

BEYOND DIGITAL ADOPTION: A QUR'ANIC VALUE-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE MSME EMPOWERMENT IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT This study develops a Qur'anic value-based framework for sustainable digital empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), addressing the limitations of technology-centred approaches to digital transformation. Employing a qualitative library-based design, the study integrates thematic Qur'anic interpretation (tafsīr mawḍū'ī), systematic literature review, and bibliometric analysis of 200 relevant publications. The findings conceptualize MSME digital empowerment as a multidimensional process comprising five interrelated dimensions: digital, physical, emotional, political, and spiritual. The digital dimension encompasses digital literacy, technology adoption, and equitable digital access, while the physical dimension emphasizes connectivity, electricity, and transportation infrastructure. The emotional dimension highlights consumer trust and loyalty, whereas the political dimension incorporates welfare-oriented governance, regulation, transparency, and accountability. Distinctively, the spiritual dimension integrates īmān, taqwā, ikhtiyār, tawakkul, shukr, and istighfār as normative foundations for responsible entrepreneurship. The study contributes to digital entrepreneurship and Islamic economics by shifting the analytical focus from technology adoption toward value-driven empowerment. It proposes that sustainable MSME transformation requires technological capability to be embedded within infrastructure accessibility, relational trust, institutional justice, and spiritual integrity, thereby advancing an inclusive, ethical, and maslahah-oriented digital economy.

Keywords: Qur'anic values; digital empowerment; MSMEs; digital transformation; Islamic economics

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the digital economy has fundamentally transformed the organization of production, exchange, finance, marketing, and consumer interaction. For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), digitalization creates unprecedented opportunities to overcome conventional constraints associated with geographical distance, limited market access, inadequate information, restricted financing, and high transaction costs. Digital platforms allow relatively small businesses to reach geographically dispersed consumers, conduct transactions beyond conventional operating hours, access new financing mechanisms, develop customer relationships, and participate in economic networks that were historically dominated by larger enterprises [1]. Nevertheless, digital transformation is neither technologically neutral nor automatically inclusive. Access to digital infrastructure, technological capabilities, human capital, financing, institutional protection, consumer trust, and ethical governance determine whether digitalization produces empowerment or reproduces existing economic inequalities [2]. This study develops a distinctive conceptual response to this problem by examining digital economic empowerment for MSMEs through the perspective of the Qur'an. Its central proposition is that digital transformation should not be conceptualized merely as technological adoption or the migration of business processes from offline to online environments. Rather, meaningful digital transformation constitutes a multidimensional process involving technological capability, material infrastructure, human and emotional relationships, political institutions, and spiritual orientation. The study therefore seeks to reconstruct MSME digitalization from a predominantly instrumental model into a value-driven model of economic empowerment. The research is motivated by a significant conceptual gap. Mainstream approaches to MSME digitalization predominantly emphasize efficiency, innovation, productivity, competitiveness, technology acceptance, market expansion,

and business performance. These variables are undeniably important. However, they provide only a partial account of empowerment because they tend to evaluate digital success according to measurable economic and technological outcomes. Such an approach insufficiently addresses normative questions: What is digitalization ultimately intended to achieve? Who should benefit from technological transformation? What ethical principles should regulate digital transactions? What obligations do governments have toward digitally disadvantaged communities? How should technological capability relate to social justice, trust, responsibility, and human welfare? Most importantly for Muslim societies, how should digital economic transformation be situated within a worldview in which economic activities remain inseparable from moral accountability and spiritual purpose?

The study responds by integrating contemporary digital economic thought with Qur'anic principles of empowerment. The Qur'an is approached not as a technical manual prescribing particular technologies, but as a normative source containing principles capable of informing contemporary economic institutions and practices. Consequently, the research does not claim that the Qur'an directly discusses e-commerce, fintech, digital payment systems, marketplaces, algorithms, or contemporary digital infrastructure. Instead, it identifies Qur'anic concepts, ethical principles, patterns of empowerment, and socioeconomic guidance that can be contextualized to contemporary digital economic conditions. This distinction is fundamental to the intellectual architecture of the study. Technology changes rapidly, whereas normative principles concerning justice, trust, responsibility, knowledge, cooperation, economic effort, accountability, and human welfare retain broader relevance. The study therefore connects changing technological instruments with enduring ethical principles. The central research question asks how digital economic empowerment for MSMEs can be conceptualized from a Qur'anic perspective. This overarching

