

The Consistency of the Qur'an in Critizing Flexing Culture in Society: Maqashidiyah Approach

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Abstract

Flexing has been a tradition across generations in human History, although with different materials to show off. This feeling of arrogance and needing recognition from others has become a social phenomenon that, if not resolved immediately, will damage the well-being of human life. This research aims to show the consistency of the Al-Qur'an in criticizing this destructive culture and offering solutions to this problem. By thematic methods and maqasidiyyah approach, this research concludes that the Al-Qur'an consistently criticizes the culture of hubb ad dunya with the revelation of verses periodically in Mecca and Medina periods. And spiritually, realizing our position among the creators is the way to avoid this social disease.

Keywords: Social climber, Flexing, verses of hubb ad dunya, Maqasidiyah

Introduction

Social Facts

The phenomenon of flexing has become an eternal tradition in society. In Indonesian, flexing is often interpreted as showing off, which is showing (demonstrating) something owned by others with the intention of showing off advantages or superiority to brag. (KBBI 2016). It is said to be a tradition because this culture has always appeared throughout the ages, although in terms of material, it has always changed. In the classical Islamic era, for example, the material exhibited was descent and roles in society. (Al-Alusy 1995). But nowadays, flexing material has shifted to all things that are owned and even attached to humans, such as clothes, jewelry, or beautiful physical appearance. And even something that is not attached, such as affiliate groups, friendship circles, gangs, trademarks, and so on. According to psychologist Indah Sundari Jayanti, the perpetrators have carried out this flexing culture to show the need for self-existence (CNN, 2022).

Consistently, Islam through the Qur'an always reminds us of bad human behavior, one of which is showing off. This consistency is manifested in several verses that were revealed, both in the Mecca and Medina periods, which can be used as guidelines by the people in behaving in relation to the advantages they have and as a warning to society about their position in worldly life, including the letter At-Takatsur, letter Ali Imran verse 104, letter Al-An'am verse 32 and letter An-Nahl verse 47 - and henceforth these verses are called the verses of hubb ad-dunya -. Historically, these verses do criticize the behavior and attitudes of Arab society at the beginning of the emergence of Islam, among the negative behaviors that violate Islamic values is flexing to gain recognition from other parties. The letters At-Takatsur and Ali Imran verse 104 were historically revealed to provide a warning to Arab society at that time, which had a tradition of flexing both in terms of descent, position, and wealth owned by their group or tribe. (Al-Alusy 1995).

The data means that, in fact, the flexing phenomenon like today is a repetition of what happened before. In Islamic culture, the culture of showing off or flexing is usually called *riya'* (www.almaany.com 2023). That is the attitude of showing something owned or done to get praise from others. Of course, this attitude erodes empathy and ignores a person's spiritual considerations. For example, a person no longer feels hurt or offended by others when showing what he has in a society full of hardship. Suppose we look at the flexing phenomenon on social media today, where an influencer no longer feels empathy for the suffering of his followers. Consciously or not, what is always seen by these followers will affect their mindset and even their lifestyle. This is the social impact of the very complex and destructive flexing phenomenon.

Literature Facts

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In social research studies, flexing culture has received a lot of attention from researchers. There has been a new polarization of social behavior patterns displayed by today's society. These symptoms present a separate social reality where the worship of consumption, the madness of lifestyle, and the clash of social identities (status, self-image) are inevitable. (Mahyuddin 2017). This shift in societal behavior shows that common sense and spiritual values are no longer used as a basis for someone to act. And as time goes by, this phenomenon is increasingly prevalent at all levels of society.

There are at least 5 (five) studies and publications over the last 4 (four) years found by the author where the discussion overlaps with what the author researched. Four of them discuss the hedonistic lifestyle and how the Qur'an criticizes this phenomenon. First, Hedonism in the Qur'an Analysis of Quraish Shihab's Views on the Letter At-Takatsur in the Tafsir Al-Misbah (S. Orphans 2019), Second, Al-Quran criticism of the hedonistic lifestyle in the interpretation of juz 'amma (Mulyawati, 2020), Third, Social Climber Perspective of the Qur'an (Review of Surah At-Takasur Verses 1-8) (2021 bill), Fourth, Comparative Study of the Interpretation of Surah Al-Takasur Between Al-Maraghi and Sayyid Qutb and the Relevance of Life Values Today (Mahrus et al., 2020), Fifth, Social Climber and Show-off Culture; The Paradox of Contemporary Society Lifestyle (M. Mahyuddin, 2019).

