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Article

Sadbor Dance Phenomenon on Social Media in Babakan Baru Village: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

This study analyses the *Sadbor* dance phenomenon in Babakan Baru village, Sukabumi regency, where residents, many of whom are farmers, perform dances during TikTok livestreams in exchange for virtual gifts, and examines the practice from an Islamic perspective. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews, participatory observation, and social media content analysis. The findings were analysed in relation to the Qur'an, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, the Islamic concept of custom (*'urf*), and the 2017 *fatwa* of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) concerning social media. The study finds that internet accessibility, economic pressure, digital skills, and community support contribute significantly to the emergence and development of the phenomenon. Seeking additional livelihood opportunities through digital work is consistent with the Islamic work ethic, while recreational activities are permissible when they maintain modesty and do not compromise religious obligations. However, deliberately soliciting virtual gifts through fabricated displays of need may conflict with Islamic teachings concerning begging. Furthermore, if the practice involves elements of gambling (*maysir*), the resulting income may be considered unlawful. The study recommends community-based strategies grounded in *maqasid al-shari'ah*, integrating digital literacy, religious guidance, and lawful diversification of livelihood opportunities.

Keywords: *Sadbor* dance, social media, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, digital livelihood, Islamic perspective.

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Introduction

In the digital era, social media has become one of the principal platforms through which individuals express themselves, share information and build communities, and short dance videos have become one of its most widely circulated genres (Buck-Pavlick, 2021). The rise of what Cunningham and Craig (2019) term social media entertainment has opened new opportunities for people outside the established creative industries, including rural residents, to earn income as content creators, a development closely tied to the platform logic of the creator economy (Warburton, 2024). Attention to rural communities in this context must extend beyond income to the sustainability of livelihoods and of local social life (Buchari et al., 2024).

The Sadbor dance is a case in point. In Kampung Babakan Baru, Desa Bojongkembar, Cikembar District, Sukabumi Regency, residents, many of them farmers, began performing a distinctive dance during TikTok livestreams in return for virtual gifts from viewers, a practice that spread rapidly and drew national attention in 2024 (Matondang & Kholil, 2024). The phenomenon took its name from Gunawan, known as Sadbor, a former tailor who pioneered the livestreams. On 31 October 2024 he was arrested by the Sukabumi Police on suspicion of promoting online gambling sites during his broadcasts (Tim detikJabar, 2024) and was subsequently detained for investigation (Tribrata News Polda Jabar, 2024).

For a predominantly Muslim community, the phenomenon raises questions that are religious as well as social and economic. Indonesian Muslims increasingly practise and negotiate their religion through social media (Slama, 2018), and online platforms have become sites where religious authority, piety and commerce intersect (Bunt, 2018; Nisa, 2018). The Indonesian Council of Ulama has issued a fatwa setting out the legal principles and guidelines for conduct through social media (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2017). How, then, should a practice in which villagers dance for virtual gifts be assessed in the light of Islamic teaching?

Existing research on the *Sadbor* phenomenon has examined it as an alternative livelihood for farmers as a form of everyday resistance against economic hardship and as a form of begging subject to legal regulation. In the light of al-Qurtubi's Qur'anic commentary, the performances of sadness and pleading designed to elicit gifts constitute a disguised solicitation that classical exegesis discourages. What remains undeveloped is an integrated assessment that weighs the benefits of the phenomenon against its harms across the full range of the objectives of Islamic law, rather than with reference to a single ruling.

This study pursues three main objectives. The first is to identify the factors that drove the *Sadbor* phenomenon among residents of Babakan Baru. The second is to assess the phenomenon from an Islamic perspective, with reference to the Qur'an,

the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), the jurisprudential treatment of custom (*'urf*) and the 2017 *fatwa* on social media. The third is to propose community strategies grounded in that assessment. The study contributes a *maqasid*-based framework for evaluating rural digital livelihoods that may be applied beyond the present case.

