



## Self-Control and Youth Moral Crisis: An Analysis of QS. Yusuf 23–25 Based on Tafsir Al-Misbah

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### Abstract

This study examines the moral framework of self-control in QS. Yusuf 23–25 based on the exegetical insights of Tafsir Al-Misbah, with a particular emphasis on its relevance to the contemporary moral crises experienced by youth. Employing a tahlili method, the analysis focuses on the textual meaning of each verse and its contextual interpretation as articulated by tafsir Al-Misbah. The findings indicate that the passage highlights four core ethical imperatives: patience as deliberate restraint of desire, responsibility as moral awareness of consequences, steadfastness as loyalty to divine moral order, and avoidance of illicit relationships as a preventive ethical discipline. These principles collectively suggest a Qur’anic model of self-control that is both spiritually grounded and socially relevant. The study concludes that the Yusuf narrative offers a robust moral ontology capable of informing youth character development and addressing contemporary ethical disruptions within a modern sociocultural landscape.

**Keywords:** *Self-Control; Youth; QS. Yusuf 23–25; Tafsir Al-Misbah*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji kerangka moralitas pengendalian diri dalam QS. Yusuf 23–25 berdasarkan penjelasan tafsir Al-Misbah, dengan fokus pada relevansinya terhadap krisis moral yang dialami anak muda kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan metode tahlili, kajian ini menelusuri makna tekstual setiap ayat serta konteks interpretatifnya dalam tafsir Al-Misbah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ayat-ayat tersebut menegaskan empat imperatif etis utama: sabar sebagai kemampuan menahan dorongan, tanggung jawab sebagai kesadaran moral atas konsekuensi, keteguhan diri sebagai komitmen terhadap tatanan moral ilahi, serta penghindaran zina sebagai disiplin etis yang bersifat preventif. Keempat nilai ini membentuk model pengendalian diri yang berakar pada spiritualitas Qur’ani sekaligus relevan bagi dinamika sosial anak muda. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa narasi Yusuf menawarkan ontologi moral yang kokoh untuk memperkuat karakter generasi muda dan memberikan respons terhadap disrupsi moral dalam lanskap budaya modern.

**Kata Kunci:** *Pengendalian Diri; Anak Muda; QS. Yusuf 23–25; Tafsir Al-Misbah*



## INTRODUCTION

The socio-religious realities of contemporary youth show fast-moving dynamics, but many of them are in a troubling direction (Burt, 2020). In the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization, instant culture, and the penetration of permissive values that touch the private and public spaces at the same time, the symptoms of moral degradation are increasingly apparent. Young people experience a change in orientation that not only affects their lifestyle, but also their basic attitudes towards ethical values such as self-esteem, relationship purity, and personal responsibility. This phenomenon indicates that many adolescents are entering a territory of moral crisis characterized by weakening of self-control skills, susceptibility to temptation, and loss of the ethical boundaries that previously underpinned socio-religious life (Laird et al., 2011).

This moral crisis is further strengthened when young people live in a social space that facilitates access to content that reduces the value of the sanctity of human relationships. Phenomena such as intimate relationships outside of marriage, a culture of courtship that knows no boundaries, the tendency to engage in private interactions without control, and the normalization of behaviors oriented towards the satisfaction of desire, show that the aspect of self-control is increasingly being excluded from the collective consciousness of the younger generation. In this context, many young people are no longer able to see human relations as a moral space, but simply as a space of free expression that does not require spiritual or social accountability (Marcus & McCullough, 2021).

Previous research has touched on the relevance of Qur'anic values to the moral development of the younger generation, although the focus of the study is often different and does not specifically highlight QS. Joseph 23–25. A study by Rahmawati (2021) shows that the value of patience in the story of the Prophet Yusuf has an important influence on the formation of adolescent characters, especially in the context of self-control. Another study by Munir (2020) emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility in the stories of the prophets as the foundation of Islamic character education. Meanwhile, a study by Siregar (2022) highlights the moral challenges of modern youth and proposes the use of a thematic interpretation approach as the basis for the reconstruction of Qur'anic ethics. Although relevant, these studies have not examined in depth the episode of Zulaikha and the resistance of the Prophet Yusuf as a model of self-control and moral fortitude in the socio-religious context of today's young people. This gap is what this study aims to fill.