In the study of the interpretation of the Qur'an, the meaning of the verses of hubbub ad-dunya varies. In the study of classical interpretation, the discussion of this letter is usually explained through the asbab nuzul and the temporal meaning in which the letter was revealed, as stated in Jami' al-bayân, tafsîr al-Qurthûbi, tafsîr al-kasysyaâf and so on. This model of interpretation is called the interpretation of bil ma'tsur. This interpretation model may answer the people's problems at that time, where the interpreter is always bound by his era, as are his products. However, this shift in era creates a society with different ways of thinking so that efforts to re-understand the Qur'an in every era are a necessity, for Asghar Ali Engineer, it is in order to explore further possibilities in the context of the reality of the social and economic structure that continues to move (Baidhowi, 2006).

Purpose of Writing

This article aims to prove the consistency of the Qur'an in criticizing negative culture - especially flexing - in society by using the maqashidiyyah approach, which is oriented towards the welfare of the people. With the maqashidiyyah approach, the author will describe how these hubb ad dunya verses play a role in criticizing the culture of showing off in society, not only limited to the classical tradition of the time when the verses were revealed, but can also be correlated and contextualized in modern times. This article is expected to be a new offer to apply the values of the verses and letters of the Quran as well as ground them in everyday life. Because the people often ignore the values of the Quran. A neglectful society is one that considers the Quran only as a book that must be read, as well as a symbolic identity, not as a guideline and guidance for life. This paradigm must be fought by showing the maqashidiyyah aspects of the verses of the Qur'an (Assyria 2020).

Method

This article examines the verses of the Qur'an related to hubbub ad-dunya and how these verses play a role in criticizing the culture of showing off while also offering solutions to society. This theme is very important considering the emergence of the flexing tradition in society to expect flattery and "recognition" from others, which is increasingly concerning. Today, there is an increasingly distant cultural shift from scientific civilization to material civilization. Whether realized or not, this tradition is contrary to the maqâshid-maqâshid of the Qur'an; on the other hand, it damages the social order in society. Previous studies have focused on interpreting certain verses and letters and connecting them to current phenomena. Meanwhile, this article reveals how the Qur'an consistently explains worldly materials created by Allah SWT.

The main sources used in this study are the verses of Hubb and Dunya in the Qur'an, especially QS. At-Takatsur and supported by other secondary sources. The author's data analysis method and implementation steps use the thematic theory of Musthafa Muslim. The author also uses the book of interpretation as a secondary source that the author uses to increase knowledge and deepen data, especially those related to asbab an nuzul, munasabat and narrations that help.

Results and Discussion

Interpretation is a process, namely the process of interpretation activity, that must be carried out continuously without knowing the stopping point. Fazlur Rahman and Muhammad Syahrur both agree that the Qur'an is a book that will always be relevant for all spaces and times but must be "read" creatively and productively so that it is truly able to become an alternative solution for solving the socio-religious problems of contemporary humanity. (Mustaqim 2012). The maqashidi approach method is a process of reading verses creatively and productively while being oriented towards the values and intent of the verses that provide solutions to the people's problems.

Maqasid has the root word qa-sha-da, which has many meanings, including istiqlâmatu at-tharîqi (the straight path), al-sahlu wa al-qarbu (ease and closeness), al-'adlu wa al-inshâfu (justice), at-tawsath wa 'adamu al-ifrâth (moderation and not excessive) (Mandhur, 2003). The word maqâshid is the plural form of maqshid, which means maudhi'u al qashdi

(destination), or maqshad, which means goal. From the origin of this word, the use of the term maqâsid as an approach in interpretation shows that this interpretation is based on the goal, value, and intention carried by the verse or letter.

