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Modern Platforms for Timeless Principles: Sharia-Based *'Aurah* Norms on *TikTok*

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Abstract: Research on digital Islam examines how Muslim women navigate modesty norms, yet less attention is given to the preachers who produce online moral regulation. This study addresses that gap by analysing how preachers on *Tiktok* discursively reconstruct *'aurah* and how religious authority is reshaped into a form of informal digital *hisbah* (moral enforcement). Using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the study examined 39 short-form videos from Malaysian and Indonesian preachers, focusing on nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, and intensification/mitigation to reveal how linguistic choices interact with *TikTok's* algorithmic environment to construct gendered socio-legal expectations. The findings show that *TikTok* is not only a medium for preaching but a site of "algorithmic moral regulation," where preachers portray women as "moral risks" and men as responsible guardians. Argumentation relies on authority and threat-based reasoning, including eschatological quantification that reframes modesty as a communal burden. A key insight is the "paradox of affective authority," where strict, fear-oriented warnings are softened with pastoral tones to maintain attention and engagement. The study contributes to digital religion scholarship by theorising *TikTok* as a mechanism of digital *hisbah* that re-entrenches patriarchal authority and compresses complex jurisprudence into simplified, fear-driven moral governance.
Keywords: '*Aurah*; *TikTok*; Muslim Preachers; Women; Sharia; Socio-legal; DHA

Introduction

The concept of *'aurah* —the boundaries of bodily concealment mandated in Islamic law—has long operated as a mechanism of social regulation, structuring Muslim moral identity, gendered expectations, and communal norms of propriety (Irfan & Yaqoob, 2023; Manzoor et al., 2024; Nurdin et al., 2024). While classical jurisprudence grounds *'aurah* in scriptural injunctions, its interpretation has always intersected with broader socio-legal norms (Hasbi et al., 2025), positioning modesty as a key instrument of behavioural governance rather than a purely theological prescription.

As Islamic discourse migrates into digital spaces, new tensions arise over how *'aurah* is defined, communicated, and enforced (Karakavak & Özbölük, 2023; Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017). *TikTok* restructures religious expression by circulating algorithmically curated, short-form videos that privilege speed, visibility, and emotional resonance, creating a platform environment where spiritual and religious meanings are shaped by affective engagement rather than doctrinal depth (Missier, 2025; Reinis, 2025; Xie et al., 2025). Existing scholarship has predominantly focused on how Muslim women negotiate digital modesty (Amalanathan & Reddy-Best, 2024; Bencherrat, 2025; Hotait & El Sayed, 2025; Karakavak & Özbölük, 2023; Manzoor et al., 2024; Mishra & Basu, 2014; Pramiyanti, 2019; Az-zakia Rahmani et al., 2025), yet the production and policing of *'aurah* norms online remains comparatively understudied. Some studies view *TikTok* as a passive medium (Chen et al., 2025; Reinis, 2025; Daswin, 2025), thereby overlooking how algorithmic visibility and virality actively shape the framing and authority of religious rulings.

TikTok's "For You Page" elevates preachers, not necessarily trained scholars, based on engagement metrics, enabling new forms of digital moral authority (Kerim et al., 2025). As content can be pushed to

users without intent, the platform generates modes of uninvited moral oversight that traditional offline settings do not replicate. Regardless, empirical research has not examined how digital preachers construct authority, justify normative claims, or frame *'aurah* as a gendered obligation within these algorithmic conditions. The socio-legal implications, particularly the potential for informal moral regulation and the reinforcement of gendered behavioural governance, remain understudied. This study addresses this gap by analysing how Malaysian and Indonesian preachers on *TikTok* discursively construct, justify, and moralise *'aurah* within an algorithmically mediated environment. It examines three questions: Firstly, how is religious authority performed and legitimised in digital *da'wah* (Islamic preaching)? Secondly, what linguistic strategies construct *'aurah* as a normative rule? Thirdly, how do these strategies shape gendered expectations and socio-legal governance?

Using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the study analyses nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, and intensification/mitigation strategies to connect textual patterns with socio-historical gender norms and the affordances of the platform. By situating *'aurah* discourse within debates on digital religious authority and moral regulation, this study contributes new empirical evidence and theoretical insight. It shows that *TikTok* not only circulates religious teachings but reshapes the production of normative Islamic discourse by amplifying patriarchal authority, intensifying moral surveillance, and enabling new forms of algorithmically driven behavioural governance.