Method

This research uses a qualitative case study method to analyze the *Sadbor* phenomenon in Babakan Baru, Sukabumi. The case study approach allows the phenomenon to be examined in its social context, with attention both to the experiences of individual participants and to the dynamics of the community as a whole. The case selection focuses on residents actively involved in the *Sadbor TikTok* livestreams, including young people who frequently share dance content on social media. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation and analysis of social media content. Analysis proceeded in two stages. Firstly, data were analyzed thematically, identifying patterns that emerged from interviews, observation and social media content, with data triangulation employed to strengthen the validity of the findings. Secondly, the themes were assessed normatively against the Qur'an, the objectives of Islamic law as articulated in contemporary *maqasid* scholarship (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2008), and the guidelines of the 2017 MUI fatwa on social media (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2017). Following Auda's (2008) study, the assessment weighs the benefits (*maslahah*) of the practice against its harms (*mafsadah*) across the five essential objectives of the law.

The study concerns a single community at a particular moment, and the phenomenon was altered by the arrest of its pioneer in October 2024. The normative assessment offered here identifies the conditions under which the practice accords with or departs from Islamic teaching; it does not issue a ruling (fatwa), which is the province of qualified religious authorities.

Result and Discussion

The Drivers of the Phenomenon: Internet Access, Economic Need and Community Support

The *Sadbor* phenomenon reflects significant social change in a rural community. Improved internet access has allowed residents of Babakan Baru village, many of whom had previously had little connection with audiences beyond their village, to reach a national audience through TikTok. The dance itself is not an inherited tradition but a recent livestream practice, described in press coverage as the *joget ayam patuk*, a movement imitating a pecking chicken, that residents adopted after its pioneer drew large audiences (Tim detikJabar, 2024). Its significance lies less in cultural heritage than in what it reveals about how rural residents adapt to the platform economy.

Economic need is the most immediate driver. Farming households face fluctuating prices for agricultural produce and uncertain returns, which creates pressure to diversify sources of income (Warburton, 2024). The farmers in Desa Bojongkembar used *TikTok* livestreaming as a supplementary livelihood alongside farming, with land ownership the strongest influence on whether households took part. Matondang and Kholil (2024) interpret the same phenomenon as a survival strategy and as an expression of farmers' dissatisfaction with their economic conditions. Through virtual gifts, livestreaming offers a source of income that may reduce reliance on unstable agricultural returns.

Community support reinforces these drivers. Residents learned from one another how to set up livestreams and attract viewers, and the collective character of the activity, with neighbours performing together and in succession, helped the practice spread through the village. Social media thus became a shared resource, although participation was not equal: households differed in their access to devices, connectivity and the time required for long broadcasts.

Digital Skills, Creativity and Commodification

The phenomenon also reflects the growth of digital skills in rural areas. Operating livestreams, responding to viewers and sustaining their attention require competences that residents acquired largely through practice, and the wider expansion of digital education has made such skills increasingly accessible (Wang et al., 2024). Dance on social media has become a field in which participants construct identities in relation to audiences and markets (Harrington, 2020), and in which collective forms of digital performance raise questions about what is held in common and what is sold (Bench, 2024).

The same dynamics expose participants to commodification. Yeo (2024) describes how performers in a market-driven dance industry are pressed to adapt their identities to audience demand, a condition she terms hyper-subjectivity, and draws on the notion of cruel optimism to describe attachments to opportunities that also cause harm. A comparable pressure operates on the livestreams, where the income generated depends on continuous visibility and on performances calibrated to elicit gifts. The need to sustain attention over long broadcasts may produce fatigue and stress, and may push performers toward content that attracts gifts at the expense of dignity. It is at this point that the Islamic assessment becomes decisive.

An Islamic Assessment of the *Sadbor* Phenomenon

The phenomenon is assessed here against six considerations: the legitimacy of seeking livelihood, the status of dance and entertainment in relation to local custom, intention and modesty, the ethics of soliciting gifts, the prohibition of gambling, and

the norms of conduct on social media. Table 1 then summarises the assessment in terms of the five essential objectives of Islamic law.

Seeking Lawful Livelihood

Islam regards the pursuit of livelihood as a virtue. The Qur'an instructs believers, once prayer is concluded, to "disperse in the land and seek God's bounty" (The Qur'an, 2004, 62:10), and the Islamic work ethic treats productive effort as a religious obligation and a source of dignity rather than a merely economic necessity (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Diversifying a household's income through new forms of work is therefore legitimate in principle, and the economic motivation of *Sadbor* participants accords with this ethic. The legitimacy of the end does not, however, settle the legitimacy of the means. Islamic law requires that earnings be acquired lawfully, without consuming the wealth of others unjustly (The Qur'an, 2004, 4:29), and Al-Qaradawi (1960/1994) emphasises that the lawfulness of an occupation depends on the nature of the activity through which income is earned.