The maqasid interpretation method is not new in the world of interpretation because all interpretations reveal the purpose (maqasid) understood by the interpreter of the text. However, this maqasid approach emphasizes the correct understanding and the directed purpose of the text in detail and depth. The use of the term maqasid has also been known in classical times, but the incorporation of the term maqasid into interpretation has only emerged in the modern century. From the time of Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, Ibn 'Asyur, and the time of Sayyid Qutb, Said Hawwa, and so on. (Niswan Abduh 2014)

Dr. Wasfi 'Assyur divides the variety of Al-Quran maqasid into five types, namely general maqasid, special maqasid, maqasid of Al-Quran surahs, maqasid of Al-Quran verses and maqasid of Al-Quran words and letters ('Assyria 2020). First, the general maqasid is the general aim of the Al-Qur'an, Second, the special maqasid covers the themes and topics of the Al-Quran, Third, the maqasid of the letter concentrates on the target, purpose, or main value of the letter in realizing the benefit of the servant in this world and the hereafter, while the fourth maqasid verses focus attention on each verse separately, and the last five Maqasid letters and words emphasize the aim and purpose of word choice in the Al-Qur'an.

Furthermore, Dr. Wasfi 'Asyur also provides rules for writing maqasidi interpretations. ('Assyria 2020). This rule acts as a fence and boundary so that an interpreter does not exceed the objectives of the verses of the Qur'an. The rules are as follows:

1. Concluded from the correct process.
2. Fulfilling the requirements of a maqashidi interpreter.
3. Prioritizing textual and original maqasid from the Al-Qur'an.
4. Prioritize the general purpose of the Qur'an.
5. Proving the harmony between sentences, verses, letters, and the Qur'an.

Verses of Hubb Ad-Dunya

Among the verses that are considered to be verses of worldly love that criticize the social conditions of society are the following: Surah At-Takatsur, Surah Ali Imran verse 14, Surah Al-An'am verses 29 and 32, Al-Hadid verse 20 and Yunus verse 24.

Surah at-Takatsur is the 102nd of 114 surahs in the Qur'an. This surah consists of 8 verses and is included in the category of Makiyah surahs,

أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ (1) حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ (2) كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (3) ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (4) كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (5) لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ (6) ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ (8) الْيَقِينِ (7) ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

Meanwhile, Surah Al-An'am verse 32 is a Madaniyah letter,

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ وَلَدَارُ الْأَجْزَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Meanwhile, Ali Imran's letter verse 14 is a Madaniyah letter

رُبُّنَا لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَاقِ

Meanwhile, the letter Al-An'am 29 is a Madaniyah letter.

وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

Meanwhile, Yunus verse 24 is a Madaniyah letter

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أُنْزِلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَادِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا أَتَاهَا أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنِ بِالْأَمْسِ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Meanwhile, Al-Hadid letter 20 is a Madaniyah letter.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

Discussion

Based on previous data, the verses of hubb ad dunya are quite numerous in the Qur'an, both in the Mecca and Medina periods. In the Mecca period, 1 set of verses was revealed, namely QS. At-Takatsur relates to the criticism of the Qur'an on the social conditions that occurred. The culture of Mecca, which often boasts of the number of lineages and descendants, is an important point in the Qur'an that highlights this issue. In the Medina period, five verses emphasized the position of wealth and social strata that had the potential to divert humans from the values of Islamic teachings.

Inevitably, time will always bring its civilization. In the Medina period, the warning of the Qur'an regarding the culture of showing off has shifted from the material side, no longer on the issue of the number of lineages but also on wealth, women, vehicles, and so on. Regarding language, the wording Allah, the Most Gracious is different from the Medina editorial, which is softer and preventive. However, this continuous and repeated warning shows the consistency of the Qur'an on this social issue. In this study, the author emphasizes the interpretation of QS, At-Takatsur seen from the Maqasidiyyah side more than other Hubb ad dunya verses.

According to Ar-Razy, At-takâtsur means to brag and show off (at-tabâhi) wealth, rank, and achievements. In Arabic, it is said *تكاثر القوم* when a group compares each other's achievements (Ar-Razy, 2000). In today's language, bragging or showing off is also called flexing. However, there are differences and shifts in terms of the material displayed due to the development of the times. Of course, flexing material will always differ from one place to another, from one culture to another, and from one era to another. This change in standards is an inevitability in the process of human civilization development. These symptoms (flexing, showing off) present a social reality where the worship of consumption, the madness of lifestyle, and the clash of social identities (status, self-image) are inevitable. (Mahyuddin 2017).