Literature Review

Algorithmic Religious Authority and the Discursive Production of Normativity

The movement of *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) into digital platforms marks a structural transformation in how religious authority is produced, circulated, and legitimised. Platforms such as *TikTok* actively shape which religious messages gain visibility through algorithmic gatekeeping (Alfi et al., 2025). Although earlier studies highlighted the democratising potential of online *da'wah* (Jima'ain, 2023; Kerim et al., 2025), more recent work shows that platform architectures create new hierarchies based on visibility, affective appeal, and engagement rather than traditional scholarly credentials (Carrigan & Jordan, 2022; Högberg, 2023; Wong, 2025). Rachman et al. (2025) describe this as a post-normal environment where authority emerges through platform performance. This shift produces moral tensions, as noted by Setia and Dilawati (2024) and Hasan and Anoraga (2025).The speed and brevity demanded by algorithmic formats encourage preachers to simplify complex rulings, sometimes at the expense of doctrinal nuance, which scholars of *maqasid al-sharia* (higher objectives of Islamic divine law) view as essential for responsible interpretation (Mat & Shamsuddin, 2024).

Analysing this environment necessitates a discursive approach that extends beyond sociological explanations. Missier (2025) argues that digital influence increasingly relies on affect and emotional resonance, highlighting the central role of discourse in shaping persuasion. Van Dijk (2008) conceptualises discourse as a tool through which ideological actors shape social reality. Digital preachers can thus be understood as ideological brokers whose authority is performed through rhetorical choices. Fairclough's (2001) argument about authoritative discourse in low deliberation settings applies to *TikTok,* where religious rulings are compressed into 15 to 60 second clips. Under these constraints, the DHA strategies are especially suitable because they enable categorical classification, moral evaluation, and emotionally heightened messaging to be delivered in highly compressed formats.

These broader shifts in platform-mediated authority are also reflected in how digital users, namely content producers and audiences, encounter and respond to religious guidance online. Recent studies show that digital platforms have fundamentally reshaped how *fatwas* are produced, circulated, and consumed, creating new patterns of public engagement with religious authority in online spaces (Adel & Numan, 2023; Ali & Aljahsh, 2025). Research across Pakistan, Indonesia, and the broader Muslim world demonstrates that digital *fatwas* now gain influence through platform dynamics such as visibility, sentiment, and audience interaction, rather than through traditional institutional structures alone (Mualimin et al., 2025; Wahid et al., 2025;). Interestingly, the relatable style typical of digital *fatwa* (Islamic rulings) communication increases acceptance among young audiences, at the same time, can obscure the

power dynamics embedded within simplified religious messaging (Rosidi, 2021). The literature, therefore converges on the idea that digital media reshape the conditions under which religious authority is constructed. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on how authority is performed linguistically in short-form video. This study addresses that gap by analysing the discursive strategies through which preachers frame *'aurah* as a normative rule within an algorithmic environment.

Gendered Moral Regulation and the Discursive Control of *'Aurah*

Even though '*aurah* is doctrinally applicable to both men and women (Sawai et al., 2020); Uthman, 2021), research consistently shows that its enforcement disproportionately targets women. Classical sources such as Surah An-Nur, Surah Al-Ahzab, and tafsir works by Ibn Kathir and al-Tabari provide interpretative flexibility (Nurdin et al., 2024). Contemporary moral discourse, however, tends to compress this interpretative breadth into rigid behavioural expectations that link community honour to women's appearance and conduct (Arshad et al., 2024; Manzoor et al., 2024). Studies on religious socialisation further show that women shoulder a heavier burden of embodying communal piety, modesty, and moral respectability (Auliya et al., 2022; Gondal & Hatta, 2024).

Digital environments do not significantly alter this imbalance. While some scholarship highlights how Muslim women reclaim agency online using *TikTok*, *Instagram*, and other platforms to challenge stereotypes, resist stigma, and articulate alternative interpretations of modesty (Aslam et al., 2025; Az-zakia Rahmani et al., 2025; Einstein Mara, 2024; Hotait & El Sayed, 2025; Sözen, 2025) the broader communicative ecology still privileges gendered surveillance. Hasyim (2025) demonstrates that male preachers frequently construct women as morally vulnerable and in need of correction, a framing that aligns with long-standing patriarchal expectations. Algorithmic systems further reinforce such narratives Hegazy & Abdelgalil (2025) observe that conservative, essentialist discourse often receives stronger amplification because it elicits high emotional engagement. This phenomenon mirrors broader findings that *TikTok's* algorithm prioritises content that triggers affective responses, whether moral, conspiratorial, or emotionally charged (Cotter et al., 2022; Kanthawala et al., 2025; Romann & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2025). Existing literature examines women's digital self-presentation and the rise of digital authority, but little is known about how male preachers use linguistic strategies to regulate women's bodies in short-form video. By grounding the study in DHA and in broader theories of discourse and power from Wodak, van Dijk, and Foucault, this research investigates how '*aurah* operates as a mechanism of gendered control that is reinforced by the algorithmic design of digital platforms.