Dance, Entertainment and Local Custom

Islamic scholarship has long debated the permissibility of music, singing and dance. Al-Qaradawi (1960/1994) holds that recreation and entertainment are permissible in principle, provided that they involve nothing prohibited in themselves, are not accompanied by indecency or by the neglect of religious obligations, and are pursued in moderation. Islamic jurisprudence also recognises custom (*'urf*) as a legitimate consideration in determining rulings, on condition that the custom does not contradict the clear texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Kamali, 2008). A light-hearted dance performed in modest dress, by participants observing their prayers, falls within the permissible. The same activity departs from it where the movements are indecent, where dress fails to meet the requirements of modesty, or where hours-long broadcasts displace the obligatory prayers, since recreation may not take precedence over obligation.

Intention, Display and Modesty

Islamic ethics evaluates an act not only by its outward form but by the intention behind it. Livestreaming is by its nature a form of display, and its rewards are measured in attention and gifts. The Qur'an censures those who perform acts "to be seen" by others while neglecting their substance (The Qur'an, 2004, 107:4–7), and the tradition of Islamic ethics distinguishes sincerity of purpose (*ikhlas*) from ostentation (*riya'*). A performer who dances to earn a lawful income for his household acts from a legitimate motive; the same performance becomes ethically compromised where the pursuit of visibility becomes an end in itself and displaces other duties. This concern converges with the analysis of commodification above: the pressure to

remain visible that Yeo (2024) identifies in market-driven dance is, in Islamic terms, a pressure toward ostentation.

Modesty is a further consideration. The Qur'an instructs believing men and women alike to lower their gaze and guard their modesty, and instructs women not to display their adornment beyond what ordinarily appears (The Qur'an, 2004, 24:30–31). Because livestreams reach anonymous audiences without limit, the requirements of modest dress and conduct apply with particular force, and the community's assessment of what is acceptable must take account of the audience that the platform creates, not only of the village setting in which the performance takes place. Islamic legal reasoning permits local custom to shape the application of these requirements (Kamali, 2008), but not to set them aside.

Soliciting Gifts and the Ethics of Begging

The central ethical question concerns the virtual gifts on which the livestreams depend. A gift freely given in appreciation of a performance is unobjectionable. As we observe, *Sadbor* performances frequently combine dance with expressions of sadness and pleading designed to elicit gifts, it is not rooted in genuine need. The Qur'an praises those in need who "do not ask people persistently" (The Qur'an, 2004, 2:273), and the Islamic emphasis on human dignity (The Qur'an, 2004, 17:70) weighs against performances that commodify distress. Digital *saweran* is a contemporary form of begging. The distinction for Islamic ethics is therefore between performance offered for appreciation and need feigned for gain.

The Prohibition of Gambling

The arrest of the phenomenon's pioneer on suspicion of promoting online gambling sites during his broadcasts (Tim detikJabar, 2024; Tribrata News Polda Jabar, 2024) brings a further and decisive consideration into view. The Qur'an names gambling (*maysir*) among the abominations of Satan's handiwork, which sow enmity and turn people away from the remembrance of God and from prayer (The Qur'an, 2004, 5:90–91). Income derived from promoting gambling is accordingly unlawful, whatever the economic need of the person who earns it. The allegation in the present case concerns an individual and was under investigation at the time of reporting; it does not implicate the residents as a whole. It illustrates, however, how monetised livestreaming exposes participants to commercial arrangements whose lawfulness they may be ill-equipped to judge, and why religious and digital literacy must proceed together.

Conduct on Social Media

The 2017 MUI fatwa sets out principles for conduct through social media. It requires Muslims to verify information before disseminating it (*tabayyun*), prohibits content that is false, defamatory or indecent, and forbids engaging in or profiting from the

production and circulation of prohibited content (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2017). These principles apply directly to monetised livestreaming. Social media can also carry value messages that erode the moral orientation of young users (Liventsova et al., 2024), and the risks of social media use in Indonesia extend to the psychological resilience of its users (Abdillah et al., 2024). At the same time, social media can serve as a resource for Islamic learning where users approach it with critical awareness (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024), and Indonesian Muslims have shown how online creativity may be joined to religious purpose (Nisa, 2018).