question is operationalized through three related inquiries concerning the nature of digital economic empowerment, the management and challenges of MSMEs in Indonesia, and Qur'anic verses or indications relevant to economic empowerment. Correspondingly, the study seeks to formulate a Qur'anic-based model of digital economic empowerment for MSMEs; identify and analyze the major components of digital economic empowerment; examine the management and structural problems confronting Indonesian MSMEs; and identify and interpret Qur'anic guidance relevant to economic empowerment.

The resulting framework proposes that MSME empowerment should simultaneously incorporate five dimensions: digital, physical, emotional, political, and spiritual. The digital dimension concerns digital literacy, technology adoption, and equality of digital access. The physical dimension incorporates digital infrastructure, electricity, and transportation infrastructure. The emotional dimension emphasizes consumer trust and loyalty. The political dimension concerns public policy, welfare-oriented leadership, regulation, oversight, transparency, and accountability. Finally, the spiritual dimension incorporates faith (*īmān*), God-consciousness (*taqwā*), purposeful effort (*ikhtiyār*), reliance on God (*tawakkul*), gratitude (*shukr*), and seeking divine forgiveness (*istighfār*). The significance of this five-dimensional model lies in its rejection of technological reductionism. MSMEs do not become empowered merely because they own smartphones, establish social-media accounts, join marketplaces, or accept digital payments. Genuine empowerment requires the capabilities to understand technology, material conditions to access it, institutional arrangements that distribute its benefits fairly, trustworthy relationship that sustain transactions, and ethical-spiritual principles that guide economic behavior. Accordingly, the study redefines digital economic empowerment as a process through which technological capability is integrated with human development, institutional justice, economic opportunity, ethical responsibility, and spiritual orientation. This integrated conception constitutes the central theoretical contribution of the research.

2. Research Context and the Strategic Importance of MSMEs

MSMEs occupy a central position within the Indonesian economic structure [3]. They function not simply as small-scale business organizations but as major instruments of employment creation, income distribution, local economic development, entrepreneurship, poverty reduction, and socioeconomic resilience. Their extensive presence across urban and rural areas gives them strategic significance in national economic development. The study emphasizes that MSMEs remain the backbone of the Indonesian economy. It reports that, by the first quarter of 2025, MSMEs contributed approximately 62.3 percent of Indonesian GDP and absorbed more than 117 million workers, representing approximately 97 percent of the national workforce. These figures reinforce the argument that MSME transformation cannot be regarded as a marginal entrepreneurial issue. Strengthening MSMEs has systemic implications for national economic resilience, employment, household welfare, regional development, and

social stability. Despite their economic importance, MSMEs continue to experience structural disadvantages. These include limited capital, restricted access to wider markets, weaknesses in business management, inadequate technological knowledge, uneven infrastructure, insufficient human-resource capabilities, and difficulties adapting to rapidly changing market conditions. Digitalization can mitigate some of these disadvantages, but it can also create new inequalities. The digital economy changes the relationship between business size and market reach. A microenterprise operating from a relatively remote location can theoretically access customers outside its immediate geographical environment through social media, e-commerce, online marketplaces, and digital payment infrastructure. Information regarding consumers, suppliers, competitors, pricing, financing, and market trends can be accessed much more rapidly than under conventional business arrangements. Communication costs can decline, customer relationship management can improve, and business operations can become increasingly data driven. Digital technologies can also extend business operations beyond conventional temporal and spatial limitations. E-commerce allows products to remain visible and potentially purchasable twenty-four hours a day. Digital communication facilitates interaction across cities and countries. Electronic payment systems reduce dependence on cash, while digital banking and fintech expand financial connectivity. Crowdfunding and other digitally mediated financing mechanisms may provide alternative sources of capital. Digital records can improve financial management, while customer relationship management systems can strengthen communication and service quality. Yet technological availability does not necessarily imply meaningful utilization. MSMEs may possess internet access while lacking the capability to evaluate digital information, manage online stores, maintain digital financial records, protect customer data, distinguish legitimate financing from exploitative arrangements, or use analytics for decision-making. Thus, access and capability must be analytically distinguished. The study identifies several recurring barriers. MSMEs may have viable business ideas but lack additional capital. Some entrepreneurs establish businesses imitatively rather than on the basis of clearly identified capabilities and market opportunities. Many lack knowledge of technological developments or the ability to operate digital systems. Human-resource quality and technological access remain uneven. Online business activities are often poorly managed because MSMEs lack specialized personnel responsible for websites and digital content [4]. At the same time, marketplaces and social media provide opportunities for MSMEs to introduce their products to much broader markets. The central challenge is therefore not whether digitalization is beneficial in principle. Rather, the challenge is how digitalization can be converted into genuine economic empowerment.