Method

This study employed a discourse-oriented qualitative design to analyse how Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim preachers construct *'aurah* in short-form digital *da'wah*. Rather than examining audience reception or platform analytics, the focus was on the linguistic and rhetorical strategies through which authority, morality, and gendered expectations were articulated on *TikTok*. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to uncover how discourse functions as a mechanism of socio-religious regulation within an algorithmically mediated environment. *TikTok* was selected as the data site because of its high engagement rate, rapid circulation patterns, and growing prominence as a source of Islamic guidance among users. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify videos where *'aurah* was explicitly discussed. For this study, videos were included based on three criteria. Firstly, they needed to discuss '*aurah* rules or modesty norms clearly. Secondly, they had to refer to Islamic sources such as Qur'anic verses, hadith, or *fatwa* traditions. Lastly, they were required to be in a short-form format of about 30 seconds to three minutes. These criteria reflect the platform's content norms and allow for the consistent analysis of discursive features within the constraints of *TikTok*'s design.

39 videos were collected from Malaysian and Indonesian preachers, using high-traffic hashtags commonly associated with *'aurah* content (#Aurat, #AuratWanita, #MenutupAurat, #AuratdalamIslam). These two contexts share linguistic and cultural proximity, allowing the study to focus on a transnational Malay-Islamic digital sphere rather than conducting a comparative national analysis. All videos were transcribed verbatim in their original languages and translated into English to preserve meaning and

facilitate analysis. The analysis was guided by the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), that links linguistic patterns to broader socio-historical contexts. DHA is suitable for the study of religious discourse because it recognises how doctrinal concepts, such as *'aurah*, grounded in classical jurisprudence, are recontextualised in new social settings. The approach is problem-oriented and attentive to the reproduction of power, legitimisation, and normativity, making it appropriate for examining how preachers frame gendered moral obligations and assert digital religious authority. Its structured taxonomy of discursive strategies provides a systematic method for identifying how claims about *'aurah* are justified and moralised.

A three-stage coding process was employed in this study. Firstly, the videos were examined holistically to identify broad thematic patterns that shaped the overall narrative and tone of the content. Secondly, the textual and verbal features were coded using five DHA strategies tailored for short-form digital religious content. These included: (i) Nomination, which examines how social actors—such as men, women, families, and communities are identified and categorised, including cases where women are defined primarily by their '*aurah*; (ii) Predication, which focuses on the attributes and moral evaluations assigned to these actors, such as framing modest women as "pure" or describing immodesty as "sinful" or "shameful"; (iii) Argumentation, which identifies the topoi used to justify claims, particularly the topos of authority (scriptural evidence used to close debate) and the topos of threat (warnings of divine punishment); (iv) Perspectivation, which analyses how preachers position themselves, by aligning their speech with prophetic instruction to enhance legitimacy; and (v) Intensification and Mitigation, which captures how emotional force is modulated through fear appeals or softer pastoral tones. Finally, insights from these stages were synthesised to demonstrate how these strategies collectively reconstruct '*aurah* as a gendered moral boundary within an algorithmically shaped religious sphere.

Results

Nomination: Linguistic Coding of *'Aurah*

The data from the findings showed that nomination strategies constructed *'aurah* as a gendered and identity-defining boundary rather than a behavioural guideline. Preachers used categorical and essentialising language to link womanhood directly to the obligation of concealment. The utterance *"A woman is 'aurah, meaning most parts of a woman's body are considered 'aurah"* [Preacher 2] relied on the copular verb "is" to collapse identity into a requirement to be covered. This identity-equivalence structure turned *'aurah* into an inherent feature of women rather than a negotiable rule. The phrase *"most parts of a woman's body"* expanded the domain of vulnerability and constructed exposure as nearly unavoidable without strict discipline. Male figures were nominated in a contrasting way. They were constructed as supervisors whose religious identity depended on their regulation of women. In the phrase *"A father who allows his daughter to go out without covering her 'aurah will be dragged into hell by his daughter"* [Preacher 1], the conditional clause marked the father as morally responsible. The metaphor *"dragged into hell"* nominated men as accountable guardians whose salvation was tied to ensuring compliance. This relational nomination created a hierarchy in which women were positioned as exposed bodies and men as custodians who had to control that exposure.

