

The Term of *Al-Haya'* in the Qur'an: A Hermeneutical Perspective of Jorge J.E. Gracia

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Abstract

This study analyzes the term *al-haya'* (shame) in the Qur'an to address digital moral degradation, such as oversharing, hoaxes, and cyberbullying, that erode individual dignity. Using a qualitative library research approach, the Mustaqim thematic interpretation method is integrated with Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutics through three interpretive functions: historical, meaning, and implicative. Three key verses are inventoried: QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26 (theological dimension), QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25 (socio-practical), and QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53 (communication ethics), supported by asbābun nuzūl and semantic analysis of the root *ḥ-y-y*. The results show the term *al-haya'* (shame) as an active instrument regulating vertical, horizontal, and internal relationships. The historical function revitalizes the original context; the semantic function reveals universal barriers to sin; the implicative function produces digital solutions: multi-layered hoax verification (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26), privacy limits on oversharing (QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25), and a 24-hour pause in responding to cyberbullying (QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53). The findings are in line with digital literacy and self-control tools, enriching the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an and the foundation of the *al-haya'*-based educational model for digital trauma management.

Keywords: *Al-Haya'*, Qur'anic Hermeneutics, Jorge J.E. Gracia.

Introduction

In the digital age, oversharing, spreading hoaxes, and cyberbullying on social media for the sake of popularity have become crucial issues (Akhtar, 2020; Baso et al., 2024). This phenomenon will gradually erode individual identity and dignity (Susanto, 2024), while also signifying a loss of shame that reflects confusion in ethical understanding and weakened self-control (Cucuani et al., 2022). Technological developments have also revolutionized religious practices, which significantly influence human perspectives and behavior (Wirayuda et al., 2023, p. 1). The term *al-haya'* (shame) is an essential moral value in religious discourse. In Islam, the term *al-haya'* (shame) serves as a moral and ethical foundation for regulating human behavior so that it remains in harmony with the principles of goodness and social harmony. Ethics functions as a value system that encompasses moral principles for individuals and groups (Wahyuningsih, 2022, p. 8). Previous studies have elaborated on the negative impact of social media on ethical and moral dimensions. Akhtar (2020) analyzes oversharing as a threat or opportunity to privacy from a Western psychological perspective, without integrating contemporary Islamic values. Baso et al. (2024) examine the dangers of hoaxes and cyberbullying but do not relate them to the moral construct of *al-haya'*. Susanto's approach (2024) examines the erosion of honor due to



digitalization, while Cucuani et al. (2022) underline the degradation of shame as a deficiency in self-control; neither engages in a Qur'an-based hermeneutic analysis. Wirayuda et al. (2023) discuss digital religious transformation but ignore the central role of *al-haya'* as the foundation of Islamic ethics. Wahyuningsih (2022) conceptualizes ethics as a moral value system for individuals and communities, but does not specify the context of Islam in the digital realm. Although related literature has revealed empirical phenomena and implications of digital behavior, there has been no study that systematically integrates Gracia's hermeneutical approach to the concept of *al-haya'* in Islam to analyze the degradation of shame in the digital age.

Analyzing the term *al-haya'* in the Qur'an through Gracia's three functions of interpretation (historical, meaning, and implicative) to overcome digital moral degradation. This research transcends a mere descriptive explanation of *al-haya'* by employing Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutical framework. While traditional interpretations often confine *al-haya'* to physical modesty, this study argues that through Gracia's textual meaning and implicative functions, *al-haya'* can be interpreted as a critical instrument for digital ethics. This perspective provides a necessary bridge to address contemporary issues such as oversharing and cyberbullying in the digital era.

Jorge J.E. Gracia provides a unique ontological approach to hermeneutics, which is crucial for this study. According to Gracia, a text is not merely a collection of signs but a functional entity that exists within a specific context. He distinguishes among the historical, meaning, and implicative functions. The textual function concerns the preservation and transmission of the message. The meaning function concerns what the author intended to communicate or what the text conveys to its contemporary audience. Most importantly for this research, the implicative function refers to the consequences or applications of the text's meaning in different contexts, such as the digital.

