetized intimacy and sexualized self-presentation (Yusuf et al., 2024). This shifts the dynamic of relational ethics into a digital space, necessitating a re-evaluation of how classical Qur’anic principles apply to modern technological and social environments (Syarifudin & Askar, 2025). One prominent example of this modern phenomenon is “sugar dating.” In this article, sugar dating refers specifically to transactional relationships in which financial or material support is explicitly exchanged for relational, romantic, or sexual expectations. This study does not equate all forms of sugar dating with prostitution; rather, it examines the extent to which particular transactional arrangements resemble the commodification of intimate relations. By doing so, it highlights how these modern practices challenge Qur’anic ethical standards regarding human dignity.

While existing literature has extensively discussed QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 from classical jurisprudential perspectives or focused broadly on gender equality in the Qur’an (Fasiha et al., 2023), there remains a noticeable gap in applying the verse’s ethical critique specifically to modern

forms of digital sexual commodification. Previous studies often treat the verse rigidly as criminal law, overlooking its potential as a dynamic ethical framework for contemporary social reform (Muin & Masruhan, 2022). Therefore, this study examines how the socio-historical context of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 informs its moral principles, and how those principles can be critically recontextualized to interpret contemporary forms of sexual commodification using Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" theory. The significance of this research lies in its effort to bridge classical exegesis with contemporary sociological phenomena, offering a progressive, Qur'anic-based ethical response centered on protecting human dignity.

METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative approach, which focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, the study employs a thematic-hermeneutic method to investigate the selected Qur'anic verse. This method allows for a comprehensive exploration of specific themes in the Qur'an by analyzing them through a hermeneutical lens to uncover their contextual and universal meanings (Mustaqim, 2014). By integrating the thematic method with hermeneutics, the analysis ensures that the Qur'anic text is understood not merely as static jurisprudence but as a dynamic moral response to historical and contemporary social realities (Baidan, 2005).

The data collection technique employed is library research, where textual data are systematically gathered from relevant literature and historical documents (Sugiyono, 2013). The primary data sources consist of al-Wāhidī's *Asbāb al-nuzūl* to establish the socio-historical context of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3, alongside Fazlur Rahman's foundational texts on hermeneutics, particularly *Islam and Modernity*. Secondary data sources include classical and contemporary exegetical works, such as the tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Āshūr, which are utilized to enrich the thematic understanding of the verse's moral dimensions (Shihab, 2013). Additionally, literature concerning contemporary digital sociology is utilized as secondary data to provide operational contexts for modern phenomena like sugar dating and OnlyFans.

The data analysis technique is operationalized through Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" theory, which serves as the core hermeneutical framework. As a contemporary methodological tool, this theory is crucial for contextualizing Qur'anic interpretation in the modern era without losing the text's original moral spirit. The first movement (historical reconstruction) analyzes the verse within its original context, investigating how it functioned as a moral critique against the exploitation of women and poverty during the early Medinan period. The second movement (reactualization) extracts the universal moral principles specifically the protection of human dignity (*karāmah*) found in the first movement and applies them critically to formulate a progressive ethical response to contemporary digital sexual commodification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Double Movement and The Socio-Historical Context of Surah Al-Nūr [24]: 3

The concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl* in Qur'anic studies is traditionally understood as the historical events that triggered a revelation. However, in Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics, *asbāb al-nuzūl* transcends mere chronology; it represents the Qur'an's dynamic moral response to specific socio-

historical problems (Umar & Said, 2023). This understanding is foundational to Rahman's "double movement" theory. The first movement requires returning to the context of revelation to reconstruct its original moral intent, while the second movement projects that universal intent into the present. Thus, analyzing the *asbab al-nuzul* is not about confining the verse to the past, but about bridging the text with socio-human realities to uncover its timeless ethical principles (Shihab, 2013).

In the context of building the early Medinan society, Surah Al-Nūr [24]: 3 was revealed to address the issue of relational dignity (Al-Zuhaili, 2005; Asyur, 1984). The verse states:

الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ وَحُرِّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

"Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden." (QS. Al-Nur [24]: 3).