Preachers also nominated body parts and clothing as moralised objects. Terms such as *"hair," "arms,"* and *"legs"* were used not as neutral anatomical references but as signs of spiritual danger. The statement *"One strand of hair exposed will become a dark mark in the afterlife"* [Preacher 3] used minimisation through the phrase *"one strand"* to intensify the severity of even the smallest exposure. The expression *"Dressed but naked" [Preacher 32]* reclassified clothing by equating tight garments with nudity. Body parts and garments were linguistically constructed as unstable sites of moral risk. At the societal level, nomination framed the present era as morally degraded. The utterance *"Exposing is haram. It's sinful. It's everywhere. Why? Because today, it's become normal"* [Preacher 4] used the adverbs *"everywhere"* and *"today"* to classify contemporary society as a corrupted moral environment. The analogy *"Showing the arm is on the same level as Western women wearing bikinis at the beach"* [Preacher 4] nominated Western femininity as a contrasting and morally

inferior category. This comparison built cultural boundaries that positioned Muslim modesty as a marker of moral superiority.

These nomination patterns constructed a moral taxonomy in which women were identified as inherently exposed subjects, men were identified as guardians responsible for enforcement, body parts and garments were treated as moral triggers, and contemporary society was framed as a site of moral decline. These linguistic constructions reflected broader Islamic revivalist concerns in Malaysia and Indonesia, where modesty was positioned as a key marker of moral identity. In nomination, preachers stabilised *'aurah* as an identity-defining boundary linked to gender hierarchy and cultural differentiation.

Predication: Moral Evaluation and the Construction of Obedience and Transgression

Within the predication strategy, moral identities were constructed through evaluative adjectives, moralising verbs, categorical labels, metaphors and intensifiers that marked actors as virtuous or deviant. The discourse did not merely state whether *'aurah* was covered; it attached moral value to the actors through language that guided the audience toward fixed judgments about behaviour, intention and identity.

Positive predication relied on evaluative verbs and adjectival predicates that attributed virtue to compliant women. In *"Women who obey Allah, the Prophet, and their husbands, what did the Prophet say? Eight gates [of paradise]. Choose whichever one you want to enter" [Preacher 28]*, the verb "obey" functioned as a positive moral predicate that elevated compliant women into a spiritually privileged category. The rhetorical structure, which combined a triadic listing of religious authorities with the imperative "*Choose whichever*", linguistically encoded compliance as rewarded moral status. Similarly, in "*You will feel calm*" [Preacher 28], "calm" operated as an affective predicate. By linking emotional regulation to bodily discipline, the discourse positioned modesty as both religiously correct and psychologically beneficial. These positive predicates demonstrated how linguistic features were used to construct obedience as a holistic moral identity.

Negative predication was far more frequent and relied on categorical labels, metaphors and extreme case formulations that framed non-compliance as spiritual danger. The label *"members of hell" [Preacher 9]* used a collective noun to categorise women into a fixed moral group, implying permanent identity rather than temporary behaviour. The phrase "*dressed but not really dressed*" [Preacher 38] employed a paradoxical predicate to delegitimise partial compliance. The negating form "not really," linguistically erased the appearance of modesty, reclassifying tight clothing as an identity marker of transgression. A more intensified form of negative predication appeared in "*Satan understands this, and he uses women as an easy way, a very easy way, to drag men into sin*" [Preacher 33]. Here, the repetition of intensifiers ("easy way," "a very easy way") and the verb "drag" constructed women as metaphoric instruments of temptation. This agentive metaphor framed the female body as spiritually weaponised, not merely uncovered. Such predication positioned women as passive objects but powerful moral threats, demonstrating how language produced gendered risk.

