

# THE IMPACT OF 'SELFIE' PHENOMENON AMONG THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of *selfie* among the millennial generation has become a very common thing to do. In the study of contemporary Islamic law, the approach of *maqâshid syar'ah* that seeks to gain *mashlahât* (benefits) and avoids *mafsadât* (harms) in human life may be used as a special consideration for dealing with the said phenomenon. This literature-based study was aimed to uncover the said phenomenon by reviewing it using *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* approaches. The results of the study indicate that the said approaches have urgency as a means of control against the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the current millennial generation. *Selfie* should only be done if it brings benefits and goodness (*mashlahât*), otherwise, it must be avoided.

**Abstrak:** Fenomena *selfie* pada generasi millennial sudah menjadi hal yang sangat sering dilakukan. Dalam kajian hukum Islam kontemporer, pendekatan *maqâshid syar'ah* yang berupaya mewujudkan *mashlahât* dan menghindarkan *mafsadât* dalam kehidupan manusia bisa dijadikan pertimbangan khusus menghadapi fenomena *selfie* tersebut. Kajian berbasis studi pustaka ini berupaya mengungkap fenomena tersebut ditinjau dengan menggunakan pendekatan *mashlahât* dan *mafsadât*. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan *mashlahât* dan *mafsadât* memiliki urgensi sebagai alat kontrol terhadap fenomena *selfie* yang dilakukan oleh generasi millennial saat ini. *Selfie* hanya boleh dilakukan jika mendatangkan manfaat dan kebaikan (*mashlahât*), sebaliknya jika tidak, maka *selfie* harus dihindari.

**Keywords:** *selfie*, millennial generation, Islamic law, *mashlahât*, *mafsadât*

## Introduction

This study departs from the authors' interest about the fundamental values of Islamic law (*maqâshid syar'ah*) and the authors' curiosity on the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the today's millennial generation. The study of the concept of *mashlahât* has claimed a very strategic and important place as an effort in responding to and answering the issues faced by the people in this contemporary era. Such is true when the concept is juxtaposed with the said *selfie* phenomenon.

The progress in the technological era, especially the advancement in the communication technology, has been easing human in conducting their activities that could not otherwise be done in the past. News and information from all over the world are very easily obtained with no time delay and people may access them just by opening the *gadget*.<sup>1</sup> In this modern era, people have benefited greatly from various advances in the information technology even to the point that they no longer need to shop to modern stores or conventional markets since they can do it through their smartphones.

Thanks to the advancement of smartphone technology, the use of social media has also been progressing very rapidly. The vast use of telecommunication media has brought a very significant impact on communication behaviour today.<sup>2</sup> One of them is narcissism. This narcissistic behaviour is generally known as *selfie* which is defined by some experts as taking one's own picture either alone, with a partner, or a group of people using a *cell phone* camera - by holding it with his/her hands or with assistive devices or directing it to a mirror - and then sharing it via social media.<sup>3</sup> Another definition of *selfie* is 'a self-portrait digital photograph, typically taken with a digital camera or smartphone, which may be held in the hand or supported by a selfie stick'.<sup>4</sup> *Selfies* are often shared on social media via social networking services such as Facebook (FB), Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram (IG). The word *selfie* was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013.<sup>5</sup> In the dictionary, the word *selfie* is a noun which is defined as 'a photo of yourself that you take, typically with a smartphone or webcam, and usually put on social media'.<sup>6</sup>

Etymologically, the first-known appearance of *selfie* in written form occurred in

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<sup>1</sup> Mulawarman and Aldila Dyas Nurfitri, "Perilaku Pengguna Media Sosial Beserta Implikasinya Ditinjau dari Perspektif Psikologi Sosial Terapan," in *Buletin Psikologi*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2017, pp. 36-44.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Hess, "The Selfie Assemblage," in *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 9, 2015, p. 1629.

<sup>3</sup> P. Sorokowski, A. Sorokowska, A. Oleszkiewicz, T. Frackowiak, A. Huk, and K. Pisanski, "Selfie Posting Behaviours are Associated with Narcissism among Men," in *International Journal of Society for the Study of Individual Differences (ISSID)*, Vol. 85, 2015, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> "Selfie," in <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

<sup>5</sup> "A Brief History of the Selfie," in <https://www.huffpost.com>, (6 Dec 2017).

<sup>6</sup> "Selfie," in [oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com).

2002 on an Australian news website, but the word did not see much use of it until 2012. By November 2013, *selfie* appeared frequently enough in print and electronic media that *Oxford Dictionaries* (publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary as well as other dictionaries) chose the word as its Word of the Year. This announcement itself led to a significant increase in the use of the word by news organizations, an increase that was further boosted following the December 2013 memorial service for Nelson Mandela, at which the then American President Barack Obama was caught taking a *selfie* with the Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt and the British Prime Minister David Cameron. The word *selfie*, with its suggestions of self-centeredness and self-involvement, was particularly popular with critics who saw this moment as a reflection of the President's character.<sup>7</sup>

*Selfie* has been popular and is done by nearly all groups of people: youngsters, students, teachers, bureaucrats, politicians, businessmen, domestic workers, and so forth. It knows no boundary. Even it may be categorized as an overdose activity.<sup>8</sup> The passion for doing *selfie* that has become a phenomenon in today's generation has sometimes gotten out of hand. *Selfie* fans seem to be carried away in all situations and conditions, so they don't realize that the *selfie* results they post may contain elements of showing off, hurting, and offending other people's feelings. Taking *selfies* without publishing in a post on social media certainly doesn't lead to any problem. However, if the *selfie* is posted on social media, there is likely to be a hidden intention from doing so whether to get a response from the *netizens*, such as *likes* and *comments*, or praises from others.<sup>9</sup>