To understand the background of this verse's revelation, Al-Wahidi along with other exegetes relates several incidents experienced by the Companions that led to its revelation. This verse did not arise in a vacuum. In his book, Al-Wahidi (1991) explains the chronology as follows:

قَالَ الْمُفَسِّرُونَ: قَدِمَ الْمُهَاجِرُونَ الْمَدِينَةَ وَفِيهِمْ فَقَرَاءٌ لَيْسَتْ لَهُمْ أَمْوَالٌ وَبِالْمَدِينَةِ نِسَاءٌ بَغَايَا مُسَافِحَاتٌ يُكْرِينَ أَنْفُسَهُنَّ وَهُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَحْصَبُ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ فَرَغَبَ فِي كَسْبِهِنَّ نَاسٌ مِنْ فَقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ فَقَالُوا: لَوْ أَنَا تَزَوَّجْنَا مِنْهُنَّ فِعِشْنَا مَعَهُنَّ إِلَى أَنْ يُغْنِيَنَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُنَّ. وَاسْتَأْذَنُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فِي ذَلِكَ فَتَزَلَّتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ وَحُرِّمَ فِيهَا نِكَاحُ الزَّانِيَةِ صَيَانَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَنْ ذَلِكَ. وَقَالَ عِكْرَمَةُ: تَزَلَّتْ الْآيَةُ فِي نِسَاءٍ بَغَايَا مُتَعَالِنَاتٍ بِمَكَّةَ وَالْمَدِينَةَ وَكَثُرَ كَثِيرَاتٍ وَمِنْهُنَّ تِسْعُ صَوَاحِبَ رَايَاتٍ لَهُنَّ رَايَاتُ كَرَايَاتِ الْبَيْطَارِ يُعْرِفْنَ بِهَا: أُمُّ مَهْزُولٍ جَارِيَةُ السَّائِبِ بْنِ أَبِي السَّائِبِ الْمَخْزُومِيٍّ وَأُمُّ عَلِيٍّ جَارِيَةُ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ أُمَيَّةَ وَحَنَّةُ الْقَبْطِيَّةُ جَارِيَةُ الْعَاصِ بْنِ وَائِلٍ وَمَرْثَةُ جَارِيَةُ ابْنِ مَالِكِ بْنِ عُمَيْلَةَ بْنِ السَّبَّاقِ وَجَلَالَةُ جَارِيَةُ سُهَيْلِ بْنِ عَمْرِوٍّ وَأُمُّ سُوَيْدٍ جَارِيَةُ عَمْرِو بْنِ عُثْمَانَ الْمَخْزُومِيٍّ وَشَرِيفَةُ جَارِيَةُ زَمْعَةَ بْنِ الْأَسْوَدِ وَفَرَسَةُ جَارِيَةُ هِشَامِ بْنِ رَبِيعَةَ وَفَرْتَنَا جَارِيَةُ هِلَالِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ وَكَانَتْ يُبَوِّتُهُنَّ تُسَمَّى الْمَوَاحِيرَ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ لَا يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهِنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِيهِنَّ إِلَّا زَانٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْأَوْتَانِ فَأَرَادَ نَاسٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ نِكَاحَهُنَّ لِيَتَّخِذُوهُنَّ مَأْكَلَةً فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ وَنَهَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَنْ ذَلِكَ وَحَرَّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ. أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو صَالِحٍ مَنْصُورُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْوَهَّابِ الْبَرَّازُ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو عَمْرِو بْنُ حَمْدَانَ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْجُبَّارِ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ عَزْرَةَ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُعْتَمِرٌ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ الْحَضَرِيِّ عَنِ الْقَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو أَنَّ امْرَأَةً كَانَتْ يُقَالُ لَهَا: أُمُّ مَهْزُولٍ كَانَتْ تُسَافِحُ وَكَانَتْ تَشْتَرِطُ لِلَّذِي يَتَزَوَّجُهَا أَنْ تَكْفِيَهُ النِّفَقَةَ وَأَنَّ رَجُلًا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَزَوَّجَهَا فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لِلنَّبِيِّ. فَتَزَلَّتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ.