Men were also morally evaluated, using relational predicates that tied to their authority over women. In "*The man is a leader for the woman*" [Preacher 34], the predicate "leader" normalised gender hierarchy through a relational noun. Male identity was predicated as supervisory and corrective. Negative predication appeared when men failed to regulate women, as in "*forbidden from entering paradise*" [Preacher 9]. This predicate functioned as a sanctioning formula, positioning moral masculinity as dependent on disciplinary anger. Acceptance or tolerance became linguistically marked as spiritual failure. Variation across the dataset showed that predication did not form a uniform pattern. Softer predicates such as "*calm*" and "*struggling*" created a pastoral sub-discourse, while more punitive predicates such as "*dragged into hell*" and "*members of hell*" represented a highly intensified mode. This fluctuation reflected how digital preachers managed audience expectations and algorithmic visibility through shifts in evaluative tone.

From a discourse perspective, predication here acted as a mechanism of moral governance. Women were linguistically positioned as moral subjects whose value depended on bodily discipline, while men were positioned as guardians whose moral worth depended on corrective action. The evaluative load of the predicates shaped how *'aurah* was understood: not as neutral behaviour but as a moral index of Islamic

identity. Furthermore, platform dynamics amplified emotionally charged predicates, reinforcing the visibility of content framed around fear, shame or spiritual reward.

Argumentation: Legitimising '*Aurah* through Divine Authority

Within the argumentation strategy, *'aurah* observance was legitimised by recurring discursive warrants, notably the topos of authority, topos of threat, and topos of moral rectitude. These warrants did not merely describe religious rules; they functioned as linguistic mechanisms, namely scriptural citation, causal connectors, quantification, metaphor, and refutational questions that collectively framed *'aurah* as an obligation with no interpretive alternatives.

The topos of divine authority appeared through direct scriptural citation, functioning as argumentative warrants. Qur'anic verses and hadith were mobilised as premises designed to close debate. The invocation of Surah al-Ahzab 59 was used to establish that covering is mandatory linguistically. In a hadith, the utterance *"Women who are dressed but naked will not even smell Paradise"* (Muslim 2128) served as a conclusive warrant, presenting the claim as doctrinally sealed. Likewise, *"The Prophet said: Your everyday clothing, O women, should be like the clothing you wear in prayer"* [Preacher 28] used analogy as argument, mapping ritual attire onto everyday behaviour. Authority was encoded linguistically via prophetic imperatives, constructing compliance as non-negotiable.

The topos of threat used causal structures and intensified eschatological imagery that justified *'aurah* enforcement by foregrounding consequences. Utterances such as *"headed straight into the pit of hellfire"* [Preacher 32] employed violent metaphor to generate fear-based legitimation. Similarly, "*One of the ten people whose prayers Allah does not accept is the person who prays but leaves the house without covering their 'aurah"* [Preacher 37] relied on an if–then causal logic, framing modesty as a prerequisite for valid worship. Quantification strengthened this threat-based reasoning. The utterance "*If one person sees you, that's one sin… Ten people see you? That's ten sins. And you get all of it"* [Preacher 17] used numerical escalation to present immodesty as an accumulative spiritual liability. This linguistic framing constructed risk as measurable and transferable, broadening responsibility beyond the individual to the wider community.

The topos of moral rectitude operated through definitional reversal and evaluative reasoning that disqualified alternative moral claims. In *"I don't eat pork… I just don't wear the hijab. But I have a good heart. How is that a good heart? That's a misunderstanding"* [Preacher 17], the predicate "misunderstanding" functioned as a definitional correction, asserting that moral goodness required visible compliance. Another utterance, *"It's better to say: Yes, I'm still struggling… Please pray for me to change"* [Preacher 20], used a comparative evaluative frame to normalise struggle as the morally acceptable stance, implicitly delegitimising moral autonomy. Argumentation relied on refutational moves, formulated as rhetorical questions that presupposed the invalidity of opposing views. *"Is the Qur'an not enough to be a guide?"* [Preacher 25] served as a pre-emptive rebuttal with presuppositional framing, assuming the sufficiency of scripture. Similarly, *"That's not covering your 'aurah. That's just covering your veins"* [Preacher 35] used contrastive metaphor to undermine insufficient covering. The metaphor of "*veins*" foregrounded anatomical exposure, reinforcing the argument that modesty required concealing shape rather than merely skin.