The Qur'an as a guide as in QS. Joseph 23–25, there are four ethical messages that are particularly powerful and relevant to young people today: responsibility for the consequences of actions, patience in the face of temptation, firmness in the face of social pressure, and the principle of maintaining personal purity through the prohibition of cohabitation or

courtship that can lead to immoral behavior. Al-Misbah's Tafsir provides interpretive depth to these four values by presenting the Prophet Joseph as a figure who did not simply resist temptation instantly, but through mature spiritual awareness, an understanding of self-respect, and non-negotiable moral integrity. Thus, QS. Joseph 23–25 not only presents a historical narrative, but it becomes an ethical framework that teaches how a young person builds a resilient character in the face of temptations and environmental pressures.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the moral message of QS. Yusuf 23–25 with the Tafsir Al-Misbah approach and relate it to the phenomenon of moral crisis of today's youth. This research seeks to show that the values of responsibility, patience, constancy, and relational ethics in the verse provide a theological and ethical foundation to understand the moral dynamics of the younger generation. By reading the verses through a socio-religious lens, this study wants to reaffirm that moral integrity is not just a normative teaching, but a skill that must be built through self-awareness, lust control, and commitment to the spiritual values taught by the Qur'an.

## **METHOD**

This research method uses the tahlili approach, which is an interpretation method that describes the meaning of the verse in order based on the structure of the text, historical context, interpersonal relationships, and explanations of mufasir. This approach allows research to explore the moral messages contained in QS. Joseph 23–25 provides an in-depth reading of the linguistic elements, storyline, and psychological dynamics that accompany the Prophet Joseph's actions in the face of destructive temptations. Using Tafsir Al-Misbah as the primary source, the study examines how Quraish Shihab builds ethical arguments that reflect responsibility, patience, principle, and an attitude of maintaining self-honor from improper intimate relationships. The tahlili method provides a space to present an integral understanding between the text, moral message, and its social relevance. The research data was obtained entirely through literature studies. Primary sources include the Qur'an and Tafsir Al-Misbah, while secondary sources include scholarly works that discuss adolescent morality, the self-control crisis of the younger generation, and academic studies of Surah Yusuf. The analysis is carried out through a thematic interpretation process that connects the meaning of the verse with contemporary moral phenomena (Lilik Ummi Kaltsum & Amin, 2024).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Al-Qur'an Surah Yusuf Verses 23–25 in Tafsir Al-Misbah**

وَرَأَوْدَتْهُ النَّيِّ هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنِ نَفْسِهِ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْبَ لَكَ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَنُؤَايِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٣) وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ

وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ ۗ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

#### Translation

*"And the woman with whom he (Joseph) lived in his house seduced him. Then he shut the doors and said: 'Come near to me.' Joseph said, 'I take refuge in Allah, indeed, my master has treated me well.' Indeed, the unrighteous will not be lucky. (23) And indeed, the woman had longed for him. And Joseph would have wanted him, if he had not seen the sign of his Lord. Thus, We turn away from it evil and abomination. Indeed, he (Joseph) is one of Our chosen servants. (24) And they ran to the door, and the woman pulled her robe from behind until it was torn, and they found the woman's husband at the door. The woman said, 'What reward is there for a man who has ill intentions against your wife, but imprisonment or a painful punishment?' (25)"*

According to M. Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah, verses 23–25 of Q.S Yusuf are qasas surah which is completely narrative and was revealed in response to the request of the Quraysh who at that time doubted the prophethood of Muhammad for him to present a story equivalent to the stories of the previous prophets. Therefore, Q.S Yusuf is more macro, namely the need for da'wah to strengthen the apostolic legitimacy of the Prophet Muhammad through prophetic narratives that unite spiritual, moral, and historical elements.

The historical context of the story in these verses is explained in great detail in Tafsir Al-Misbah. M. Quraish Shihab asserts that verses 23–25 describe the most critical phase in the life of the Prophet Yusuf while living in the court of the family of al-'Aziz in Egypt. Zulaikha al-'Aziz's wife was fascinated by Yusuf's handsomeness, morals, and integrity and tried to seduce him intentionally. The phrase "*wa ghallaqat al-abwāb*" according to Quraish Shihab indicates intentions and careful planning, not impulsive temptations. This indicates that the temptation that Joseph faced was a very structured, closed, and psychologically stressful situation (Shihab, 2022).