3. Conceptualizing Empowerment

The research begins from the understanding that empowerment is more comprehensive than simple participation. Empowerment concerns the development of capacity, autonomy, agency, control over resources, decision-

making ability, and the capacity to transform unfavorable conditions [5]. In economic terms, empowerment should enable individuals and communities to move from dependency toward productive independence [6]. The study draws particularly on empowerment theory, including Zimmerman's framework. Zimmerman conceptualizes empowerment through intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components. The intrapersonal component concerns perceived control, self-efficacy, motivation, competence, and mastery [7]. The interactional component concerns understanding the social and political environment, identifying available alternatives, recognizing causal agents, developing relevant skills, and understanding the norms governing collective action. The behavioral component concerns actual participation, organizational involvement, coping behavior, and resource mobilization. This framework is relevant to MSMEs because digital empowerment requires all three elements. Entrepreneurs require confidence and perceived competence to use digital systems; they must understand the economic and institutional environment within which digital platforms operate; and they must convert knowledge and confidence into concrete actions such as adopting digital payment systems, managing online marketplaces, building digital brands, maintaining financial records, and expanding business networks. However, the study argues that conventional empowerment theory can be extended by incorporating a Qur'anic normative dimension. Empowerment from a Qur'anic perspective does not terminate at greater individual control or material capability. Economic capacity is embedded in moral responsibility and social purpose. Power, knowledge, wealth, technology, and institutional authority are understood as resources carrying obligations [8]. The study identifies seven Qur'anic concepts associated with empowerment: *at-tamkīn*, *at-taqwiyah*, *at-ta'zīz*, *at-tathbīt*, *al-imdād*, *at-ta'yīd*, and *asy-syadd*. Together, these terms convey interconnected meanings of enabling, strengthening, reinforcing, supporting, stabilizing, assisting, and consolidating capacity. Among these concepts, *tamkīn* becomes particularly important because it suggests empowerment that is broader than the acquisition of individual skills. It encompasses the strengthening of individuals, institutions, social structures, economic resilience, and collective welfare. In the context of digital MSMEs, *tamkīn* therefore provides a conceptual bridge between technological capability and a broader Qur'anic conception of human flourishing. This perspective transforms the meaning of technological empowerment. Digital skills become instruments rather than ultimate ends. Access to technology becomes valuable because it can increase productive capability, expand economic participation, reduce structural exclusion, strengthen independence, and facilitate beneficial economic activity. Likewise, digital infrastructure becomes normatively important when it expands access rather than deepening geographical inequality.

4. Relationship with Modern MSME and Innovation Theories

The study does not reject conventional economic or technological theories. Instead, it positions its Qur'anic framework as an extension and normative reconstruction of

several influential perspectives. First, the research recognizes Schumpeterian innovation as fundamental to MSME competitiveness. Innovation enables firms to create new products, modify processes, reorganize operations, and enter new markets. Digitalization accelerates this innovative capacity by allowing small enterprises to experiment with business models, communication strategies, distribution systems, payment mechanisms, and customer engagement [9]. Second, the study recognizes the relevance of gradual internationalization models. Digital platforms reduce some of the traditional barriers associated with geographical expansion, but MSMEs may still develop market capability incrementally. Digital technology can therefore accelerate rather than necessarily eliminate the learning processes associated with market expansion [10]. Third, the framework acknowledges flexible specialization and the adaptive capacity of smaller firms. MSMEs often possess organizational flexibility that can enable rapid adaptation to consumer preferences and technological changes. Digital systems can amplify this advantage when entrepreneurs possess sufficient literacy, infrastructure, and institutional support.