In Indonesia, several studies on the *selfie* phenomenon have actually been conducted. Some of them include Raditya who studied *selfie* and social media as an existence proof in arts,<sup>10</sup> Krisnawati and Soetjningsih who studied the relation between *selfie* and lonelines on students,<sup>11</sup> and Ikhsan and Pranata who studied the motives of *selfie* among students.<sup>12</sup> Differing to these studies, the authors focused this study in responding to the issue of social media use that changes the inevitable people's behaviour and is demanded to go along with the development of era. Meanwhile, the paradigm of Islamic law which is *shâlih fî kulli zamân wa makân* (good in all time and place) is required to provide a response to the issue in concern. Islamic law does not close itself off and rejects various advances of

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<sup>7</sup> "Selfie," in <https://www.merriam-webster.com>.

<sup>8</sup> "Fenomena Selfie Sudah Overdosis," in <https://bbc.com> (29 January 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Umi Hanik, "Relasi Makna *Selfie* Dengan Hadis Tentang *Riya'* dalam Perspektif Mahasiswa Ilmu Hadis IAIN Kediri," in *Universum: Jurnal Keislaman dan Kebudayaan*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2019, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Michael H. B. Raditya, "Selfie dan Media Sosial pada Seni sebagai Wujud Eksistensi," in *JSP: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2014, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Evina Krisnawati and Cristiana Hari Soetjningsih, "Hubungan antara Kesepian dengan *Selfie-Liking* pada Mahasiswa," in *Jurnal Psikologi*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2017, pp. 122-127.

<sup>12</sup> Rizal Ikhsan and Leonardo Pranata, "Motif *Selfie* di Kalangan Mahasiswa (Studi Fenomenologi Pada Group Instragam UNP Cantik)," in *SosioGlobal: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Sosiologi*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2018, pp. 1-9.

the times, even it basically provides leeway to be able to be more open and accept every product of the progress of the times.<sup>13</sup>

This study employed an approach of contemporary Islamic law which is known as *maqâshid syarî'ah* (purposefulness of Islamic law) with its basic principles: obtaining *mashlahât* and rejecting *mafsadât*. In the context of the attitude towards the *selfie* phenomenon as previously described, Muslims are required to be more selective and wise in responding to this. This means that any activity can be justified in Islamic law to be permissibly done when it brings *mashlahât*, otherwise, if it leads to *mafsadât*, such activity must be avoided.

This paper will reveal the *selfie* phenomenon among the millennial generation analysed using *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* theories as the essence of *maqâshid syarî'ah* paradigm. The data were obtained through a literature study (*library research*) on several media about the *selfie* phenomenon. Then, they were dialogued against the essence of *maqâshid syarî'ah*. Meanwhile, the data were analysed using the content analysis,<sup>14</sup> so that it was expected to produce a view on the *selfie* phenomenon through the perspective of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât*.

### ***Selfie: Between a Need and Narcissism***

In this competition era, a man does not only compete with other people but also with robots and machines that have a much higher level of efficiency. This is certainly a challenge in itself as well as an inevitable reality. Evolution in the field of technology and internet innovation does not only give birth to new media, but also changes various patterns of human life such as their social interaction and communication. In the past, people introduced each other in a conventional way such as exchanging business cards; today, the way is very different: they no longer exchange business cards but, rather, they exchange account addresses or make friends through social media.<sup>15</sup>

One of the consequences of technological developments is the appearance of social media which then becomes a human special need. Social media is part of online media which aims to ease its users to share and participate. Additionally, social media is an online media that supports aspects of social communication and the use of social media employing media web-based such as Instagram (IG), Facebook (FB), Twitter, Whatsapp (WA), and so on has changed communication in the interactive form. With the existence of social

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<sup>13</sup> Nur Aksin, "Pandangan Islam Terhadap Pemanfaatan Media Sosial," in *Jurnal Informatika*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> See further, John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013) and C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International Ltd. Publisher, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> M. Saeful Amri, "Mitsaqan Ghalidza di Era Disrupsi (Studi Perceraian Sebab Media Sosial)," in *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi dan Penelitian Hukum Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2019, p. 96.

media, many human activities are facilitated, such as making it easier to find information, to make friends with distant people, to buy and sell, to study, and so forth.<sup>16</sup>

The use of social media nowadays has had a tremendous influence on social changes in society. Social media has also presented the idea of a “*global village*” where people are now connected by internet telecommunication technology through social media. The impact is that humans have entered the modern revolution where the boundaries of place and time have been able to be penetrated with no limitation.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, in reality, there is a very worrying trend among today's modern society. People today have a great dependence on the use of technology. Activities without technology seem tasteless so much so that when someone leaves home without his/her smartphone, he/she is willing to return back to pick it up since it is considered important to him/her, even some people regard it as 'everything'. The customs and culture of the modern era today attract people to use technology even to the level of “*overdose*”. This fact seems to be easily agreed noting that the use of this technology does not limit any age and caste so that anyone can consume it although, eventually, such situation makes it difficult for them to distinguish between the virtual world and the real one.