Method

This research is a qualitative study (Mulyatiningsih, 2023, pp. 179–180), based on library research (Zed, 2008). In the data processing stage, this study employs the thematic interpretation method (Mustaqim, 2024, p. 56), integrated with Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutical framework (1995) for meaning transformation. Data processing in this study was conducted through two mutually integrated methodological stages:

- a. Thematic method (Mustaqim, 2024, p. 56): This stage was used to compile Qur'anic verses related to the theme of the term *al-haya'*, identify *asbabun nuzul* (if any), and develop a systematic interpretive framework based on the classification of theological, social, and ethical dimensions.
- b. Hermeneutics of Jorge J.E. Gracia (1995): After the verse data is collected, the researcher applies Gracia's three functions of interpretation, namely, the historical function (understanding the text of *al-haya'* according to its original context), the meaning function (finding the universal message of the text of *al-haya'*, and the implicative function (connecting the essence of the text of *al-haya'* with the ethical problems of media users in the digital age).

The technical flow of this literature data analysis was systematically designed to bridge classical texts with contemporary ethical challenges. There are five stages in this study, as follows:

1. **Research Object:** Identifying verses from the Qur'an as primary library data that discuss the concept of *al-haya*.
2. **Research Approach:** Adopting Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutical framework, which includes three functions of interpretation (historical, meaning, and implicative).
3. **Analysis Stage:** Conducting a literature review using thematic methods and a hermeneutic approach to map the representation of the term *al-haya* from each unit of analysis.
4. **Analysis Results:** Formulating a comprehensive interpretation that integrates the theological, social, and ethical dimensions of communication based on the results of literature data extraction.
5. **Research Objective:** To produce a contextual interpretation that applies to the phenomenon of moral degradation in the digital age.

To ensure the accuracy of the transition of meaning from classical texts to the contemporary context, this study uses a hermeneutic synchronization matrix as the main analytical instrument. This matrix serves to map the flow of data transformation from historical functions to adaptive ethical formulations for digital users as follows:

Table 1. *Matrix of Hermeneutics Synchronization and Digital Ethics*

Object of Study	Historical Function	Meaning Function	Implicative Function	Method Output
QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26.	The parable of the mosquito as an instrument of truth	Theological: affirmation that Allah is not ashamed to reveal the truth.	The difficulty of using hoaxes and deepfake AI to manipulate reality.	Layered information verification is the requirement to fully verify information before sharing it.
QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25.	The courteous conduct of Shu'aib's daughter in upholding honor.	It is socially practical to physically express shame in public settings.	The trend of excessive sharing and the deterioration of individual privacy boundaries.	Self-regulation in preserving the privacy of personal information while upholding others' rights is known as privacy boundary management.
QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53	The development of the Prophet's character (visitation and communication etiquette)	Communication ethics: self-control and consideration for others' feelings.	The rise of cyberbullying and digital verbal aggression.	Communication reactivity control: implementing a time delay (e.g., 24 hours) before responding to negative interactions.

This table ensures a consistent flow between the Qur'an's textual messages and the formulation of solutions grounded in the concept of *al-haya* to address current challenges in digital

media user behavior. In the final stage of analysis, this study translates the interpretation of the concept of *al-haya* into practical ethical guidelines that reinvigorate this value as an internal filter for social media users. Thus, Gracia's implicative function provides practical answers to contemporary moral degradation.

Results and Discussion

The Term of Al-haya in the Qur'an

Before delving into the specific verses, it is essential to analyze the etymological root of the term *al-haya*. Linguistically, *al-haya* is derived from the root *h-y-y*, which is fundamentally linked to the word *al-hayah* (life). This connection is not merely coincidental; in Islamic ethics, the 'life' of the heart is measured by its capacity for shame. As the heart becomes more 'alive,' its sensitivity toward moral boundaries increases. Conversely, a lack of *al-haya* signifies a spiritual 'deadness.' In the digital context, this etymological link suggests that digital morality requires a 'living' conscience to navigate the complexities of virtual interactions. In accordance with the results of the inventory of verses containing the term *al-haya*, this study focuses on three primary verses that represent different dimensions of this virtue (Elshinawy, 2021)

In accordance with the procedures of the thematic method (Mustaqim, 2024, p. 55), the researcher compiled verses that clearly convey the meaning of the term *al-haya* in the Qur'an. Based on thematic classification, three representative verses contain the term *al-haya* with different dimensions, as summarized in the following table:

Table 2. *Inventory of Al-haya Verses*

Verse	Dimension of <i>Al-haya</i>	Thematic Representation
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 26.	Theological	Affirming that Allah is not ashamed " <i>lā yastahyi</i> " to make parables for the sake of truth.
QS. Al-Qasas [28]: 25.	Social-Practical	This verse explicitly mentions Shu'aib's daughter coming with a shy gait ' <i>alāy qasūḥyā</i> ' as an example of the physical application of <i>al-haya</i> in the public sphere.
QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 53	Communication Ethics and Privacy	This verse discusses the ethics of visiting and interacting with the Prophet SAW, including the Prophet's sense of modesty " <i>qalābā fayaṣṭahyi</i> " in admonishing his companions not to linger. And Allah is not shy/reluctant " <i>lā yastahyi</i> " in affirming the truth.