The exegetes said: The Muhajirun arrived in Madinah, and among them were poor people who had no wealth, while in Madinah there were prostitutes who engaged in fornication and offered themselves for hire, and at that time they were the wealthiest people in the city. Some of the poor among the Muhajirun were tempted by the prospect of earning from them, so they said: "If only we could marry some of them and live with them until Allah, the Exalted, makes us independent of them." They sought permission from the Messenger of Allah regarding this, and this verse was

revealed, in which marriage to an adulteress was prohibited to protect the believers from such a union. Tkrimah said: "The verse was revealed concerning prostitutes who were openly practicing their trade in Mecca and Medina, and there were many of them; among them were nine women who carried banners -banners like those of a veterinarian- by which they were recognized: Umm Mahzool, the slave-girl of al-Sa'ib ibn Abi al-Sa'ib al-Makhzumi; Umm Thyat, the slave-girl of Safwan ibn Umayyah; Hanna the Coptic, the slave-girl of al-'As ibn Wa'il; Muẓna, the slave-girl of Ibn Malik ibn 'Umayla ibn al-Sabbāq; Jalala, the slave-girl of Suhayl ibn 'Amr; Umm Suwayd, a slave girl of 'Amr ibn 'Uthman al-Makhzumi; Sharifa, a slave girl of Zam'a ibn al-Aswad; and Farsa, a slave girl of Hisham ibn Rabi'a; and Fartana, the slave girl of Hilal ibn Anas, and their homes were called al-Mawakhir during the pre-Islamic era; no one would enter or visit them except an adulterer from among the people of the Qiblah, or a polytheist from among the people of the idols, So some of the Muslims wanted to marry them in order to take them as concubines, so Allah, the Exalted, revealed this verse, forbidding the believers from doing so and declaring it unlawful for them. Abu Salih Mansur ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bazzāz told us, saying: Abu 'Amr ibn Hamdan told us, saying: Ahmad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar told us, saying: Ibrahim ibn 'Ar'ara told us, saying: Mu'tamir narrated to us, from his father, from al-Hadrami, from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, that there was a woman who was called: Umm Mahzool, who was committing adultery, and she had stipulated to whoever married her that she would provide for him. A Muslim man wanted to marry her, so he mentioned this to the Prophet, and this verse was revealed.

Based on this historical account, it is evident that severe economic inequality reduced vulnerable individuals to objects of transaction. For the impoverished Muhajirun, marriage was temporarily viewed as a pragmatic survival tool rather than a sacred bond. The naming of specific female figures in the classical accounts highlights how women were trapped within an exploitative social system, often identified merely by their masters or their transactional roles. Therefore, the prohibition in QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 functions as a corrective intervention against practices that degrade human dignity. By rejecting the normalization of marriages based on economic exploitation, the verse establishes a protective relational ethic. This context forms the foundation for the first movement of Rahman's hermeneutics, demonstrating that the Qur'an actively protects the vulnerable from transactional commodification (Syarifudin & Askar, 2025).

First Movement (Historical Movement): Social Moral Reconstruction

The first movement in Fazlur Rahman's theory of double movement reconstructs the historical meaning of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 as a gradual social reform, in which the prohibition against marrying adulterers addresses pre-Islamic exploitation through a humanistic principle of purity. This reconstruction serves as a step toward understanding the suffering of society at that time, as the verse was revealed as a moral response to the poverty faced by the Muhajirin. This prohibition is not merely a rule but a correction to the Jahiliyyah norms that degraded human dignity (Syarifudin & Askar, 2025). In its historical context, Islam rejects the objectification of women and transactional relationships, a principle aligned with the Qur'an's vision of gender equality, which emphasizes the equal dignity of all humanity where female prostitutes such as Ummu Mahzūl were treated as objects of economic transactions (Rahman, 1982).

Interpreting the verse based on its original context reveals the prohibition as a step toward gradual social reform an effort to transform pre-Islamic exploitative norms. The original context in which this verse was revealed depicts a society in Medina still grappling with social issues such

as the normalization of prostitution and the position of women, who were often treated as objects of economic transactions. The prohibition against marrying an adulterer serves as a social critique and correction that goes beyond merely establishing legal rules; rather, it promotes moral and social transformation. Islam rejects the objectification of women and transactional relationships in the moral reconstruction outlined in verse 3, which protects human dignity from degradation. For Islam teaches that marriage is a spiritual bond, not an economic one. In this context, Islam strongly rejects the objectification of women and relationships based solely on transactional dynamics. Marriage is not merely a social or economic bond but an institution that must uphold human values and the dignity of both parties (Al-Ṭabarī, 1995).