Community and social networking are a platform to express oneself. With the aid of social media, anyone having an account can upload his/her photos to share with friends or public easily. With various conveniences presented, social media users can upload all their activities at any time and from any place to show their 'at-present' condition and important moments to all their friends. There are two possible feelings when they stare at their bodies and faces in a *selfie*, either they secretly admire and are proud of what they see or become trapped in reluctance and horror when noticing a flaw and a defect in them.<sup>18</sup>

The *selfie* behaviour is a narcissism that explores one's body and capture important and happy moments in one's life. When someone expresses himself/herself on a moment through a *selfie*, he/she will feel superior to others and feel more confident. *Selfie* is also a part of mirroring oneself in a mirror that does not only reflect the image but also that attempts to find the one's own subject in an imaginary world.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, *selfie* photos were captured, selected, and sometimes edited first before they were uploaded to one's social media account. The aim is to have uploaded photos look more captivating. Apart from showing off attracting bodies, the *selfie* takers usually look for perfect locations as

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<sup>16</sup> Mulawarman and Nurfitri, “Perilaku Pengguna Media Sosial”, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph A. Devito, *Komunikasi Antar Manusia* (Jakarta: Kharisma Publishing Group, 2014), p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremi Hormes, *Narsisisme* (Jogjakarta: Pohon Sukma, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106.

their photo backgrounds coupled with expressions of happiness to show how happy their lives are. It seems that such existence is only behind a mirror that covers an actual image.<sup>20</sup>

Narcissism behaviour is no longer a part of human nature but it has a purpose to favour freedom and attitudes that simulatively instil efficient and economical standards and that can compete with others. It is used as capital to be able to bring an advantage in a social context and be able to respond to various social phenomena and may even become an instrumental force on societal norms and ethical conducts of consumption and production communities.

### ***Maqâshid Syar'ah: an Effort to Realize Mashlahât and Reject Mafsadât***

In one paper, Nur and Muttaqin wrote that different era brings with it different issues, especially with today's situation in which scientific and technological advancement moves very rapidly. It is, therefore, understandable that the classical model of Islamic law cannot be presented to deal with current problems satisfactorily.<sup>21</sup> Facing such situation, contemporary Moslem scholars use their reason with the help of *nash syar'iy* (Islamic legal texts) to determine whether a thing is *mashlahât* or *mafsadât*. This is so since determining *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* using the power of one's reason only without the assistance of *nash syar'iy* will cause anyone to fall into mere human egoism and lust.

Etymologically, *mashlahât* means goodness,<sup>22</sup> it is the goodness that exists within human beings and that prevents them from damage. Luwis Ma'luf defines that *mashlahât* is something that brings benefits to individuals and groups,<sup>23</sup> whereas in the dictionary of Lisân al-Arâb,<sup>24</sup> *mashlahât* is defined as manifesting goodness and eliminating damage. Meanwhile, in *Mukhtâr al-Sihâh*, *mashlahât* is explained to be the opposite of damage.<sup>25</sup> Apart from that, it is also stated in *Mu'jam al-Mushthalahât al-Alfâzh al-Fiqhiyyah* that *mashlahât* is goodness (*al-khayr*) which is the opponent of damage.<sup>26</sup> From some of these definitions, it can be understood that *mashlahât* linguistically means something

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<sup>20</sup> Rabian Syahbana, *Selfie (Mengungkap Fenomena Selfie dari Masa ke Masa)* (Surabaya: Workshop Nulis Buku, 2014), p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Iffatin Nur and Muhammad Ngizzul Muttaqin, "Reformulating the Concept of Maslahah: From A Textual Confinement Towards A Logic Determination," in *Justicia Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Hukum dan Sosial*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2020, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Manzûr, *Lisân al-Arâb*, Chap. II (Beirut: Dâr Shâdir, 2000), p. 516.

<sup>23</sup> Abu Luwis Ma'lûf al-Yasu'i, *Al-Munjîd fi al-Lughâh wa al-Adâb wa al-'Ulûm* (Beirut: Matba'ah al-Katulikiyyah, 2005), p. 432.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Manzûr, *Lisân al-Arâb*, p. 516.

<sup>25</sup> Muḥammad Ibn Abu Bakr Ibn 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Râzi, *Mukhtâr al-Sihâh* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-Arabî, 2000), p. 367.

<sup>26</sup> Mahmûd 'Abd al-Rahmân 'Abd al-Mun'im, *Mu'jam al-Mushthalahât al-Alfâzh al-Fiqhiyyah*, Chap. III (Cairo: Dâr al-Fadilah, 2003), p. 300.

that brings people into goodness and expediency, whereas terminologically, there are several differences among the scholars about *mashlahât*.<sup>27</sup>

Al-Syâtibi defined that *mashlahât* is all efforts to achieve a position of benefit and goodness and a rejection of damage (*mafsadât*) obtained through reason assisted by *nash syar'iy*.<sup>28</sup> Ibn 'Asyûr explained that *mashlahât* is an action that produces continuous benefits and goodness for individuals and groups.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, al-Bûti explained that *mashlahât* as goodness and benefits given by Allah to human beings to protect religion, soul, mind, descent, and property (*al-ushûl al- khamisah*).<sup>30</sup>

Al-Ghazâlî explained that *mashlahât* is a term that represents the purpose of God. He said that *mashlahât* is a statement towards the realization of benefits and rejection of damage.<sup>31</sup> These two things - realization of benefits and rejection of damage, - in his view, cannot be realized only based on human will, but, rather, with the guidance and the will of *nash* that include realizing the goodness of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. To al-Ghazâlî, all the matters and conducts that safeguard these five things are *mashlahât*, otherwise they are *mafsadât*.<sup>32</sup>

