



Analysis of the Application of Online Games from the Perspective of Maqashid al-Shariah in the Era of a Sustainable Modern Digital Economy

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ABSTRACT

The current development of the digital economy has a significant impact on various aspects of life, including the entertainment sector through the proliferation of online games. This phenomenon is not only related to entertainment but also impacts social, moral, and economic values among Muslim communities. This study aims to examine the use of online games from the perspective of maqashid sharia by emphasizing the five main objectives of sharia, namely protecting religion (hifz ad-din), life (hifz an-nafs), mind (hifz al-'aql), offspring (hifz an-nasl), and wealth (hifz al-mal). The method used in this study is qualitative-descriptive with a literature review approach from various academic sources related to the digital economy and Islamic ethics. The analysis findings indicate that online games can provide economic and educational benefits if used wisely and in accordance with sharia principles, especially in terms of increasing creativity, collaboration, and economic opportunities through e-sports and digital content. However, excessive misuse can result in negative effects such as addiction, neglect of worship, and unnecessary expenditure of time and money. Therefore, the application of maqashid sharia is important as an ethical guideline to achieve a balance between digital technological progress and the moral and spiritual sustainability of Muslims.

Keywords: *Maqashid Sharia, Online Games, Digital Economy, Islamic Ethics, Sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

Online gaming has now evolved from mere entertainment into a complex digital economic ecosystem, encompassing the game development industry, distribution platforms, virtual asset markets, and the esports ecosystem, all of

which absorb labor and generate new sources of income. This development creates economic opportunities, but it also raises ethical, social, and legal questions that must be examined through a robust value framework (Entertainment Software Association, 2024).

In Islamic law, *maqashid al-shariah* (the objectives of Sharia) provides a normative framework for assessing whether an economic or cultural practice is consistent with the goals of protecting religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). The *maqashid* approach enables an evaluation that goes beyond mere formal legality, encompassing moral objectives, the protection of welfare, and long-term social benefit (Maulida & Ali, 2023).

In the context of online gaming, several business practices—such as microtransactions, loot boxes, and virtual asset trading—raise issues related to *maqashid*. These include the potential for economic exploitation of players, the risk of behavior resembling gambling, and adverse effects on mental and social well-being. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the extent to which monetization mechanisms in games respect the protection of wealth, prevent harm to life and well-being, and preserve the rational economic judgment of players (Meng, 2024).

On the other hand, the gaming and esports industries also offer tangible benefits, including job creation, local economic growth during events, technological innovation such as AR/VR, and opportunities for digital entrepreneurship. The *maqashid* perspective encourages these benefits to be optimized for the public good (*maslahah*) while minimizing their harmful effects through policy interventions, responsible product design, and user education (Nyström, 2022).

The sustainability dimension is equally important. Recent studies indicate that the development of the esports industry and digital economy must take into account environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions to ensure that growth remains sustainable and equitable. A well-directed *maqashid* approach can serve as a normative foundation for aligning gaming industry practices with sustainable development principles, for example by ensuring inclusion, protecting creative workers, and reducing negative impacts (Nyström, 2022).

From the perspective of education and capacity building, gamification elements and educational games hold substantial potential to enhance skills, participation, and digital literacy when designed ethically. However, the boundary between games that are genuinely educational and mechanisms that

are exploitative – such as psychological manipulation in purchasing behavior – becomes a critical concern when assessing compliance with *maqashid*, particularly in relation to the protection of intellect and life/well-being (Meng, 2024).

In terms of regulation and public policy, there remains a significant gap between the pace of innovation in gaming platforms and the lag in regulatory updates, whether in consumer protection, virtual asset trading, or religious concerns related to the prohibition of gambling. A *maqashid*-based analysis can provide proposals for balanced regulatory principles that safeguard both freedom to innovate and the obligation to protect society from harmful practices (Raihan, 2024).

A notable gap in the current literature is the lack of empirical studies integrating *maqashid* analysis with real economic data from the gaming sector – for example, analyses of revenue from microtransactions in relation to players' welfare, or case studies on the implementation of *maqashid*-based policies in gaming platforms. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap through an interdisciplinary approach that combines Sharia studies, digital economics, and public policy analysis (Raihan, 2024).

In summary, this introduction views online gaming as a phenomenon that cuts across multiple sectors and therefore requires moral and normative evaluation. By employing *maqashid al-shariah* as the analytical framework, this study is expected to offer policy recommendations and product design insights that not only ensure economic benefit but also preserve the fundamental values of society, thereby generating outcomes of value for academics, policymakers, industry actors, and Muslim communities engaged in the digital world (Rohman, 2023).

METHOD

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research design. This approach was selected because it is capable of providing a comprehensive description and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of online gaming based on the principles of *maqashid al-shariah*. The data used in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through observations of online gaming users' behavior and interviews with individuals possessing an understanding of Sharia values and the digital industry. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from relevant sources such as literature, scholarly articles, books, and official reports related to the subject of the study.