Fourth, the study engages with technology adoption perspectives such as Diffusion of Innovations and technology acceptance frameworks. These theories help explain how individuals and organizations decide whether technologies are useful, accessible, compatible, or sufficiently advantageous to adopt. The Qur'anic model differs, however, by arguing that adoption cannot be evaluated solely according to efficiency or perceived usefulness. A technology may be highly efficient while facilitating unethical practices. A platform may expand sales while producing exploitative relationships. A financial technology may increase access while embedding prohibited or unfair contractual structures. An algorithm may optimize marketing while encouraging manipulation or violating privacy. Thus, technological acceptance must be complemented by ethical acceptability. This distinction constitutes an important theoretical advancement. Conventional technology adoption asks whether users *can* and *will* adopt a technology. The Qur'anic value-based approach additionally asks whether the technology, its application, and its institutional consequences contribute to justice, trust, welfare, responsible stewardship, and permissible economic conduct. The study consequently proposes a transition from technology-driven transformation to value-driven digital transformation.

5. Methodological Approach

The research employs a qualitative, library-based design. Its principal objects of investigation are Qur'anic texts, interpretations of relevant verses, and scholarly materials related to digital economic empowerment and MSMEs. Qur'anic verses constitute the primary textual foundation, while interpretations are drawn from exegetical works representing different historical periods, schools, and intellectual orientations. Hadith materials are prioritized from authoritative canonical collections where relevant. Secondary materials include books, journal articles, previous research, scholarly publications, and other academically accountable sources addressing empowerment, digital economics,

MSMEs, business, technology, and related socioeconomic issues.

The study employs thematic Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr mawḍūʿī*) to identify and organize verses relevant to empowerment and economic activities. This thematic method allows the research to examine Qur'anic principles across different verses and contexts before relating them to contemporary problems of MSME digitalization. A bibliometric component complements the qualitative and interpretive analysis. The study reports a systematic bibliometric approach integrated with a systematic literature review involving 200 relevant scientific publications. The bibliometric exercise is intended to map research developments, thematic trends, intellectual structures, conceptual relationships, and research gaps within the literature on digital MSMEs. The analytical procedure combines several stages. Relevant Qur'anic interpretations are examined with attention to the intellectual and sociocultural backgrounds of different exegetes. Interpretations are compared to identify similarities, distinctions, and complementary insights. Relevant hadith evidence is incorporated where appropriate. The exegetical analysis is then connected with rational and scientific literature concerning MSME digital empowerment. Conclusions are subsequently formulated within the theoretical framework developed by the study. Data validity is strengthened through source triangulation. Different documentary sources are compared to identify convergent, divergent, and context-specific interpretations. This procedure is particularly important because the research integrates religious texts, classical and modern exegesis, contemporary economic literature, digital transformation theory, and MSME studies. Methodologically, therefore, the research can be characterized as an integrative normative-conceptual study combining thematic Qur'anic interpretation, qualitative documentary analysis, systematic literature synthesis, and bibliometric mapping.

6. Digital MSME Problems through a Qur'anic Analytical Lens

The study organizes the contemporary challenges of MSMEs into several interconnected areas: marketing, finance, operations, human resources, technology utilization, and transactions. Marketing problems include restricted market access, inefficient distribution, limited promotional capability, inadequate branding, and weak competitiveness. Digital platforms can mitigate these barriers by connecting producers with consumers beyond local markets. However, market expansion must remain consistent with truthful communication and fair exchange. Financial problems concern both payments and financing. Digital payments can reduce transaction friction and improve convenience, while digital financial services may increase access to capital. Nevertheless, financial inclusion requires ethical safeguards. Digital financial expansion cannot be considered empowering when it creates excessive indebtedness, unjust contractual relationships, or prohibited forms of financial extraction. Operational problems include technology adaptation and logistical efficiency. Digital supply-chain systems, inventory applications, online ordering, and data-driven management