From some of these definitions given by Moslem scholars, it can be concluded that they agreed that the arrival of *syar'ah* (religious rules) aims for realizing benefits and avoiding harms. Nevertheless, they consciously admitted that *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* which are truly pure (*maḥdhâh*) are only a few in number. Such was stated by 'Abd al-Salam who said that everything that happens in this world which has a pure value of either *mashlahât* or *mafsadât* is very little, whereas those containing both values of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* are many.<sup>33</sup>

What was meant by *mashlahât* in the above explanation is benefit which becomes the purpose and goal of *syara'* and not one which is solely based on human desire and lust. This is so because it is understandable that the purpose of implementing Islamic law sent by Allah is none other than to realize *mashlahât* for all human beings in all aspects of their life in the world as well as to avoid them from various things that can lead to damage. In other words, every provision of Islamic law that has been established by *Syâri'* (the Law Maker, namely Allah), is aimed at creating benefits for all mankind.

<sup>27</sup> Mushtafâ Zaid, *Al-Mashlahah fi al-Tasyrî' al-Islamî* (Cairo: Dâr al-Yasar, 2006), p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> Abû Ishâq al-Syâtibi, *Al-Itishâm*, Chap. II (Cairo: Dâr al-Hâdits, 2008), p. 362.

<sup>29</sup> Muḥammad Tâhir Ibn 'Asyûr, *Maqâshid Syar'ah al-Islâmiyyah* (Jordan: Dâr al-Nâfi'i, 2009), p. 278.

<sup>30</sup> Muḥammad Sa'id Ramadhân al-Bûti, *Dhawâbit al-Mashlahah fi al-Syar'ah al-Islâmiyyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risâlah, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Abû Hâmid Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî, *Al-Mustasyfâ min 'Ilm al-Ushûl* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2011), p. 275.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 275

<sup>33</sup> 'Izzuddîn Ibn 'Abd al-Salâm, *Qawâ'id al-Aḥkâm fi Mashâliḥ al-Anâm* (Damascus: Dâr al-Qalam, 2004), p. 14.

*Mashlahât* as a method of determining Islamic law requires and positions the values of goodness in the diversity of *madzhab* (Islamic school of thought) with all their differences in the method of *istinbâth* (way of establishing law) and all its legal products. When there is a difference concerning the law about an issue, the final decision as a ‘referee’ is a compromise or comparison that favors an opinion that is more inclined towards realizing the general benefit for mankind, therefore, the *tarjîh* (opting the stronger argument) method is more dominant in the use of *mashlahât* as an approach or as a method for establishing Islamic law (*al-istinbâth al-hukmi*).<sup>34</sup>

The above explanation can be traced through the mixture between the value of kindness with evil, joy with misery, and pleasure with pain.<sup>35</sup> Such is in line with al-Qarafi who said that *mashlahât* would not appear unless there present *mafsadât* albeit only in a small proportion and the vice versa, *mafsadât* would not appear unless there present *mashlahât* albeit only in a small proportion.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, when determining *mashlahât*, one should consider which one of the two is more dominant.<sup>37</sup> When *mafsadât* dominates, a matter falls into the *mafsadât* category and must be avoided. However, if *mashlahât* dominates, it falls into the *mashlahât* category and must be taken.

Al-Syâtibi also strengthened the opinion of the mentioned scholars. According to him, if there are more *mashlahât* found in a matter, then this would be the real goal of *syara’*, but if *mafsadât* dominates in it, then the matter must be abandoned.<sup>38</sup> Both *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* do not completely negate each other’s existence in certain conditions and cases. Thus, rejecting *mafsadât* alone does not necessarily manifest *mashlahât* absolutely. The concept of realizing *mashlahât* and rejecting *mafsadât* has a relationship in the same condition, even though the two have different concepts.<sup>39</sup>

As a result, all legal stipulations by *fuqahâ’* (Moslem jurists) require to be decided whether their stipulations contain *mashlahât* or *mafsadât*. In determining such legal stipulations, they do not only employ their reason, but must be assisted with *nash syara’* to avoid the possibility of being trapped in assessing the matter merely based on lust. This was used by al-Ghazâlî when interpreting *mashlahât* by defining it as rejecting harms and realizing

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<sup>34</sup> Ahmad Faisal, “Islamic Shari’a in Indonesia: The Struggle Between Sacrality and Profanity,” in *Jurnal Al-Ulum*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2019, pp. 33-34.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Salâm, *Qawâ’id al-Ahkâm*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Syihâb al-Dîn Abû al-Abbâs Ibn Idrîs al-Qarâfi, *Syarh Tanqîh al-Fusûl fi Ikhtishâr al-Mahshûl fi al-Ushûl* (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr, 2000), p. 87; Read further: Mhd. Syahnân, *Hukum Islam dalam Bingkai Transdisipliner* (Medan: Perdana Publishing, 2018); Mhd. Syahnân, “The Image of the Prophet and the Systematization of Ushul al-Fiqh: A Study of al-Shafî’i’s Risalah,” in *Jurnal Miqot*, No. 103, 1998, p. 44-50.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Izzuddîn Ibn ‘Abd al-Salâm, “*Qawâ’id al-Ahkâm*,” p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Abû Ishâq al-Syâtibi, *Al-Muwâfaqât fi Ushûl al-Syarî’ah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2008), pp. 20-21.