The table shows that *al-haya* is not merely a passive moral concept but an active instrument that regulates human relationships with God, oneself, and fellow human beings. To provide a complete textual overview before conducting an interpretive analysis.

Analysis of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 26 (Theological Dimension)

This verse thematically addresses the hypocrites' doubts about the mosquito metaphor, which they consider undignified. This context represents the theological dimension of *al-haya* associated with Allah's nature in conveying the truth and not being bound by false shame. Ibn Jarir narrates the historical context of this verse from As-Suddi, who said, "When Allah made a parable for the hypocrites in verses 17 and 19, the hypocrites said, '*Did Allah Azza waJalla make such a parable?*'" Then Allah revealed verses 26-27 of Surah Al-Baqarah. (HR. Ibn Jarir) (I. J. As-Suyuthi, 2021, p. 3).

a. Historical Function

Based on Gracia's (1995) historical function, this verse explains the sociological background of the emergence of doubt among the polytheists. They questioned the tone of mentioning small creatures (mosquitoes) in the revelation, considering it shameful. Allah SWT then revealed this verse as a theological argument and confirmation (without shame or hesitation) of the truth of the parable, which the polytheists considered humiliating (I. As-Suyuthi, 2014, p. 9). This verse changed the standard perspective of *al-haya* from the prestige of the polytheists to obedience to divine choice.

b. Meaning Function

The word *yastahyi* comes from the root word *h-y-y*, which is semantically related to *al-haya* (shame) and *al-hayah* (life) (Al-maany, 2026). In Gracia's textual identity (1996), this root word was chosen to emphasize that Allah is free from "shyness" when conveying the parable of the mosquito for the sake of truth. The word "*yastahyi*" when attributed to Allah, is impossible in *haqiqi* but functions as *tasybih* (Yamani, 2023, p. 99). *Tasybih* in the form of *tamsil* (mosquito) is a metaphor of a small animal to remind humans of His power (Jabbar & Burhanudin, 2012). When "*haya*" is attributed to Allah, it does not refer to human "fear," but rather "abandoning futile deeds for the sake of truth" (Az-Zuhaili, 2013a, p. 79).

Quraish Shihab emphasizes that "*la yastahyi*" shows that Allah SWT is free to use simple metaphors, such as mosquitoes, to convey profound wisdom. This verse distinguishes between believers who accept with certainty and disbelievers who are misguided by their wickedness (Shihab, 2005, p. 133).

In Gracia's interpretive methodology, the study of the word "*yastahyi*", the root of the word *h-y-y* (Al-maany, 2026), reveals a strategic textual identity: the semantic connection between *al-haya* (shame) and *al-hayah* (life) is designed to construct *kinayah ilahiyyah*. The authoritative intent of the revelation positions "*la yastahyi*" as *tasybih* mustahil *haqiqi* Allah through the metaphor of a mosquito, which is actually an affirmation of the truth (*ta'ziz al-haqq*). M. Quraish Shihab (2005), representing the perspective of the text's recipient, understands this verse as a discriminatory criterion between believers who accept with conviction and the wicked who are lost due to their disobedience.

c. Implicative Function

Contemporary social media phenomena, such as the spread of hoaxes through AI-generated deepfakes and manipulated content, undermine public trust in digital

information (Sari, 2025), driven by motives of instant popularity (M. Arif Susanto, 2024). In Gracia's implicative analysis (1995), the concept of *al-haya* in QS. al-Baqarah verse 26, where Allah SWT does not hesitate to use the metaphor of a mosquito as an analogy for His absolute power (Jabbar & Burhanudin, 2012, p. 202), results in practical implications for contemporary audiences: the urge to verify information in layers to prevent the reckless spread of content for the sake of social validation (Dary et al., 2025).

Gracia's implicative function (1995) offers a new understanding to contemporary readers by connecting the meaning of the original text to the current context, so that the *al-haya* (shame of sin) becomes a proactive digital ethic for preventing hoaxes and AI deepfakes through content verification before dissemination.