can improve efficiency, but physical infrastructure remains indispensable. Digital orders ultimately require products to be produced, stored, transported, and delivered. Human-resource challenges center on digital literacy and innovative capacity. Technology cannot substitute for knowledge. Entrepreneurs require skills to interpret market information, operate platforms, manage digital records, evaluate financial services, communicate with customers, and protect information [11]. Technology-use challenges include visualization and information speed. Online consumers often evaluate products without physical inspection, making visual representation, description accuracy, and information transparency especially important. This technological condition increases rather than diminishes ethical responsibility. Finally, transaction-related issues include various Islamic contractual structures and principles, including *istisnā'*, *salam*, guarantees, avoidance of *ribā*, international trade, honesty, trustworthiness, accurate measurement, and the requirement that economic activities not cause spiritual negligence. This multidimensional problem mapping demonstrates that digital transformation is simultaneously a technological, managerial, ethical, institutional, and religious issue.



7. The Five-Dimensional Qur'anic Model of MSME Digital Empowerment

The principal contribution of the study is the formulation of an integrated five-dimensional model comprising digital, physical, emotional, political, and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions should not be interpreted as independent variables

operating separately. Rather, they constitute an interconnected system. Digital capability depends on physical infrastructure. Digital transactions depend on consumer trust. Infrastructure and market rules depend partly on political institutions. Political authority requires ethical accountability. Spiritual principles shape individual conduct and provide a normative orientation for all other dimensions. The model therefore conceptualizes digital empowerment as an ecosystem rather than a single intervention.

7.1 Digital Dimension

The digital dimension consists of three principal elements: digital literacy, digital technology adoption, and equality of digital access [12]. Digital literacy constitutes the human-capability foundation of transformation. It extends beyond the ability to operate devices. It includes accessing information, understanding digital environments, critically evaluating content, using applications, maintaining records, communicating through digital channels, understanding digital transaction rules, protecting information, and applying technology strategically to business activities. The study contextualizes Qur'anic teachings concerning knowledge and education as a normative basis for digital literacy. Knowledge becomes an instrument of empowerment because it enables individuals to move from passive technology consumption toward productive technology utilization. For MSMEs, digital literacy includes the ability to manage digital financial records, document transactions, maintain product information, understand marketplace rules, evaluate online information, identify misinformation, interpret market opportunities, communicate professionally, and develop digital marketing strategies. Digital literacy is consequently conceptualized as both technical competence and critical competence [13]. Digital technology adoption constitutes the second element. The study uses the Qur'anic account of Saba' and its sophisticated water-management infrastructure as an interpretive analogy for productive technological utilization. The essential principle is not the historical technology itself but the purposeful organization of resources through technological capability. Applied to contemporary MSMEs, this principle supports the adoption of inventory-management applications, digital accounting systems, production technologies, marketing automation, e-commerce, social media, mobile banking, electronic wallets, QR-based payments, fintech, and digital financing. Technology adoption can increase operational efficiency, expand markets, improve financial management, strengthen business resilience, and enhance competitiveness. Digital systems also allow firms to continue operating under circumstances in which physical interaction is disrupted. Yet the Qur'anic framing introduces an additional condition: technology should serve constructive human purposes. Technological sophistication is not synonymous with moral progress. Technology becomes empowering when it supports productivity, justice, resilience, and welfare. The third component is equality of digital access. The study interprets Qur'anic principles of human equality and *ta'aruf* as relevant to digital inclusion. The digital divide should not be treated merely as a technical disparity but as a question of economic justice. Rural entrepreneurs, geographically isolated communities,

microenterprises, and economically disadvantaged groups should have meaningful opportunities to access digital infrastructure and services. If high-quality connectivity is concentrated in economically privileged regions, digital transformation can intensify existing spatial inequality. Digital inclusion therefore requires equal opportunity to access internet connectivity, digital platforms, information, financing, training, and technological infrastructure. In this framework, digital justice is part of economic justice.