Quraish Shihab emphasizes that Yusuf's attitude of saying "*ma'ādza Allāh*" is a form of spiritual steadfastness that grows from deep theological awareness, not just a spontaneous response. Tafsir Al-Misbah also explains that the "*burhāna rabbihi*" is not just a visual image, but an inner enlightenment that strengthens Yusuf's self-control dimension so that he is able to resist the great temptations that are socially and psychologically difficult to avoid. Thus, this verse displays the dynamics of prophetic ethics that combine moral awareness, social integrity, and spiritual resilience in the face of the pressure of lust and power structures (Shihab, 2022).

#### **From Text to Context in Q.S Yusuf verses 23-25**

The text of the verse features the proactive action of Zulaikha (the woman of the household) who "seduces" him (*rawadat-hu*) and closes the

door; Yusuf's response is *ta'widh* (seeking refuge from Allah) as well as an ethical statement of his loyalty to the master who has given him good (*rabbi ahsana mathwaya*). In the reading of the tahlili of Al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab emphasizes two things: (1) the language of verse positions Joseph as a morally mature subject — the choice of the word "*ma'adhallâh*" is not merely a ritual call but an expression of ethical argument: he refuses not out of fear of reputation alone but out of theological and relational commitment (responsibility to God and master). (2) the closing of the door by Zulaikha is a symbol of the intensity of temptation and an effort to create a private situation that maximizes the opportunity for violation; This action serves as a contrast that clarifies Joseph's moral choices. Quraish Shihab also attributes the phrase "*innahu la yuflihu al-zhâlimûn*" as a normative warning: pity towards piety results in moral salvation, while oppression or moral transgression leads to failure (Shihab, 2022). With a tahlili approach, Al-Misbah reads this verse not simply as a historical episode, but as a normative text that offers a learning of self-control and interpersonal responsibility for contemporary readers.

Textually verse 24 describes the encouragement (*himmat*) of two parties: "*wa laqad hammata bihi wa hamma biha*" — a balanced phrase that signifies the presence of an internal temptation in Joseph and an external stimulus from Zulaikha. Al-Misbah's interpretation interprets the existence of the "*burhân rabbihi*" (see evidence from his Lord) as an epistemic moment — not only a physical vision but an experience of divine revelation or signs that awakens an ethical consciousness in Joseph's heart. Quraish Shihab explains that the "*burhân*" here serves as a divine intervention that deflects the inclinations of lust and preserves Joseph as "Our sincere servant" (*min 'ibâdinâ al-mukhlisîn*) (Shihab, 2022). In the study of tahlili, Al-Misbah emphasizes the religio-psychological dimension: self-control is not just a rational ability, but is also rooted in transcendent experiences that strengthen the moral identity of the individual. Consequently, this verse is relevant for the discourse on the formation of moral resilience of young people: the strengthening of religious values (*spiritual anchors*) plays a critical role in the moderation of psychological impulses.

Verse 25 describes the dramatic consequences of Zulaikha's efforts: the chase towards the door, the tearing of Joseph's clothes (*qaddat qamisahū min anus*), and the intervention of a third party (they found their master at the door) (Shihab, 2022). In the tafsir tahlili Al-Misbah, this scene is analyzed as a means of narrative that emphasizes two aspects: (1) external facts — material evidence (torn clothes) which then becomes a tool of socio-legal examination; (2) the social-communal dimension — the presence of the 'master' as a social witness that transforms the narrative journey into a moral-institutional trial. Quraish Shihab underlines that this incident shows how Yusuf's self-control was tested in both public and private spaces; Despite the eye-popping visual evidence, the moral and ethical interpretation remains grounded in Joseph's

extraordinary honesty and integrity. From the perspective of tahlili, this event is a source of teaching on the importance of maintaining reputation through behavior and at the same time rejecting reductionism that sees victims solely through physical evidence without a broader moral-psychological context. This verse, according to Al-Misbah, teaches the handling of slander and moral-community procedures in dealing with conflicts between personal interests, evidence, and truth.