Muhammad Al-Ghazali also explains the meaning of takâtsur by comparing achievements between people in his book *Nahwa Tafsîr Maudhû'i li Suwari Al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, he wrote about the thematic interpretation of the letter At-Takâtsur, The problem is not in the busyness of fulfilling the needs of life, but rather the existence of competition with other people in terms of collecting greater pride and luck that they get and this competition is carried out continuously until death comes (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

Ar-Razy explained that the word takâtsur comes from the form of wazan tafâ'ul, which is the root word ka-tsa-ra, which means many. There are three possible meanings of wazan tafâ'ul namely, One shows the interaction between two or more parties. Two shows an excessive attitude, and Three shows the original meaning of the root word. According to Ar-Razy, the word takâtsur in the first verse of the letter At-Takatsur contains two initial possibilities, namely the interaction of attitudes of showing off and being proud of each other between the two parties, and shows the meaning of an excessive attitude in increasing something that can be proud of. Takâtsur, in this case, has the same meaning as the word tafâkhur si in verse 20 of the letter Al-Hadid as follows,

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

“Know that the life of this world is only play and diversion and pomp and a cause of boasting among you and trying to outdo one another in wealth and children.” (QS. Al Hadid; 20)

Ar-Razy interprets the two phrases as having similarities. Namely, both contain elements of demonstrating or showing others the achievements that are owned, be it in the form of wealth, descendants, or anything owned. In KBBI, this attitude is called showing off (KBBI 2016), or in the modern language, it is called flexing.

The perpetrator intends Takatsur and tafâkhur to show happiness (as-sa'adah) to the other party. There are three types of happiness, spiritual, physical, and happiness, that externally support physical happiness. (Ar-Razy 2000). The source of happiness for the soul is knowledge and morality.

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْغِ قَلْبِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

“(Ibrahim prays): O my Lord, give me wisdom and include me among the pious people.” (QS. Ash-Syu'araa: 83)

This is the primary and basic source of happiness through which one can obtain true and eternal happiness. A person who has a lot of knowledge and good morals is certainly happier than someone who doesn't have it because the knowledge that is mastered should be the standard for distinguishing between good and bad.

The source of physical happiness is health, the beauty of body shape, and so on. This physical happiness is at the second level after the soul's happiness. Two sources of external happiness support physical happiness: absolute sources such as wealth, rank, and position. According to Ar-Razy, this physical happiness can be divided into two sources, namely absolute sources of happiness and non-absolute sources of happiness. (Ar-Razy 2000). And sources that are not absolutely necessary, such as relatives, friends, companions, and relations. This source of non-absolute happiness is at the third level, namely the lowest level, which, in essence, only serves to support physical happiness. The proof is that if someone is sick and loses one of the sources of physical happiness, then he will sacrifice his wealth and position in order to get cured. This shows that the position of physical happiness is more important than the happiness that supports the body, whether absolute or not. Therefore, something supportive should not be used as the main thing, and vice versa. The same is true for physical happiness, where this happiness is ultimately intended to obtain spiritual happiness.

Ar-Razy emphasized that anyone who understands this reality should prioritize the most important happiness, namely the soul's happiness. On the other hand, boasting of wealth, rank, position, relations, and relatives means boasting of the lowest source of the level of happiness. (Ar-Razy 2000). Busying oneself with multiplying and bragging about all of this can prevent someone from having the opportunity to gain soul happiness through knowledge and charity. This attitude of prioritizing trivial matters like this is, of course, a bad attitude, which is why Allah condemns it in verse 1 of the At-Takatsur letter.

In this explanation, the author sees the value of maqâshidiyyah in the interpretation of Ar-Razy, namely explaining the maqâshid of the letter in general. Understanding the letter At-Takatsur is not only through the meaning of History but also brings values that are explained neatly, applicable, and relevant to the present day. Critical reading is the reading of the unreadable text of the Qur'an. It wants to reveal again what is unreadable (Mustaqim, 2012) (taken from Ali Harb, Naqd an-Nushush (Beirut: Al-Markaz at-Tsaqafi, 1995, p. 60).