7.2 Physical Dimension

A major strength of the proposed model is its recognition that the digital economy remains materially dependent on physical infrastructure. The physical dimension comprises digital infrastructure, electricity infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure. Digital infrastructure includes telecommunications networks, broadband connectivity, hardware, software, data systems, and platforms [14]. These systems form the technological architecture through which digital economic activities occur. For an archipelagic country such as Indonesia, geographical differences make infrastructure equality particularly challenging.

The study emphasizes that broadband connectivity must reach rural and remote areas and remain affordable for MSMEs. Public-private partnerships may be necessary to support infrastructure expansion. From the study's Qur'anic interpretation, markets represent essential infrastructure for livelihood. Contemporary digital marketplaces are understood as extensions of the economic function historically performed by physical markets: connecting sellers and buyers. Yet digital markets require connectivity infrastructure in much the same way that conventional markets require roads and transportation. Electricity is equally fundamental. Internet connectivity, servers, smartphones, computers, payment systems, logistics applications, and digital platforms all depend on energy. Consequently, areas without reliable electricity cannot meaningfully participate in the digital economy. The study interprets Qur'anic imagery of light in relation to the productive use of electricity, drawing particularly on interpretive traditions that see modern forms of illumination as compatible with the symbolic possibilities of the verse. In economic terms, electricity enables digital inclusion by supporting connectivity, financial services, marketing, production, and communication. Transportation infrastructure forms the third physical component. Digital commerce does not eliminate physical distribution. An online transaction involving a physical product ultimately requires logistical movement from producer to consumer. Roads therefore remain essential to e-commerce, last-mile delivery, raw-material access, labor mobility, and market integration. The Qur'anic instruction to traverse the earth in pursuit of sustenance is interpreted as supporting the importance of accessibility and mobility. Roads reduce logistical costs, shorten delivery times, connect isolated producers with wider markets, and allow digital commerce to produce tangible economic benefits. This physical dimension corrects a frequent misconception in digital-development discourse: digitalization does not replace physical infrastructure; it increases the economic value of integrated infrastructure.

7.3 Emotional Dimension

Digital transactions frequently occur between parties who do not meet physically. This increases the importance of intangible relational assets, especially trust and loyalty. The emotional dimension therefore comprises consumer trust and consumer loyalty. Consumer trust depends on perceived integrity, reliability, competence, and fulfillment of obligations [15]. In digital markets, consumers must often rely on photographs, descriptions, ratings, reviews, seller histories, payment systems, and platform assurances. Information asymmetry can therefore be substantial.

The Qur'anic prohibition against diminishing the rights of others provides a normative basis for protecting consumers. In digital business, this principle extends beyond traditional weights and measures to product quality, descriptions, data privacy, delivery commitments, guarantees, refunds, and promotional accuracy.

The model emphasizes four interrelated principles: *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ʿadl* (justice), and social responsibility. Truthfulness requires that digital representations correspond to actual products. Manipulated photographs, misleading descriptions, hidden defects, false testimonials, deceptive pricing, and exaggerated claims violate the informational foundation of consumer consent. *Amanah* requires businesses to protect payments, personal data, contractual commitments, and customer expectations. Because digital commerce depends heavily on informational trust, violations of *amanah* can rapidly destroy reputation. Justice requires consumers to receive their legitimate rights, including appropriate product quality, transparent pricing, clear conditions, warranties, and fair treatment. Social responsibility extends these principles beyond individual transactions. Manipulated ratings, fake reviews, misuse of customer data, and other deceptive digital practices damage the integrity of the broader market. Consumer loyalty emerges when transactions repeatedly generate satisfaction, trust, and perceived fairness. The study relates loyalty to the Qur'anic requirement that trade occur through legitimate exchange and mutual consent (*tarāḍin*). In a digital environment, meaningful consent requires more than clicking a checkout button. Consumers should understand the product, price, delivery cost, contractual terms, and relevant conditions. When businesses provide transparent information and consumers receive products consistent with expectations, satisfaction can evolve into repeat purchasing, recommendations, positive reviews, and long-term loyalty. Thus, Islamic ethics should not be understood as external to business performance. Within this model, ethics can generate relational economic capital.