Regarding the meaning of the phrase “لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً” in this verse, the prohibition is not merely a criminal law restriction, but rather a moral boundary governing marital relationships (Asyur, 1984). From a textual and linguistic perspective, the prohibition against marrying an adulterer in Surah Al-Nur, verse 3, does not serve merely as a criminal law restriction; rather, it is an integral part of the ethical framework of marriage in the Qur’an. Through a comprehensive examination of the root of the word *nakaha*, this verse is clearly classified within the category of fundamental prohibitions in marriage. This confirms that the Qur’an designs the institution of marriage as a sacred bond that must be safeguarded from transactional relationships and immoral practices that could undermine the dignity of the family institution (Abdullah & Kamil, 2024). This underscores that marriage to an adulterer is impermissible in order to preserve social purity and human dignity within the Muslim community. Fazlur Rahman asserts that revelation is a “moral response to a historical situation,” meaning that this verse reflects an ethical response to the social conditions of that era, not merely a static normative text (Rahman, 1980). In the Al-Azhar exegesis, Hamka asserts that this prohibition is an effort to preserve women’s dignity (Amrullah, 2002). This approach enriches exegesis with a humanistic dimension that remains relevant across eras. Thus, this verse contains a fundamental moral principle: respect for humanity and social integrity (Idris et al., 2023). This serves as the foundation for broader social reform aimed at breaking the cycle of exploitation and moral degradation in society.

Based on the *asbab al-nuzūl* explained by al-Wāhidī, the prohibition against marrying an adulteress arose in response to a request from impoverished Muhajirin to marry adulteresses as a means of survival. The stories of Ummu Mahzūl and other adulterous women feature prominently in the narrative surrounding the revelation of this verse, reflecting the actual social inequalities and gender dynamics of the time, and thus the verse serves as a normative correction to that reality. This historical interpretation helps to understand the verse contextually and opens the door to a more inclusive and reflective exegesis of changing social conditions, without disregarding the high moral values contained in the text of the Qur’an (Husni, 2019). In applying the “double movement” theory, the analysis of *asbab al-nuzūl* is not intended to confine the verse’s meaning to the past but rather serves as a methodological gateway to explore its universal theological message. Historical events, such as the poverty of the Muhajirin in Medina, are positioned as a backdrop that clarifies the urgency of the Qur’an’s universal message. Through an approach that integrates the context of the revelation, the ethical values of Surah Al-Nūr, verse 3, can be comprehensively reformulated into guidelines that transcend temporal boundaries in addressing contemporary issues (Mafaza & Aswadi, 2026).

This historical analysis highlights the economic motives behind the Companions' desire to marry prostitutes. Muin and Masruhan (2022), explain that the revelation of Quranic Surah Al-Nur, verse 3, was a divine response to the phenomenon of the Companions who wished to marry women of ill repute (such as Ummu Mahzul) not out of love, but for the pragmatic purpose of improving their livelihoods amid poverty. This confirms that the prohibition is essentially a critique of the exploitation of the institution of marriage for purely financial gain.

Second Movement (Contemporary Movement): Reinterpreting Values in the Modern Era

The second phase of Fazlur Rahman's theory of "double movement" focuses on the reactualization of the Qur'an's universal moral values within the context of an ever changing modern society and culture (Rahman, 1980). In this regard, the third verse of Surah al-Nūr is not only interpreted historically but also applied critically to address contemporary moral and social issues. One phenomenon that has drawn attention is the rise of casual sex and digital prostitution, which reflect a shift in sexual behavior within global society (Rahman, 1982).

The digital revolution and social media have opened new avenues for the exploitation of women's bodies, for example through the "OnlyFans" and "sugar dating" cultures. Although these two platforms are cited as examples in the discourse on digital prostitution, they represent a more complex and systemic phenomenon within the digital economy. OnlyFans (launched in 2016) is a subscription-based platform that allows creators to sell exclusive content including adult content while maintaining full control over pricing and access. "Sugar dating" refers to transactional relationships between "sugar daddies/mommies" (financial providers) and "sugar babies" (financial recipients), which are often facilitated by sites like SeekingArrangement. Both are often referred to as forms of "covert prostitution" or the commodification of intimate relationships in the digital economy. Furthermore, the phenomenon of sugar dating in the modern era cannot be separated from parasitic and manipulative relationship patterns that diminish human dignity. Such transactional relationships often exploit one party's emotional dependence, which in turn creates dynamics of domination and undermines the well-being and autonomy of the individual victim. This demonstrates that such exploitation operates much like a toxic relationship that is destructive to mental health and social integrity (Hanipah & Ad-Diba'i, 2026).