<sup>39</sup> Muḥammad Thâhir Ibn ‘Asyûr, *Maqâshid Syarî’ah al-Islâmiyyah*, p. 281.

goodness and benefits in order to achieve the goal and will of God which include protecting one's religion, soul, intellect, offspring, wealth, environment, dignity, and nation's unity which are summed up as *maqâshid syarî'ah*.<sup>40</sup>

In accordance with the understanding of the *maqâshid* concept as previously explained, it can be understood that legal stipulation using *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* (*maqâshid syarî'ah*) is a right that is *tsâbit* (permanent) for every individual or group which is regulated by provisions of Islamic law. It can also be understood that *maqâshid* is *al-huqq al-khâshshah* (special rights). Meanwhile, the right to stipulate law using *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* (*maqâshid syarî'ah*) is divided into three, namely the rights of Allah, human rights, and the rights of both. Allah's rights are those related to general benefits and benefits for all human beings without exception. This means that this right is a benefit that must be realized by humans in terms of upholding the religion of Allah.

Human rights are something that Allah stipulates for the benefit of individuals and groups during their life in this world. These human rights are special rights attached to all mankind to obtain a right of goodness and benefit in all matters. Meanwhile, the rights of Allah and humans are those that are exclusive to Allah and human rights. The concept of rights which disembody into *maqâshid syarî'ah* is a fundamental value in realizing *mashlahât* in all aspects of human life.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the emergence of the *mashlahât* theory aims to fight transnationality and introduce the diversity of Islamic law products that are under one big umbrella, namely *mashlahât* (benefits). The emergence of the theme (i.e. *mashlahât*) itself, as explained by Nur and Muttaqin, has the Holy Qur'an together with the Hadith of the Prophet as its foothold.<sup>42</sup> Therefore it can be said that the emergence of *mashlahât* has a very big role in creating an order of life that is godly, just, has legal certainty, and has a universal understanding of benefit. With such conditions, Islam will come forward to today's human civilization with a cool, peaceful, and reassuring face.

## **Dampening the *Selfie* Phenomenon Practiced by the Millennial Generation through the *Mashlahât* and *Mafsadât* Approaches**

The rapid development of technology and science in the use of social media has contributed to the speed of continuous changing of the concept of social media. This is evidenced by the emergence of new websites and various social media contents all the time. During its development, social media has become increasingly popular in all human

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<sup>40</sup> Al-Ghazâlî, *Al-Mustasyfâ*, p. 275.

<sup>41</sup> Asyraf Wajdi Dasuki & Nurdianawati Irwani Abdullah, "Maqashid al-Shari'ah, Maslahah and Corporate Social Responsibility," in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2007, p. 30-33.

<sup>42</sup> Nur and Muttaqin, "Reformulating the Concept of Maslahah", p. 74.

activities. We know that most people in this world have social connections through social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp, to name the most used social media by all categories of race, age, social class, and gender.<sup>43</sup>

Social media has also become a very popular topic among academics in the fields of communication, sociology, psychology, business, and economics. This can be found in various works and literature that review it. Various works and literature that have been published in the last few decades are more focused on discussing the social processes of the impact of social media in the realms of economy, marketing, politics, communication, education, and health.<sup>44</sup>

Historically, narcissistic photographs (*selfies*) became popular in 2013 to coincide with the emergence of new *gadget* technology with various facilities for taking *selfies*. The emergence of the term *selfie* started when there were phenomena of taking one's photograph by using the most common style and were done by most people and were regarded common. *Selfie* photographs can be done by using a camera that is directed at the photographer or taking one's photo using a tool and by reflecting on the mirror. However, the range of such *selfie* is limited, so the most obvious and most visible objects are the *photographer* himself/herself and some people around him/her.<sup>45</sup>

One of the motives to post and upload *selfies* on social media is to express one happiness. Happiness may be defined as a state of being very well and having pleasant experiences. Those who upload *selfie* photos convey happiness and express it by narcissistic post which are usually accompanied by an interesting *caption* in order to attract readers and get 'likes' and comment.<sup>46</sup> This shows that displaying self-confidence and happiness with *selfies* is the main motivation for posting photos on their social media accounts. More specifically, those who upload *selfie* photos want to tell others that they are happy individuals and they post their *selfies* via social media to convey this message.<sup>47</sup>

Along with the development of technology and the internet, posting *selfie* photos via social media has indeed become popular and has serves as a self-presentation. One study found that the motivation for people to take and post *selfie* photos is to reveal impression management. The impression meant here is to convey a positive self-image

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<sup>43</sup> Christopher Barger, *The Social Media Strategies: Built a Successful Program the Inside Out* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> Evawani Elysa Lubis, "Potret Media Sosial dan Perempuan," in *Jurnal PARALLELA*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2014, p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> Umi Hanik, "Relasi Makna *Selfie*", pp. 62-63.

<sup>46</sup> Kathryn Pounders, Christine M. Kowalczyk, and Kirsten Stowers, "Insight into the Motivation of Selfie Postings: Impression Management and Self-Esteem," in *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50, No. 9/10, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

to public by showing to them photos of being happy which also display a perfect and beautiful physical appearance.<sup>48</sup>

However, not all *selfie* photos were posted in the context of happiness, some were meant to cover up one's sadness and downturn. The hope is that when the photos get *likes* and good comments from the public, he/she will forget his/her sadness although just a little.<sup>49</sup> From these various motivations of posting *selfie* photos, it seems they were done to satisfy human desire for obtaining instant satisfaction. By posting them, they get an opportunity to feel good about themselves, although sometimes the bad feeling about oneself may also occur.