Variation across the data demonstrated that argumentation was not one-sided. Some preachers relied on calm scriptural anchoring, while others used threat-based escalation, with vivid imagery and numerical logic. This variation reflected different rhetorical alignments within Malaysia–Indonesia's digital *da'wah* ecosystem, where platform algorithms tended to amplify emotionally charged warnings while still sustaining gentler persuasive strands. Across these patterns, argumentation discursively produced legitimacy for *'aurah* with layered warrants that constructed modesty as obligatory, deviation as dangerous, and alternative interpretations as invalid. These interlocking linguistic strategies indicate that *'aurah* emerged not as a matter of personal discretion but as a rationalised and morally binding duty grounded in scriptural authority and eschatological consequence.

Perspectivisation and Framing: Positioning *'Aurah* as a Collective Duty Between Self, Society, and Allah

In the perspectivisation and framing strategy, *'aurah* was formed as a multilayered duty situated among the self, the community, and divine command. The discourse positioned it as a shared moral structure of the *ummah* (community), not as a private lifestyle choice. A coordinated use of deictic movement, evaluative patterning, and stance-taking practices guided the audience interpretation to a preferred moral viewpoint. Perspectivisation showed how speakers momentarily adopted personal, communal, or divine standpoints to legitimise their claims while delegitimising behavioural alternatives.

At the personal level, enactive perspectivisation was used through the ventriloquation of listeners' voices. The utterance "*I want to be my true self… Now I want to be myself*" [Preacher 18] reconstructed autonomy as misguided reasoning. This was immediately countered by evaluative stance-taking such as "*If your heart is good, you will listen to God*" [Preacher 26], which framed obedience as the only credible moral orientation. The alternation between mimicked self-justification and corrective evaluation guided audiences to reject autonomy-based arguments and recentre divine command as the primary moral reference point. Collective perspectivisation broadened responsibility to the societal level. Nostalgic framing in "*There is no more shame… In our time, it's become normal not to cover*" [Preacher 23] contrasted an idealised past with a morally degraded present, constructing non-compliance as symptomatic of broader social decline. Epistemic warnings such as "*If you don't have knowledge, don't speak. You could mislead many people*" [Preacher 24] positioned improper speech as a communal hazard. *'Aurah* became a shared moral duty in which individual lapses were presented as threats to collective religious integrity.

Religious framing was activated when speakers adopted a divine vantage point. Statements such as "*Covering 'aurah … that's not a command from an ustaz but from Allah*" [Preacher 23] displaced interpretive agency from preachers to God, reinforcing the idea that modesty was not subject to personal negotiation. Eschatological framing intensified this stance, with utterances such as "*Most of the people in hell are women… The biggest sin: not covering 'aurah*" [Preacher 7], embedding *'aurah* within a salvific logic tied to ultimate consequence. Moral-social framing further positioned bodily visibility as a communal risk. Hyperbolic formulations like "*Just a glimpse of a girl's hair… wow, that's something else*" [Preacher 14] and causal constructions such as "*Just one strand of your hair… can drag four men into hell*" [Preacher 11] shifted perspectivisation to the imagined male gaze. These linguistic moves presented female bodily visibility not as individual expression but as a catalyst for male spiritual danger. Moreover, practical framing softened the strictures of *'aurah* through actionable advice. In "*If you don't feel like wearing socks, wear a long top and closed shoes. InshaAllah it won't be visible*" [Preacher 28], modesty was framed as manageable rather than burdensome, presenting compliance as achievable in everyday routines.

The perspectivisation connected the micro-level framings to the wider Malaysia–Indonesia socio-religious dynamics. Nostalgic contrasts echoed regional concerns about moral decline in a rapidly modernising, media-saturated environment. The construction of women's bodies as communal risk aligned with longstanding patriarchal models of moral regulation in Southeast Asian Islamic revivalism. Emphasis on visibility, obedience, and public judgement resonated with the rise of digital religious authority on platforms like *TikTok*, where algorithmic visibility amplifies disciplinary speech. These choices connect to wider debates because the way preachers preach about modesty, gender roles, and religious duty reflects ongoing discussions in society about how Islam shapes behaviour and identity today.

Intensification and Mitigation: Enforcing *'Aurah* with Fear Appeals and Pastoral Reassurance

In the intensification and mitigation strategy, *'aurah* was presented in the forms of patterned linguistic amplification and selective softening. The discourse operationalised lexical intensifiers, hyperbole, extreme case formulations, sensory imagery, metaphoric contrasts, repetition, and imperative constructions to heighten emotional impact. The linguistic devices positioned *'aurah* as a high-risk moral threshold whose violation endangered spiritual standing, communal stability, and divine approval.