Table 1 summarises the assessment in terms of the five essential objectives of Islamic law (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2008), setting the potential benefits of the Sadbor phenomenon against its potential harms.

Table 1. The *Sadbor* phenomenon assessed against the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*)

Objective	Potential benefit (*maslahah*)	Potential harm (*mafsadah*)	Governing principle
Preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*)	Online presence that may carry religious greetings and positive messages	Long broadcasts displacing obligatory prayer; content contrary to Islamic *adab*	Recreation may not take precedence over obligation
Preservation of life and dignity (*hifz al-nafs*)	Recreation and relief from economic stress	Performances of feigned distress; fatigue from prolonged broadcasting	Human dignity (Q 17:70)
Preservation of intellect (*hifz al-'aql*)	Acquisition of digital skills and media literacy	Exposure to destructive value messages; compulsive viewing and broadcasting	Verification (*tabayyun*) and critical literacy
Preservation of family (*hifz al-nasl*)	Household income and cooperation among family members	Indecent movement or dress contrary to modesty	Custom (*'urf*) recognised only where consistent with the texts
Preservation of wealth (*hifz al-mal*)	Supplementary income alongside farming	Income from gambling promotion (*maysir*) or from solicitation not grounded in need	Prohibition of *maysir* (Q 5:90–91); restraint in asking (Q 2:273)

Taken together, the assessment indicates that the *Sadbor* phenomenon is not inherently contrary to Islamic teaching. Its permissibility depends on conditions: that the dance remain modest, that broadcasts not displace religious obligations, that gifts be received for performance rather than solicited through feigned need, and that no income derive from gambling or other prohibited content. Where these conditions are met, the practice may serve the objectives of the law by supporting household welfare; where they are breached, its harms outweigh its benefits.

Community Strategies Grounded in *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*

The assessment points to strategies that would allow the community to retain the benefits of digital work while avoiding its harms. The first is digital literacy joined to religious guidance: training in the technical and commercial dimensions of livestreaming should include instruction in the lawful sources of income, the recognition of gambling promotion, and the principles of the 2017 fatwa (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2017). The second is the active involvement of local ulama and village authorities, who are best placed to set community norms for broadcasting hours, dress and conduct consistent with local custom (*'urf*) and with Islamic teaching (Kamali, 2008).

The third is the lawful diversification of digital income. Residents' digital skills may be turned to the marketing of agricultural produce, to content that shares farming knowledge, and to the promotion of local culture, all of which serve household welfare without the ethical risks of gift solicitation (Agus et al., 2021). The fourth is attention to equitable access, since disparities in devices and connectivity shape who can benefit from the platform economy. Programmes that address these points would allow the community to pursue livelihood in a manner that protects wealth, dignity and faith alike.

Conclusion

The Sadbor phenomenon in Kampung Babakan Baru was driven by easy internet access, economic pressure on farming households, the growth of digital skills, and community support that allowed the practice to spread rapidly through the village. It is a recent livestream practice rather than an inherited tradition, and its significance lies in what it reveals about rural adaptation to the platform economy. The phenomenon is not inherently contrary to Islamic teaching. Seeking additional livelihood through digital work accords with the Islamic work ethic, and recreation is permissible within the limits of modesty and religious obligation, with local custom recognised where it does not contradict the texts. Its permissibility is nonetheless conditional. Soliciting gifts through feigned need conflicts with Islamic teaching on begging and on human dignity, and any income derived from the promotion of gambling is unlawful. Assessed against the objectives of Islamic law, the practice serves the preservation of wealth where these conditions are met and undermines the preservation of religion, dignity and wealth where they are breached.

The study proposes digital literacy joined to religious guidance, the involvement of local ulama and village authorities in setting community norms, the lawful diversification of digital income, and attention to equitable access. The principal limitation of the study is its focus on a single community; further research

comparing livestreaming practices across Muslim rural communities would allow the *maqasid*-based framework proposed here to be tested and refined.

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