One of the interesting aspects of this phenomenon is its connection to the role of social media, which is able to cloak these transactional practices in subtle language. Similar to the findings, regarding polygamy campaigns on social media where the use of sensational and modern language successfully captured public attention while eliciting mixed reactions, sugar dating employs a similar mechanism: packaging sexual exploitation within a narrative of a luxurious lifestyle to obscure its elements of prostitution (Astari et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is not merely a personal issue but also a social problem that involves the commodification of human beings as economic objects; economic inequality and a lack of financial literacy particularly among women can exacerbate vulnerability to exploitation (Amaroh & Istianah, 2020). Qur'anic values demand a firm moral response to these excesses, given the danger they pose to human honor and dignity. Economic inequality also exacerbates moral conditions in the era of global capitalism, where material needs sometimes come at the expense of ethical principles and social integrity. Women are often a group vulnerable to exploitation within this

system, a situation exacerbated by a consumerist culture that promotes the commodification of the human body as a market commodity (Setiawan, 2012).

In this context, the third verse of Surah Al-Nūr offers a highly relevant universal value: the importance of chastity (*'iffah*) and dignity (*karamah*) as the foundation of human dignity and self respect. The understanding of chastity must shift from merely a physical-biological attribute to one of complete moral and spiritual integrity. The exploitation of the body is often rooted in gender-biased social constructs, in which women's bodies are reduced to mere symbols of physical honor. In fact, the Qur'an positions *'iffah* as an ethical process and a moral responsibility, one of self-restraint that is universal and applies equally to every individual (Afifi, 2026). This value must be understood not as a rigid restriction where justice does not always mean absolute equality but rather as the proportional fulfillment of rights according to context (Wijaya et al., 2025). Such values must be safeguarded and upheld as pillars of a healthy social ethic. The concept of social responsibility also underscores the need for solidarity within society to prevent moral and social decay (Shihab, 2005). Criticism of consumerist culture and the commodification of the human body is an integral part of contemporary interpretations of this verse. A culture that judges human beings solely in terms of economic value has the potential to undermine the foundations of humanity and social justice. Social thematic exegesis seeks to revive Qur'anic principles in building dignified social relationships.

The Qur'anic solution proposed is to build a social system capable of preserving human dignity while upholding relational justice among members of society. This system rejects all forms of exploitation and the institutionalization of adultery or transactional relationships that degrade human dignity. Through the reactualization of these values, the verse becomes a tool for shaping a social ethic capable of addressing modern moral crises, whether local or global. This humanistic approach treats Qur'anic values as a dynamic guide to life that remains relevant, rather than a static text. The social critique encapsulated in Qur'an 24:3 is, in essence, an effort to restore the dignity of marginalized people. This approach aligns with the perspectives of contemporary Muslim feminists, such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas who emphasize the need to reinterpret verses to eliminate the oppressive dominance of male agency (Fidhayanti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Qur'an's critique of these contemporary phenomena opens up opportunities for a productive dialogue between tradition and modernity, enabling Muslim societies to respond to the changing times without losing their moral and spiritual identities. This approach also underscores the importance of an interpretive framework grounded in conceptual-thematic principles rooted in justice and humanity, one that is not rigid or inflexible, but rather adaptive to the dynamic and complex social conditions of the present day. Thus, the second phase of the "double movement" theory positions the third verse of Surah Al-Nūr as a source of universal moral values that must be critically re-actualized in the modern era to build an ethical and just society that upholds human dignity in the face of various contemporary moral challenges.

This verse prohibits marriage to adulterers, not merely as a rule of Islamic jurisprudence, but as a social critique of transactional relationships that reduce human beings to economic objects. In the historical context, impoverished Muhajirin intended to marry prostitutes to exploit their income a practice corrected by the Qur'an because it transformed marriage from a sacred bond into an economic tool. OnlyFans and sugar dating reflect similar patterns in the digital age because

these two platforms reduce the human body and relationships to commodities, much like the institutionalized prostitution of the Jahiliyyah era. Furthermore, these platforms also exploit people in the name of economic necessity, much like the Muhajirin who were tempted to marry prostitutes merely to survive. Finally, there is an effort to normalize transactional relationships devoid of empathy, as mentioned in Al-Wahidi’s account of the “flag” as a marker of open prostitution.