Analysis of QS. Al-Qasas [28]: 25 (Social-Practical Dimension)

The theme of this verse is the phrase "*alāy q̣stīḥyā 'i*" which provides a concrete description of the manifestation of shame in practical social interactions in public spaces. In a historical context, this verse tells the story of when the two daughters returned home earlier than usual, their father was surprised by their unusual return. When asked, they explained that a young man had helped them by dispersing the crowd and giving water to their livestock. Upon hearing this story, the father asked one of his daughters to return to meet the young man and invite him to his residence (QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25) (Audah, 2011, pp. 182–183).

a. Historical Function

In Gracia's historical function (1995), the context of *Jahiliyah* is crucial for the reconstruction of the *al-haya* as a collective norm of *ʿird kabilah* through *muʿallaqat Zuhayr bin Abi Sulma* (bait 28-29, 60) (Bunjamin, 2005), which emphasizes the fulfillment of inter-tribal promises for the sake of tribal dignity, as well as the *Sirah Nabawiyah* (Al-Mubarakfuri, 2021, p. 47), which records the practice of burying female infants due to social shame that burdens the honor of the father. The pre-Islamic concept of *al-haya* (shame) was collective to the tribe, not individual.

In contrast to QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25, revelation repositions this concept through Shu'aib's daughter approaching Moses with *istihya'* (shy steps, soft voice) as personal female honor (Audah, 2011, p. 183). This historical foundation becomes the basis for Gracia's subsequent function of meaning.

b. Meaning Function

In the meaning function of Gracia (1995), the word "*istihya'*" is in the form of "*istafala*" (Ali, 1965, p. 27), meaning "shy" (Al-maany, 2026). QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25 "*fajāq 'alhu q̣līḍyhumā tanīshī 'alāy q̣stīḥyā 'i*" conveys the self-control of a respectable woman who is very shy but polite (Az-Zuhaili, 2013b, p. 366), a balance between humility and ethical assertiveness (Azkiya & Kusnadi, 2025, p. 11), which is relevant to contemporary readers.

c. Implicative Function

In the context of QS. Al-Qashas: 25, the term *al-haya* serves as a psychological and ethical boundary. Contemporary social media phenomena such as oversharing on digital

platforms (Dary et al., 2025) are driven by ethical confusion that leads to a loss of shame (Cucuani et al., 2022). In Gracia's implicative analysis (1995), the *al-haya* in QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25 presents a two-way example of shame: Shu'aib's daughter, who is described as "modest and hasty" (*istihya'*) (Az-Zuhaili, 2013b, p. 366), and Musa AS, who maintained proper interaction etiquette. Through Gracia's implicative function, the way the daughter of Shu'ayb carried herself, characterized by *istihya'*, can be reinterpreted as a form of privacy management in the digital age. It directly addresses the modern phenomenon of oversharing, where individuals often lose their sense of *al-haya* by exposing private details to the public for social validation. By internalizing this verse, digital users are encouraged to maintain their dignity by filtering what is shared and what remains private.

Analysis of Al-QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 53 (Dimension of Communication Ethics)

This verse highlights the ethics of communication and the importance of maintaining privacy as part of self-control based on modesty. After finishing their meal, some of the companions remained seated and conversed for quite some time in his house. This situation made the Prophet feel uncomfortable, although he was too shy to ask them to leave his house immediately. It was in this context that the verse of the Qur'an was revealed, instructing the companions to take their leave and leave the Prophet's house immediately after finishing their business. This verse also emphasizes the etiquette of interacting with the Prophet, maintaining his privacy, and serving as a guideline for social ethics in the lives of Muslims (Hanafi, 2017, p. 363).

Meanwhile, from Aisha, ra: *"It was narrated by ath-Thabrani with a sahih chain of transmission, from Aisha, who said, 'When I was eating with the Messenger of Allah, Umar entered. The Prophet invited him to eat with us. At that moment, Aisha's finger touched Umar's, so Umar said, 'Oh, if only my proposal had been accepted (to wear the hijab), no one would be able to see your wife.' Regarding this incident, the verse on the hijab in Surah al-Ahzab [33]: 53 was revealed."* (HR. al-Thabrani) (A.-W. An-Nisaburi, 2014, p. 434; A. al-H. A. bin A. al-W. An-Nisaburi, 1991, p. 212).

a. Historical Function

Based on the historical function of Gracia (1995), QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53 explains the sociological background of the ethics of visiting: Ibn Mardawaih narrated from Ibn Abbas that a man who was visiting sat too long in the Prophet's residence, so he left three times as a subtle hint because of the Prophet's *al-haya* (shyness) and reluctance to reprimand him directly (I. J. As-Suyuthi, 2021, p. 199). Umar bin Khattab suggested the hijab to maintain the privacy of the Prophet's wives, which became the basis for the revelation of QS. al-Ahzab [33]:53 (I. J. As-Suyuthi, 2021, p. 199).