Intensification formed the dominant mode of regulation. One recurrent mechanism was graduated exclusion, which escalated the severity of punishment in layered phrasing. The utterance "*Those prohibited by Allah from even smelling paradise, not entering it, just smelling it*" [Preacher 21] built successive levels of

exclusion, transforming a doctrinal rule into an escalating threat. This structural pattern intensified fear by portraying punishment as increasingly absolute. Intensification also relied on sensory and visual imagery, as in "*A father bathes naked while the child plays with a yellow duck in the basin*" [Preacher 27]. The striking juxtaposition of innocence and impropriety created a semiotic shock effect, implying that '*aurah* boundaries were violated even in domestic spaces. *'Aurah* became a boundary requiring vigilance in all contexts through such imagery. Preachers used extreme case formulations to construct *'aurah* violations as categorically severe. Statements suggesting an inevitable trajectory toward hellfire or asserting that minor lapses could invalidate prayer framed *'aurah* as a non-negotiable threshold obligation. These formulations echoed broader digital *da'wah* patterns where fear-based rhetoric secured audience attention within competitive algorithmic environments. Intensification also showed numerical escalation, as in "*If one person sees you, that is one sin… Ten people see you? That is ten sins. And you get all of it*" [Preacher 17]. This arithmetic logic converted *'aurah* into a quantifiable moral burden, presenting sin as cumulative.

Mitigation appeared as a secondary yet significant strategy, used to maintain engagement without loosening doctrinal boundaries. In "*For those who are not there yet, help them with prayer. Do not belittle. Do not mock. Invite… Pray for them*" [Preacher 12], the repeated negation and imperative verbs softened the interpersonal stance. The discourse cultivated a pastoral voice that encouraged compassion toward those struggling with compliance through ritualised repetition. Mitigation here served relational functions, offering emotional support while maintaining *'aurah* requirements. Mitigation were also expressed in empathetic redefinition, which was visible in "*Wearing a long hijab… that is not a sign of being a religious teacher. That is a sign that she is struggling to obey Allah*" [Preacher 5]. This reframed visible piety as a sign of sincere effort rather than pretension. Linguistically, the shift from judgment to empathy expanded the moral community to include those in transition, reducing resistance while preserving normative expectations.

Variation across the data unveiled the intensification and mitigation functioned along a spectrum rather than as uniform patterns. It highlights a tension that reflects a market-driven environment in which algorithms reward dramatic, punitive warnings. At the same time, community expectations still value the gentleness associated with traditional religious guidance. The reliance on eschatological imagery, maximalist metaphors, and quantification reflected anxieties surrounding moral decline and Islamic identity politics in contemporary Malaysia and Indonesia. Mitigation strategies mirrored communal norms that value pastoral care and collective responsibility. These discursive moves reasserted religious authority, reinforced gendered norms, and framed *'aurah* observance as an emotionally charged yet navigable moral duty.

Discussion

This study examined how preachers on *TikTok* discursively construct *'aurah*, how religious authority is performed in short-form digital *da'wah*, and how these strategies shape gendered expectations and socio-legal practices. The findings reveal that *'aurah* discourse is not merely moral instruction but a digitally mediated regime of governance shaped by linguistic choices, algorithmic incentives, and long-standing patriarchal norms. Using DHA, the discussion integrates the micro-linguistic patterns identified in the Results with broader socio-historical, gendered and platform-specific dynamics.

Algorithmic Morality and the Rise of Digital '*Aurah* Governance

In answering RQ1 and RQ3, the study shows that religious authority on *TikTok* is constructed through gendered nomination and predication strategies that position women as primary moral subjects. This is consistent with Gondal and Hatta (2024), yet the current findings extend their argument by showing how *TikTok*'s architecture amplifies such framings. In van Dijk's terms, preachers reproduce "ideological square" patterns that foreground women's vulnerability and background male responsibility, thereby naturalising asymmetrical gender roles. The fragmentation of the female body into regulated parts reflects Wodak's DHA premise that discursive strategies materialise social hierarchies. Within a Foucauldian lens, the constant availability of these messages through algorithmic circulation creates what can be understood as a digital panopticon, where users internalise surveillance even without direct enforcement. This re-

entrenchment is not merely rhetorical but also socio-legal. By repeatedly linking men's piety to their governance of women's *'aurah*, preachers reproduce a system of vicarious morality where male guardianship becomes a communal expectation. This supports Hasyim (2025) on patriarchal reinforcement but adds a new dimension: *TikTok*'s circulation mechanics push gendered warnings into public visibility, making *'aurah* policing more pervasive and normalised than in traditional settings.