However, there remains a key difference that sets them apart: digital platforms create the illusion of “autonomy” and “control” for creators, so that exploitation often goes unnoticed. This is where the principles of human dignity (*karāmah*) and chastity (*‘iffah*) in QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 become relevant not to judge individuals, but to critique a system that promotes the commodification of the self as an economic solution. Thus, Surah Al-Nūr [24]:3 is relevant not only as a historical critique but also as an ethical framework for interpreting contemporary digital economic phenomena that threaten human dignity namely, that marriage is not merely legally valid but must also be based on spiritual purity. In the context of the digital platforms mentioned above, such relationships become inappropriate for a believer because they are based on instant gratification rather than the sanctity of the bond.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 using the double movement framework

Analytical Phase	Socio-Economic Context	Forms of Commodification	Qur’anic Ethical Response
First Movement (Historical Reconstruction)	Early Medinan Society	Institutionalized prostitution driven by poverty among the impoverished Muhajirun (e.g., the case of Ummu Mahzūl).	Prohibition of transactional marriage; establishment of moral boundaries to protect the vulnerable from economic exploitation.
Second Movement (Contemporary Reactualization)	Modern Digital Economy	Digital sexual exploitation (OnlyFans, sugar dating) masked by lifestyle narratives and the illusion of autonomy.	Re-actualization of dignity (<i>karāmah</i>) and chastity (<i>‘iffah</i>) to critique economic systems that monetize human intimacy.

Table 1 illustrates the synthesis of Fazlur Rahman’s double movement theory applied to the prohibition in QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3. The first movement highlights the verse’s historical role as a moral intervention against the institutionalized prostitution of the Jahiliyyah era, where economic vulnerability forced marginalized groups into transactional relationships. Building upon this historical foundation, the second movement extracts the universal principles of human dignity (*karāmah*) and chastity (*‘iffah*) to address modern ethical crises. By juxtaposing the classical context of poverty-driven exploitation with contemporary digital commodification, the table demonstrates how the Qur’anic ethical framework remains highly relevant in critiquing systems that reduce human intimacy to mere economic transactions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that QS. Al-Nūr [24]: 3 functions not only as a juridical prohibition but also as a profound articulation of ethical concerns regarding sexual conduct, marriage, and human dignity. Through Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" theory, the main findings reveal two interconnected layers of meaning. The first movement demonstrates that historically, the verse served as a moral intervention against the institutionalized commodification of women, specifically protecting vulnerable groups such as the impoverished Muhajirun from transactional marriages driven by poverty. The second movement critically recontextualizes these principles, asserting that the Qur'anic values of human dignity (*karāmah*) and chastity (*'iffah*) provide a robust ethical framework to critique contemporary forms of monetized intimacy, such as OnlyFans and sugar dating.

The significance of this study lies in its integration of classical thematic exegesis with modern sociological realities, offering a progressive, Qur'anic-based ethical response to the contemporary commodification of the body without being trapped in rigid textualism. However, this research has certain limitations; as a study relying primarily on library research, the analysis remains within the conceptual and textual realm, lacking empirical data on the actual lived experiences of individuals engaged in these digital platforms. Therefore, future research is strongly recommended to conduct empirical field studies using sociological or psychological approaches to capture the direct impacts of digital sexual exploitation. Additionally, future studies could enrich this discourse by employing the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach to formulate concrete preventive policies or exploring the issue further through the lens of contemporary Muslim feminist hermeneutics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their profound gratitude to Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya for providing the academic environment and resources necessary to conduct this research.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

The authors used ChatGPT to improve language and readability. The authors reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content. AI was not used to formulate the core ideas, theoretical frameworks, data analysis, or scientific arguments, as the entire substance of the study is the result of the author's own academic thinking.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, M. Y., & Kamil, I. (2024). Decoding Islamic Marriage Terms Through Quranic Text by Nvivo 12 Pro. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 3(1), 16–30. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v3i1.184>
- Afifi, A. N. (2026). Virginity as an Ethical Value in the Qur'an: An Analysis of Al- Azhar's Tafsir on QS . Al-Waqi'ah Verse 36. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 5(1), 266–278. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v5i1.821>
- Al-Ṭabarī, M. ibn J. (1995). *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*. Dār al-Fikr.
- Al-Wahidi, A. (1991). *Asbab al-Nuzul* (K. B. Zaghlul (ed.)). Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Zuhaili, W. (2005). *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Juz 9. Dar al-Fikr.