Apart from the motivational aspect of taking *selfies*, it is very often that *selfie* takers do not think wisely about the dangers of the scene they take. A cliff edge, the roof of a multi-storey building, or the transmitter tower become favourite background offering a unique beauty for *selfie* takers regardless they expose fatal threats to their lives.<sup>50</sup> A report from the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care cited by Christiatuti on her post stated that at least 259 people died while clicking *selfies* around the world between October 2011 and November 2017. The highest number of incidents and *selfie*-deaths has been reported in India followed by Russia, United States, and Pakistan.<sup>51</sup>

Relating to cases of *selfies* that result in fatalities, every year the number of victims increases. This was triggered by increasingly sophisticated cell phones and *selfie* supporting accessories in the forms of a tripod or a handphone holder stick which make *selfie* activities easier. Introduction of "*selfie* sticks" and "*selfie* shoe" have enhanced obsession among people for *selfies*.<sup>52</sup> These days the choice of smart phones is based on their *selfie* picture quality. They allegedly encourage *selfie* takers to challenge a bigger risk in order to get satisfying and perfect *selfie* photos. Thus, taking *selfie* photos seems to be a must and should be carried out without considering about its negative impacts.

Furthermore, the *selfie* phenomenon done by the millennial generation also stimulates extravagant behaviour in the form of buying expensive cameras and their accessories either for occasional use or just for the sake of prestige, despite the fact that an expensive camera is not a basic requirement for taking *selfies*. Taking *selfies* has also been considered

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Bestari Kumala Dewi, "Sedang Sedih? Segera Lakukan Selfie, Bisa Bikin Mood Membaik Lagi!," in <https://surya.co.id> (16 September 2016).

<sup>50</sup> The Editorial Team, "Deretan Korban 'Selfie' Berbahaya di Dunia," in <https://cnnindonesia.com> (23 January 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Novi Christiatuti, "Banyak Yang Tewas, Selfie 5 Kali Lipat Lebih Mematikan daripada Serangan Hiu," in <https://news.detik.com> (27 June 2019). Read further: Agam Bansal, Chandan Garg, Abhijith Pakhare, & Samiksha Gupta, "Selfies: a Boon or Bane?," in *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> J Che, "Selfie Shoes are exactly what they sound like," in <https://huffingtonpost.com> (1 April 2015).

to be selfish and obsessed with one's own appearance. Even so, several studies revealed that apart from having negative impacts, *selfie* also provides mental health benefits. It has an impact on one's self-confidence. It also makes people happy and helps to ease burdens in their mind.<sup>53</sup>

The presented data elaboration indicate that *selfie* has both positive impacts (*mashlahât*) and negative one (*mafsadât*). In accordance with our understanding, God's laws revealed to mankind aim to create benefits on this earth. The problems and issues faced by mankind in this world always grow, develop, and never end<sup>54</sup> whereas detailed and lucid texts of God's laws are very limited. In such a condition, Islamic teaching provides a way for mankind to stipulate laws which can help us find a way out for the problems we face.<sup>55</sup>

*Maqâshid syar'ah* (purposefulness of Gods laws) has the essence of realizing *mashlahât* and avoiding *mafsadât*. Etymologically, *mashlahât* has a meaning that is identical to benefit, advantage, joy, pleasure, and all efforts that can lead to goodness. Whereas in the terminology of *syar'ah*, *mashlahât* substantially is a state of an effort that aims to manifest in a positive condition and avoid a negative one.<sup>56</sup> Applying the perspective and approach of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât*, in the authors' view, is essential in responding to the conditions and habits practiced by the current millennial generation. The alarming need for proper ethics in using social media, the showing off one's vanity and arrogance, offending those who are less fortunate, and other negative impacts resulted from *selfie* habits need a to receive appropriate attention and analysis.

Seeking for *mashlahât* and avoiding *mafsadât* are a new characteristic model in contemporary Islamic law. This characteristic will create a more dynamic and flexible Islamic law which is less rigid in understanding the text. Having so, the paradigm of contemporary Islamic law which prioritizes the creation of *mashlahât* will be more adaptable and oriented towards the social and humanity life.<sup>57</sup> The *mashlahât* approach to contemporary problems and phenomena will give rise to Islamic legal thought that cannot be separated

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<sup>53</sup> Rahmi Anjani, "Manfaat Selfie untuk Kesehatan: Jadi Bahagia dan Percaya Diri," in <https://walipop.detik.com> (15 September 2016).