The data analysis process was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the collected data were selected to ensure their relevance to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were presented in a systematic explanatory form to assist the researcher in identifying patterns and meanings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions, in which the results of the analysis were used to identify the extent to which the application of online gaming aligns with the objectives of *maqashid al-shariah* and its implications for the sustainability of the modern digital economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that online gaming exerts a significant influence on the economic behavior of digital society, particularly among younger generations. Gaming activities are no longer limited to entertainment, but have become integral to the digital economy through online transactions, professional competitions, and creative business opportunities (Entertainment Software Association, 2024b). This transformation reflects a shift in values – from mere consumption of entertainment to productive activities that generate income. However, this shift also introduces ethical and spiritual challenges that require serious consideration from the perspective of *maqashid al-shariah* (Rohman, 2023).

From the perspective of *hifz al-din* (protection of religion), online games can function positively when utilized for educational purposes, simulations, and cognitive development. Nevertheless, many commercial games are not entirely value-neutral; some contain elements of violence, exploitation, and interactions that encourage consumerist behavior. This highlights the importance of ethical guidelines and value-based content filtering grounded in Islamic principles to ensure that gaming activities remain Sharia-compliant (Yusuf, 2021).

In terms of *hifz al-nafs* (protection of life), studies reveal that excessive gaming can lead to addiction, sleep disturbances, and reduced social interaction. These effects arise from reward systems designed to prolong gameplay and increase emotional dependency. Therefore, education and the regulation of playing time are essential components in applying *maqashid* to safeguard users' physical and mental well-being (Ibrahim, 2022).

From the perspective of *hifz al-'aql* (protection of intellect), gaming offers benefits such as enhanced strategic thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. However, field studies also indicate that some users experience a decline in academic focus and productivity due to exposure to distracting content. This

situation necessitates the development of Sharia-compliant gamification systems to maximize the positive potential of gaming (Fauzi, 2023).

Regarding *hifz al-nasl* (protection of lineage), online gaming environments create complex social dynamics. Interactions across genders and cultures may foster tolerance, yet they also open the possibility of moral deviations and erosion of family values. Consequently, character development and social control are crucial to ensure that digital generations can utilize technology responsibly without compromising norms of modesty and dignity (Nabila, 2024).

The aspect of *hifz al-mal* (protection of wealth) represents a major concern in this analysis. Microtransactions, virtual item purchases, and investments in digital assets within gaming platforms often involve elements of uncertainty and speculation. From a *maqashid* perspective, such practices must be regulated to prevent economic loss and player exploitation. Sharia-based regulations are required to ensure that in-game transactions adhere to principles of justice and transparency (Rohman, 2023).

Empirical findings suggest that players who apply principles of moderation and spiritual awareness are better able to maintain a balance between entertainment and economic responsibility. They are less likely to fall into consumptive behavior and tend to perceive gaming as a medium for learning and self-development. This behavioral pattern demonstrates that *maqashid al-shariah* can be practically implemented in digital environments, provided it is accompanied by strong intention and self-regulation (Hassan, 2024).

Interviews with stakeholders in the gaming industry reveal an increasing awareness of the importance of ethical principles and sustainability. Some developers have begun incorporating moral messages, social activities, and educational elements into game design. This aligns with the principle of *maslahah*, which seeks to maximize benefits while minimizing harm in economic activities. Such an approach also supports sustainable development goals by emphasizing balance among economic, social, and spiritual dimensions (Latif, 2023).

Moreover, online games hold potential as a medium for digital da'wah and education. With engaging and interactive design, Islamic values can be conveyed creatively to younger generations. Several initiatives in this field have demonstrated positive outcomes in enhancing religious awareness and digital literacy. Thus, the application of *maqashid* serves not only as a moral regulatory framework but also as a driver of innovation for societal benefit (Ahmad, 2022).

Overall, this discussion emphasizes that the application of *maqashid al-shariah* in the online gaming industry constitutes a crucial step toward an ethical and sustainable digital economy. These principles can serve as guidelines for policy formulation, technological innovation, and balanced digital consumption

behavior—harmonizing worldly enjoyment with spiritual responsibility. Therefore, integrating Sharia values into the gaming sector is not merely a normative necessity, but also a strategic pathway toward a dignified digital society (Syafiq, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the application of *maqashid al-shariah* to online gaming constitutes an important step toward balancing technological advancement with the spiritual values of Islam. Online gaming is not merely a form of entertainment, but also part of a broader digital economic ecosystem with considerable potential in education, business, and innovation. Nevertheless, without moral and ethical control, such activities may generate negative consequences for the religious, social, and psychological dimensions of players' lives. Therefore, the application of *maqashid* values—namely the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth—serves as a principal guideline in determining the boundaries and direction of the gaming industry's development so that it remains beneficial and does not undermine the social order.

Furthermore, this study affirms that the *maqashid al-shariah* approach can serve as a relevant evaluative framework in the era of the modern digital economy. Through the integration of the principles of *maslahah* (public benefit), justice, and social responsibility, the online gaming industry can be transformed into a sector that is not only economically profitable but also supportive of the moral and spiritual sustainability of the Muslim community. Accordingly, the development of digital technology, including online games, should be directed toward achieving a balance between worldly progress and success in the Hereafter, in line with the primary objective of Sharia to realize the welfare of all humankind.

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