The findings also address RQ2 and RQ3 by showing how preachers rely on the topos of threat, turning *TikTok* into a form of digital *hisbah*. Unlike Rosidi's (2021) claim that digital *fatwas* increase accessibility, the current study indicates a shift toward informal legal adjudication. Preachers compress complex jurisprudence into simplified binary rules, confirming Setia and Dilawati's (2024) observation that social media accelerates doctrinal reduction. However, the present findings add that such compression is not only cognitive but structural: platform design rewards decisive, punitive language. Predications such as "dressed but naked" and "people of hell" legitimise moral policing by presenting condemnation as scripturally anchored and therefore incontestable. This dynamic raises socio-legal concerns: *'aurah* becomes a publicly adjudicated norm, enforced not by formal institutions but by dispersed online actors whose authority is algorithmically elevated. A central interpretive contribution of this study lies in explaining the tension between intensification and mitigation. Rather than treating fear and empathy as contradictory, the findings position this duality as a strategic adaptation to the attention economy. While Hasan and Anoraga (2025) note increasing dramatisation in digital religion, the present analysis shows that preachers pair fear with pastoral softness to maintain both doctrinal rigidity and audience retention. This aligns with Missier's (2025) argument that young users respond more to affective resonance than doctrinal detail. Within a Foucauldian view of pastoral power, the mitigation strategies function as techniques of relational control: care is used to secure compliance, not to liberalise norms. This interpretation connects directly to RQ1: authority is performed through alternating tones that reinforce obedience while preserving the preacher's credibility as both disciplinarian and guide.

The novelty of this study lies in conceptualising *TikTok 'aurah* discourse as an emergent form of digital *hisbah*, where discursive strategies interact with algorithmic visibility to produce informal moral governance. While prior work has described online preaching, none have shown how DHA strategies, especially the topos of threat and predication, function within platform-driven logics to shape gendered socio-legal norms. This contribution matters because it reframes digital *da'wah* not only as content creation but as a mode of governance embedded in everyday media infrastructures.

Conclusion

This study examined how preachers on *TikTok* in Malaysia and Indonesia construct and legitimise '*aurah* norms using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The analysis demonstrated that digital *da'wah* does not merely communicate modesty requirements. It reconstructs *'aurah* as a fixed, gendered, and morally consequential boundary within coordinated nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, and intensification/mitigation. The study shows that religious authority on *TikTok* is performed using linguistic strategies that merge traditional patriarchal discourse with platform-driven visibility; that *'aurah* is framed as a non-negotiable rule justified by divine command, threat, and moral logic. These discursive mechanisms contribute to broader systems of gendered socio-legal governance through communal surveillance and algorithmic amplification. The findings offer three higher-order contributions. Theoretically, the study advances debates on digital religious authority by showing how algorithmic infrastructures reinforce, rather than destabilise, gendered moral regulation. Methodologically, it demonstrates the suitability of DHA for short-form religious media by illustrating how micro-linguistic patterns and topoi reproduce larger ideological formations. Empirically, it provides one of the earliest detailed accounts of Malaysian and Indonesian *TikTok da'wah* on *'aurah*, indicating how platform-specific affordances intensify the circulation of fearful, paternalistic, and disciplinary messaging.

The study has limitations. The dataset exhibits strong gender asymmetry, but the causes of this imbalance cannot be fully determined. This constrains the generalisability of the findings beyond *'aurah-centered* discourse. Future research could explore perspectives from preachers themselves to better

understand the factors contributing to this gender imbalance in digital preaching. Moreover, the analysis focuses exclusively on preacher-generated content; without audience data, it remains unclear how users interpret, negotiate, or resist these constructions. Future research could extend this work by examining audience reception, particularly how young Muslim women navigate or contest digital moral regulation in their everyday media practices. Comparative analysis across platforms would clarify how different algorithmic systems shape religious authority, while multimodal approaches could reveal how visual and performative cues interact with language to produce moral governance. In conclusion, *TikTok* functions not only as a site of informal religious instruction but as an emerging arena of digital moral regulation where gendered norms are reinforced, legitimised, and circulated. Using DHA, this study shows that the interplay of linguistic strategies, patriarchal tradition, and algorithmic visibility sustains an evolving form of digital *hisbah*, with significant implications for understanding contemporary Islamic discourse and its socio-legal effects.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest associated with this article.

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