b. Meaning Function

Within the framework of meaning function, Gracia (1995), *fayastahiyi* is analyzed as a *fi'il mudhari*, meaning "then he felt shy/reluctant" (Ali, 1965, p. 27). In the context of revelation, the expression "*fayastahiyi min kun*" describes the Prophet's modesty in asking his guests to leave (Az-Zuhaili, 2013c, p. 398), while "*wāllahu lā yastahiyi min alhaqī*" affirms Allah's firmness in conveying the truth (Ath-Thabari, 2007). Universally, *al-haya* is

understood as a psychological barrier that prevents a person from harming others (Jabbar & Burhanudin, 2012). Thus, the concept of *al-haya* is relevant to contemporary communication ethics, especially in the digital era, in building civilized communication.

c. Implicative Function

Contemporary phenomena such as cyberbullying on digital platforms often create psychological trauma (Sari, 2025). Gracia's implicative analysis (1995) allows the application of the concept of *al-haya* in QS. al-Qasas [33]: 53, which describes the Prophet's high level of *al-haya*, manifested in his reluctance to ask his guests to leave, reflecting his gentleness so as not to hurt others' feelings (Az-Zuhaili, 2013c, p. 398), is applied to the current digital context. Implicitly, the concept of *al-haya* becomes a strategy for dealing with cyberbullying, such as delaying a response for 24 hours before replying to negative comments, thereby avoiding the cycle of negative validation or hate speech (Mas'ud et al., 2025).

This framework aligns with research showing that digital literacy and self-regulation mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress, making self-regulation the key to managing digital pressure (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Additionally, studies on digital self-control tools confirm that technology-based self-control strategies are effective in maintaining discipline and balance in digital device usage (Roffarello & De Russis, 2023).

The digital implication: appropriate modesty enables social media productivity while maintaining professional-personal boundaries and respecting others' privacy (Mas'ud et al., 2025). This involves avoiding intrusive behaviors such as cyberbullying, tagging without consent, or entering private digital spaces (direct messages) without ethical consideration. Respecting others' boundaries is a manifestation of *al-haya* that preserves social harmony in the virtual world.

Synthesis of Al-haya In Digital Citizenship

In the framework of digital citizenship, *haya* functions as a moral compass that guides individuals in navigating the complexities of virtual anonymity. While the digital world often grants a sense of invisibility that can lead to ethical detachment, the revitalization of this term through Gracia's implicative function ensures that the user remains anchored in their human dignity.

Furthermore, digital *al-haya* contributes to the development of critical digital literacy. It is not merely about knowing how to use technology but having the spiritual and intellectual shame (shame as a virtue) to refrain from infringing upon the rights of others. This paradigm shift transforms the user from a passive consumer of content into an ethical "digital citizen" who prioritizes social harmony over viral impulsivity. Consequently, *al-haya* becomes a sustainable solution to digital social issues such as the erosion of privacy and the proliferation of hate speech, fostering an internal culture of respect and self-restraint that legal frameworks alone cannot achieve.

Conclusion

The thematic analysis has successfully inventoried three key verses from QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26, al-Qasas [28]: 25, and al-Ahzab [33]: 53 that represent the theological, socio-practical, and ethical dimensions of communication in the concept of *al-haya*. This inventory, in accordance with

Mustaqim's procedure (2024), confirms that the term *al-haya* is an active instrument that regulates vertical (with Allah), horizontal (social), and internal (self-control) relationships, supported by complete textual descriptions, *asbābun nuzūl*, and historical accounts.

Jorge J.E. Gracia's framework (1995) produces a layered interpretation: the historical function of revitalizing the original context (hypocritical skepticism in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26, Jahiliyah norms in QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25, and the Prophet's hospitality ethics in QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53); the semantic function of revealing the root meaning of *h-y-y* as a barrier against sin (divine likeness *and the modesty of Shu'aib's daughter, haya'* of the Prophet SAW); as well as the implicative function of bridging to contemporary verification of hoaxes (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 26), the limits of oversharing (QS. al-Qasas [28]: 25), and the pause in cyberbullying responses (QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 53). This analysis proves that the concept of *al-haya* is not passive shame but rather proactive ethics relevant to the digital era, in line with digital literacy (Ibrahim et al., 2024) and control tools (Roffarello & De Russis, 2023). These findings enrich the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an, offering empirical strategies such as a 24-hour delay in responding to negative responses (Mas'ud et al., 2025) and a foundation for developing an *al-haya*-based educational model to address digital trauma (Sari, 2025). Further research is recommended for broader empirical validation.

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