<sup>54</sup> Iffatin Nur and Muhammad Ngizzul Muttaqin, "Fiqh Jalan Tengah (Mempertemukan *Maqâshid Syar'ah*, Hukum, dan Realitas Sosial)," in *Zawiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> About the essence of Islamic Law, read further: Muhammad Ngizzul Muttaqin and Iffatin Nur, "Menelusuri Jejak *Maqâshid Syar'ah* dalam Istimbath Hukum Imam Hambali," in *Ahkam: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Ahmad Syafi'i SJ., "FIQH PROLETAR: Rekonstruksi Nalar Kepentingan Umum dalam Kasus Pembebasan Tanah untuk Pembangunan Menuju ke Arah Transformasi Sosial yang Progresif-Humanis," in *Jurnal Fikrotuna*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Reconstruction of Fiqh Nusantara: Developing the Ijtihad Methodology in Formulating Fiqh from Indonesian Perspective," in *QIJIS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2019, p. 240.

from the context surrounding it including the time context, spatial context, historical context, social context, cultural context, psychological context, and religious context.<sup>58</sup>

The real purpose of Islamic law is to realize and create benefits and reject harms in the human life, and there is no doubt that benefit continues to develop with the development of social reality and will continue to evolve with the changes of environmental situation and condition. If the benefit is neither prioritized in its entirety nor responded to with an appropriate provision but rather is only focused on the existence of arguments that acknowledges it, surely it will disappear from the human life's reality and the development of law that is responsive to the changes and developments of era will cease. It has to be noted that any attitude which does not pay attention to the development of *mashlahât* means that it is neither in line with nor in agreement with the goals of Islamic law which is to realize and create benefits and reject harms to the continuity of human life. Therefore, holding on to *mashlahât* becomes a must since it is one of the main grips that stand as a separate theory and does not come out of other legal bases. Thus, it becomes clear and obvious that the perspective in the concept of *mashlahât* is part of the objectives of *syari'ah* even though it is not directly stated by *nash* (texts) of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith.

The interesting part to observe from the concepts of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* is the substance of the benefits (*mashlahât*) and harms (*madharât/mafsadât*) itself. In this case, the measure of a value for *mashlahât* must exist within mankind. Then, the value of a human action must be measured by absolute perfection which is the value of every human action. Meanwhile, the value that is sought to achieve the degree of *mashlahât* must be obtained through correct knowledge (*al-ma'rifah al-shahîhah*) and carried out with moderation (*al-i'tidâl*), which is done by respecting the rights of others. The concept of realizing *mashlahât* and eliminating *mafsadât* is actually to realize real human welfare as well as to achieve sustainable development in the long term. The realization of *mashlahât* for human beings is a basic requirement relating to human rights.<sup>59</sup>

The new format of *ijtihad* (intellectual exercise) using the *mashlahât* approach is an idea of uniting and viewing a problem from various scientific disciplinary perspectives.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, in responding to the said *selfie* phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the *mashlahât* aspect from many points of view. Meanwhile, the main essence in conducting *ijtihad* using the *mashlahât* approach is avoiding *mafsadât*. In this situation, Islamic law

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<sup>58</sup> See further: M. Noor Harisudin, "The Taqin of Indonesian Islamic Law Dynamic," in *Journal of Indonesian Islam (JIIS)*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2015; Mhd. Syahnan, *Modernization of Islamic Law of Contract* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang & Diklat Departemen Agama RI, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Syamsuri & Okta Yuripta Syafitri, "Maqashid Syari'ah Approach on the Empowerment of Human Resources in Mulyodadi Village Bantul Yogyakarta," in *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, Vol. XLII, No. 2, 2018, pp. 386-387.

<sup>60</sup> Nur and Muttaqin, "Reformulating the Concept of Mashlahah", p. 75.

is present by providing an understanding and solution in responding to the rampant *selfie* activities.

The urgency of the emergence of the concept of *mashlahât* which is reduced in *maqâshid syarî'ah* originated from the anxiety of Islamic jurists about the sustainability of Islamic law products. This anxiety is certainly not without reason; the difference in time and changes in place is certainly the main trigger. Therefore, in its development, the concept of *mashlahât* experienced a conceptual renewal through a new breakthrough from a philosophical approach to a systems approach. With this understanding, *mashlahât* certainly has a very strong urgency in maintaining the spirit of Islamic law to be accepted at any place and time.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, the use of *mashlahât* also has significant legal implications to the contemporary Islamic law's style and format. The strength of attaining *mashlahât* in exploring contemporary Islamic law opens up very widely the possibility of the birth of different Islamic legal provisions at different places and in developing time. This is because employing *mashlahât* as a consideration in stipulating a law is very much influenced by the conditions of the place and the time difference. Islamic law that once developed in the Middle East, for example, cannot automatically be applied in other places such as Indonesia. One of the aspects that influence it is the condition of the place (the reality of society) and the human civilization at different time. Therefore, Islamic law is open, flexible, and distinct; it is not like the characteristic of *tawhîd* (faith) which is certain.

In this case, Yûsuf al-Qarâdhâwi, one of the scholars who developed the concept of *maqâshid syarî'ah*, had outlined the rules to be considered should there be a contradiction between *mashlahât* and *mafsadât*. The rules include the following: 1) rejecting *mafsadât* must take precedence over attaining *mashlahât*, 2) a little *mafsadât* will be pardoned in order to gain a greater *mashlahât*, 3) a temporary *mafsadât* is forgiven for attaining a continuous *mashlahât*, and 4) attaining *mashlahât* that is certain should not be left for avoiding *mafsadât* that is still suspected.<sup>62</sup>

Understanding the *mashlahât* (positive) and *mafsadât* (negative) sides of today's *selfie* phenomena is a preventive effort in dealing with some dangerous and detrimental *selfie* activities. Such an effort is also necessitated in order to re-upload fundamental values in the study of Islamic law. Reviewing the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the millennial generation is a theological aspect of Islamic law which is taken and examined from the fundamental values of achieving the objectives of Islamic law (*maqâshid syarî'ah*). In this context, *mashlahât* is understood as a fundamental value of Islamic law which has the

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<sup>61</sup> Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Actualizations of Maqasid al-Shariah in Modern Life: Maqasid al-Shariah Theory as a Method of the Development of Islamic Laws and Shariah Economics," in *Justicia Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2019, p. 257.