- Amaroh, S., & Istianah. (2020). Women and Islamic Financial Literacy. *Palastren: Jurnal Studi Gender*, 13(2), 259–280. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v13i2.6523>
- Amrullah, A. M. K. (2002). *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Pustaka Pujimas.
- Astari, R., Perawironegoro, D., Faturrahman, M. I., & Kistoro, H. C. A. (2023). Indonesian Muslim Society's Reception of Sensation Language and Invitation To Polygamy on Social Media. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 13(2), 369–397. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i2.369-397>
- Asyur, M. T. I. (1984). *At-Tahrir Wa At-Tamwir, Vol. 18*. Dar at-Tunisiah li an-Nasyr.
- Baidan, N. (2005). *Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an: Kajian Kritis terhadap Ayat-Ayat yang Beredaksi Mirip*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Fasiha, Umar, Cahyani, R., & Nursafitri, E. (2023). Islamic Law Perspective on Gender Equality in Improving Family Welfare. *Al-Qalam Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Sosial Budaya*, 29(2), 331–340. <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v29i2.1336>
- Fidhayanti, D., Muhammad, M., Rofiq, M. A., Robith, M., Hakim, A., Chusna, N., & Makkiy, B. (2024). Rethinking Islamic Feminist Thought on Reinterpreting the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Thoughts of Aminah Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan. *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 35(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v35i1.4956>
- Hanipah, & Ad-Diba'i, M. D. S. N. (2026). Toxic Friendship and Mental Health Among University Students: An Integrative Psychological and Qur'anic Analysis. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 5(1), 473–487. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v5i1.871>
- Husni, F. (2019). Tipologi Tafsir Alquran di Indonesia Pasca Reformasi: Telaah Pribumisasi Al-qur'an Karya M. Nur Kholis Setiawan. *Mutawatir : Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, 9(2), 323–351. <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2019.9.2.323-351>
- Ibrahim, M. (1982). Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13(3), 343. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800051984>.
- Idris, Arief, A., & Saihu, M. (2023). Keadilan Sosial dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an. *JCSR Journal of Creative Student Research*, 4(1), 58. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jcsrpolitama.v1i4.2214>
- Lubaba, G., & Niamillah, N. M. (2026). The Qur'anic Response to Social Marginalization: A Thematic Analysis of Selected Verses in Surah Al-Baqarah (2: 27 , 2: 154 and 2: 187). *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 5(1), 208–222. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v5i1.706>
- Mafaza, R. Z., & Aswadi. (2026). The Munāsabāt al-Nuzūl Approach as a Reformulation of Asbāb al- Nuzūl: A Study of Surah al-Fatihah and its Relevance to the Foundations of Islamic Theology. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 5(1), 138–152. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v5i1.780>
- Muin, A., & Masruhan. (2022). Konflik Tentang Pernikahan: Tinjauan Sosio Historis Ayat 3 Dan 6-9 Surah Al-Nur. *Al-Thiqah: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman*, 5(2), 51–58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.56594/althiqah.v5i2.69>
- Mustaqim, A. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*. Idea Press Yogyakarta.
- Rahman, F. (1980). *Major Themes of The Qur'an*. Bibliotеча Islamica.

- Rahman, F. (1982). *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*.
- Setiawan, M. N. K. (2012). *Pribumisasi al-Qur'an: Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan*. Kaukaba Dipantara.
- Shihab, M. Q. (2002). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Vol 8*. Lentera Hati.
- Shihab, M. Q. (2013). *Kaidah Tafsir: Syarat, Ketentuan, dan Aturan yang Patut Anda Ketahui dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat al-Qur'an*. Lentera Hati.
- Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Syarifudin, A., & Askar, R. A. (2025). Gender Equality in the Qur'an: Implications for Social Justice Education. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO)*, 2(3), 2386–2394. <https://doi.org/10.62567/micjo.v2i3.827>
- Umair, M., & Said, H. A. (2023). Fazlur Rahman dan Teori Double Movement: Definisi dan Aplikasi. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 2(1), 71–81. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v2i1.26>
- Wijaya, A., Muchlis, I., & Rohmatulloh, D. M. (2025). Rethinking Gender Justice in the Quran: A Critical Exploration of Muslim Feminist Perspective. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*, 26(1), 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v26i1.5704>
- Yusuf, M. A., Hadi, S., & Jauhari, M. (2024). Fazlurrahman's Double Movement and Thematic Methods Of Interpretation of the Al-Qur'an. *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)*, 7(3), 6724–6737. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ijse.v7i3.5647>