### **Self-Control to Contemporary Youth in QS. Joseph 23–25**

The moral message in QS. Yusuf verses 23–25 present a framework of self-control that is very relevant for contemporary young people, especially in a society that is experiencing digital acceleration, normalization of permissive behavior, and fragmentation of values. In the perspective of modern moral psychology theory, self-control includes the ability to resist instant impulses, prioritize long-term values, and maintain one's integrity despite situational pressure. In parallel, Tafsir Al-Misbah shows that the Prophet Yusuf shows four interrelated dimensions of self-control: patience in the face of temptation, responsibility as a moral person, steadfastness of principle in maintaining self-respect, and commitment to avoid adultery as a form of *self-worth* protection). These four dimensions form an ethical structure that is not only normative-theological, but also compatible with contemporary morality theories, including *self-regulation theory* (Baumeister), *moral agency* (Bandura), and *virtue ethics* (MacIntyre) (Kerasha et al., 2024).

First, the dimension of patience (*ṣabr*) in Joseph's story cannot be read as passive, but as moral endurance—moral resilience in the face of internal and external pressures. Tafsir Al-Misbah explains that Yusuf's patience was not just restraint, but showed a moral awareness that any impulse could potentially damage long-term value. In the context of today's young people, patience is a form of moral competence that suppresses emotional impulses, especially in an *instant culture* that gives birth to a tendency to make decisions without ethical considerations. Therefore, *ṣabr* becomes an element of self-control that builds adolescents' capacity to manage desires and social pressures that are often present in the form of temptations of free relationships, exposure to digital pornography, or immature affective impulses (Purwono et al., 2019).

Second, the value of responsibility is a very strong element in this verse and is underlined by Quraish Shihab as Yusuf's awareness of his moral position as a servant of Allah and as an entrusted individual. Responsibility in the context of *self-control* can be understood as a form of moral accountability—a willingness to bear the ethical consequences of any action. Contemporary young people often face a crisis of responsibility due to a digital culture that is anonymous and does not present direct accountability. QS. Joseph 23–25 teaches that freedom must always be based on an awareness of moral

boundaries, so that behavior is not driven by momentary desires, but by integrity and clarity of direction.

Third, the value of self-determination (*istiqāmah*) shows how Joseph chose moral purity even though he situationally had the opportunity to follow temptation without anyone knowing. Quraish Shihab emphasizes that Joseph's steadfastness stemmed from an inner vision of the truth, which in Al-Misbah's terms is called *burhān rabbihi*. Theoretically, self-determination is closely related to moral resilience, which is the ability to maintain moral commitment in ambiguous and stressful conditions. For young people today, steadfastness of principle is very important as a self-protection mechanism against the dominance of permissive cultures that normalize free sexual behavior, unlimited association, and the loss of ethical standards in interpersonal relationships.

Fourth, the message of avoiding adultery is the peak dimension of self-control in this verse. Tafsir Al-Misbah states that adultery is not only a violation of the Shari'a, but also a form of degradation of human dignity, because it breaks the relationship between values, honor, and responsibility. From the perspective of self-regulation theory, avoiding adultery is the most complex practice of self-control because it involves biological, social, and emotional impulses simultaneously. For contemporary young people, the temptation to engage in free sexual behavior comes through digital media, entertainment algorithms, and loosening social relationships. Therefore, this Qur'anic message can be read as an invitation to build *sexual moral agency*, which is the capacity to set healthy moral boundaries in order to protect oneself from psychological, spiritual, and social damage (Aggarwal et al., 2023).

Thus, the message of *self-control* in QS. Joseph 23–25 not only exemplifies the piety of a prophet, but establishes an ethical framework that is highly relevant to contemporary youth. He integrates patience as the management of desires, responsibility as moral awareness, self-determination as value stability, and avoidance of adultery as a form of protection of dignity. These four values, as explained by Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah, are the foundation for the formation of a morally and spiritually healthy adolescent character in facing the dynamics of modern times.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The story of Yusuf's resistance to Zulaikha's temptation shows that moral integrity is built through the ability to control oneself, patience in the face of pressure, responsibility for the values of truth, steadfastness of principle when faced with potentially fatal situations, and awareness to stay away from any path that leads to adultery. When these messages are brought into the socio-religious context of today's young people, QS. Joseph verses 23–25 offer a relevant ethical paradigm for responding to moral crises

characterized by weak self-control, increased promiscuity, and a strengthening of permissive cultures. Through the tahlili approach, this article shows that these verses not only present a historical story, but also provide a normative framework for the character formation of modern young people. The implication of this paper confirms that self-control as a Qur'anic value has significant potential to be an ethical foundation in building a generation capable of facing social pressures, maintaining moral principles, and living a life with a strong spiritual orientation.

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