<sup>62</sup> Yûsuf al-Qarâdhâwi, *Fi Fiqh al-Aulawiyât: Dirasât al-Jadîdah fi Dau' al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2011), p. 28.

aim of achieving and creating goodness for all mankind both Muslims and adherents of other religions. Having such understanding, it is clear that the fundamental values of Islamic law are able to provide proper insight and response to the *selfie* phenomenon.

In the practice and application of the concept of *mashlahât* as an effort to provide control over the rise of the *selfie* phenomenon, *mashlahât* is urgent to be used as a consideration for anyone when conducting *selfie* activities. Having such consideration in mind, someone can determine whether his/her *selfie* activities will bring *mashlahât* or *mafsadât*. With such urgency, it is hoped that the concept of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* approaches has a role in dampening and controlling the rampant *selfie* activities done by the current millennial generation.

In the Islamic teaching, everyone is responsible for their actions and they will be accounted for what they have done in front of Allah. This is in accordance with Allah's sayings in the holy Quran, such as "*Kullu nafsin bimâ kasabat rahînah*" (every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds),<sup>63</sup> and "*Lâ yus'alu 'ammâ yaf'alu wahum yus'alûn*" (He (Allah) can not be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs))<sup>64</sup> and with the Prophet Muhammad's saying: "*Kullukum râ'in wa kullukum mas'ûlun 'an ra'iyatihi*" (every of you is a leader and every of you is held accountable for his/her leadership).<sup>65</sup> This is because Islam teaches us that every person is a leader at its different level of leadership with all its facilities; at least someone is a leader for himself/herself. Thus, he/she will be accounted for his/her actions in carrying his/her leadership.<sup>66</sup>

Monitoring the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the millennial generation based on the *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* approach is sought to protect *selfie* takers from any negative impacts (*mafsadât*). Related to the achievement of Islamic law's objectives (*maqâshid syar'ah*), the following conditions may be used to monitor *selfie* activities: first, a *selfie* photo must not accompany any caption of insult to religion, its teachings, and its practices and it is a form of caring and protecting the existence of religion (*hifzh al-dîn*). Second, *selfie* must not be conducted by endangering one's life or safety or hurting one's body and it is the form of caring and protecting human life (*hifzh al-nafs*). Third, *selfie* involving family and children without endangering their life and safety means caring and protecting one's offspring (*hifzh al-nasl*).

Fourth, taking *selfie* photos that aims to bring happiness to one's mind without overdoing it means caring and protecting one's mind (*hifzh al-'aql*). Fifth, taking *selfie*

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<sup>63</sup> The Holy Quran Surah, Q.S. al-Muddatstsir/74: 38, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Maryland-USA: Amana Corporation, 2008), p. 1562.

<sup>64</sup> Q.S. al-Anbiyâ'/21: 23, *Ibid*, p. 799.

<sup>65</sup> A hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhârî, no. 893. See further: Imam al-Bukhârî, *Al-Jâmi' al-Shahîh al-Muhtashar* (Beirut: Daar Ibnu Katsir, 1987/1407).

<sup>66</sup> Munardji, "Prophetic Leadership di Era Industri 4.0" (Pidato Pengukuhan Guru Besar), edited by Iffatin Nur & Binti Nur Asiyah (Tulungagung: IAIN Tulungagung Press, 2020), p. 22.

photos without spending one's property unwisely means caring and protecting one's wealth (*hifzh al-mâl*). Sixth, taking *selfie* photos without damaging the environment is a form of protecting the existence of the environment (*hifzh al-bî'ah*). Even, when the photos' background involve beautiful sceneries, they might invite other people and institutions to preserve them. Seventh, *selfie* photos must not include any caption of contempt to others and it is the form of caring and protecting one's self-esteem (*hifzh al-'irdh*). Eighth, taking *selfie* photos together with other people aimed for fertilizing togetherness among them may become an effort to create and maintain unity and solidarity of one person to another which eventually can safeguard a nation's integration (*hifzh al-dawlah*).

## Conclusion

The tendency of most people to take *selfies* seems unstoppable and it is very possible that their use will increase. This is due to unstoppable technological developments and the human need for technology has been a basic one. *Selfie* has both positive impacts (*mashlahât*) and negative ones (*mafsadât*). One way to dampen the rampant *selfie* phenomenon is employing the *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* approach. This approach gives consideration to *selfie* takers of whether their *selfie* brings *mashlahât* or *mafsadât*. Such approach is expected to be able to reduce various problems that arise and negative impacts resulted from the *selfie*. This approach must also be used as a means for controlling the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the millennial generation today. *Selfie* should only be done if it gives benefit and goodness (*mashlahât*), otherwise it should be avoided.

From reviewing the *selfie* phenomenon using the *mashlahât* approach, *selfie* must be a means that brings benefits and goodness. The benefits may be in the form of motivating, encouraging, and nurturing good relations among people as well as being a forum for promoting economic products honestly. This research is only limited to observe and review the *selfie* phenomenon practiced by the millennial generation employing the *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* approach. The significance of this research is to provide an understanding of the impacts of taking *selfies*, particularly in the effort of avoiding its negative impacts (*mafsadât*). It is hoped that future researchers will conduct field research and collect proper data directly so that the analysis process using the perspective of *mashlahât* and *mafsadât* can be more justified.

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