In the fourth masâil of the first group of verses, according to Ar-Razy, not all forms of takasur are reprehensible. Verse 11 of Surah Ad-Duha shows that takâstur and tafâkhur, with deeds of obedience and good morals if expected to be followed by others, are permissible and commendable. According to Ar-Razy, the letters alif lam in the word The Cathar In verse 1 of the letter At-Takatsur, it is not useful to include al-istighrâq (to encompass), but rather to include al-ma'hud (the prevailing custom), namely the custom of showing off and being proud of wealth, rank and achievements. (Ar-Razy 2000). So, according to Ar-Razy, the rule that states

(As-Sa'di 1999) الألف واللام الداخلة على الأوصاف وأسماء الأجناس تفيد الاستغراق بحسب ما دخلت عليه

Does not apply to the interpretation of this verse. Of course, this is an interesting review of Ar-Razy's interpretation. al-ma'hûd (prevailing customs) is what the Al-Quran criticizes and denounces. In other words, boasting about the type of mental happiness that is true happiness is not reprehensible. This is supported by a history that tells of Ali bin Abi Talib ra's answer when Al-Abbas boasted of his position of responsibility in matters of the siqâyah and Syaibah by showing off his position as holder of the key to the Kaaba, where Ali ra answered, "As for me, I have cut the throats of those who disbelievers with my sword so that disbelief becomes weak, then you will enter Islam." Ali ra's answer is supported by the words of Allah verse 19 of Surah At-Taubah,

أَجْعَلُكُمْ سِبْغَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَ عِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

"Do you equate (those) who give drinks to those who perform the Hajj and take care of the Grand Mosque to those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and strive in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah, and Allah does not guide unjust people." (QS. At-Taubah: 19)

The tradition of flexing about a worldly material is not new in human civilization, because in every era, this culture exists and (perhaps) will continue to exist until human civilization ends. It's just that the material that is exhibited develops according to the development of a society's culture. Regarding this phenomenon, the criticism of the At-Takatsur letter not only answers the social phenomenon when the verse was revealed, but this verse is a verse that can be relevant in every era. In every era, the tradition of showing off or flexing is a tradition that is carried out to express one's happiness and pride in what one has. If this is done continuously and by many people, it will become a destructive culture, which will unconsciously cause damage to the social order that has been built previously. If people want to understand, true happiness is the happiness of the soul that arises because of intellectual and moral kafa'ah, not through false happiness that is only complementary. This true happiness is permitted in takâstur and tafâkhur, according to Ar-Razy. Conversely, takâstur and tafâkhur are not true traditions that are permitted, such as position, wealth, vehicles, and so on.

According to Qardhawi, human awareness of this must continue to be built to avoid the temptations of arrogance - through the culture of flexing - until the end of their lives. In another reference, Qardhawi emphasized this matter of showing off by saying, "Man should make the life of this world a field for life afterward. By enjoying its goodness without making it a goal, working on his worldly needs as if he will live forever, and working on his afterlife affairs as if he will die tomorrow. He has combined two good things and obtained happiness in this world and the hereafter." (Qardhawi 2005).

Conclusion

The Qur'an, as a living guide for Muslims, is not only a book containing laws but also contains social criticism that occurred at the time the verse was revealed. The number of verses that concentrate on social issues is quite large quantitatively and are revealed periodically as proof of the consistency of the Qur'an in playing a role in social life. The nature of shâlih li kulli zamân wa makân possessed by the Qur'an makes the verse not only limited to a certain time but throughout time. Regarding the verses of hubb ad dunya, the Qur'an not only criticizes it but also reminds and provides solutions to this negative phenomenon. With the maqasidiyyah approach, the author can conclude that the solution to the problem of flexing in today's society is through a spiritual path and personal awareness that will form a shared awareness to realize the welfare of life (well-being) in society. Happy learning. Allahumma fahhimna bi maqâshidi al-Qurân. Wallâhu `a'lam bi as-shawwâb.

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