7.4 Political Dimension

Digital MSME empowerment cannot be achieved exclusively through entrepreneurial effort. Institutional structures determine infrastructure investment, platform regulation, market competition, consumer protection, financial access, business licensing, data governance, and public training. The political dimension therefore addresses politics as an instrument of welfare and politics as a mechanism of oversight. The study draws on Qur'anic teachings concerning the leadership of Prophet David, emphasizing justice,

responsibility, and avoidance of decisions driven by self-interest. Political authority is conceptualized as an *amānah*, or entrusted responsibility. Applied to digital MSMEs, this implies that governments should develop policies that broaden market access, improve digital literacy, provide adequate infrastructure, simplify business administration, protect smaller enterprises from unfair competition, and ensure legal certainty in digital transactions. Policy should not merely increase the statistical number of digitally registered MSMEs. The relevant criterion is whether digitalization improves substantive economic capacity and welfare. The political dimension also incorporates oversight. Public programs involving digital training, infrastructure, financing, and assistance require transparency and accountability. The Qur'anic emphasis on actions being observed and ultimately accountable provides a normative foundation for institutional monitoring. The model identifies multiple forms of accountability: divine accountability, public accountability, and institutional accountability. Public authorities must therefore ensure transparent allocation of financial support, open access to training, equitable infrastructure development, and measurable program effectiveness. The framework consequently conceptualizes good digital governance as a combination of justice, transparency, accountability, inclusion, and welfare orientation. This dimension is especially significant because digital markets may generate concentrations of economic power. Large platforms can possess substantial advantages in data, algorithms, capital, logistics, and network effects. Without appropriate governance, digital transformation may reproduce asymmetric power relations between platforms and small businesses. The Qur'anic political perspective therefore supports policies that prevent digital empowerment from becoming digital dependency.

7.5 Spiritual Dimension

The spiritual dimension constitutes the normative core distinguishing this framework from conventional digital-transformation models. It comprises faith, *taqwā*, *ikhtiyār*, *tawakkul*, gratitude, and *istighfār*. Faith provides the fundamental ethical orientation. Economic activity is understood not as a morally autonomous domain but as part of human responsibility before God. Business can therefore become an act of worship when undertaken with legitimate intention, lawful methods, honesty, justice, and social responsibility [16]. This perspective transforms economic performance. Profit remains important for business continuity, but profit is not the exclusive measure of success. Economic activity should also generate lawful livelihood, social benefit, employment, fairness, and *barakah*. *Taqwā* strengthens this ethical orientation by encouraging compliance with divine limits. Within economic activities, it requires avoidance of prohibited transactions, dishonesty, exploitation, and injustice. It encourages truthful exchange, responsible financial behavior, and equitable relationships. The model regards *taqwā* as a mechanism connecting spiritual consciousness with economic conduct. Ethical behavior becomes internally motivated rather than dependent exclusively on external enforcement. *Ikhtiyār* represents purposeful human effort. Qur'anic spirituality is therefore not

interpreted as economic passivity. Individuals are required to pursue livelihood, develop capabilities, use resources, innovate, plan, and work [17]. For MSMEs, *ikhtiyār* means acquiring digital skills, experimenting with new technologies, developing products, improving management, entering new markets, seeking legitimate financing, and continuously adapting. *Tawakkul* complements rather than replaces effort. It represents reliance on God after responsible human action. In entrepreneurial environments characterized by uncertainty, competition, market volatility, and risk, *tawakkul* can provide psychological resilience [18].

The integration of *ikhtiyār* and *tawakkul* produces a balanced entrepreneurial orientation: maximum effort without absolute dependence on material outcomes [19]. Gratitude (*shukr*) encourages productive and responsible use of available resources. Technology, infrastructure, knowledge, natural resources, business opportunities, and social networks are interpreted as forms of provision that should be used constructively.

For MSMEs, gratitude can be expressed through productive utilization of digital platforms, ethical business practices, employment creation, innovation, and contribution to community welfare. Finally, *istighfār* introduces the dimension of moral self-correction. Economic actors are fallible. Businesses may make mistakes, institutions may develop unjust practices, and technological systems may generate harmful consequences [20]. A value-based economic system therefore requires mechanisms of reflection, correction, and renewal. The study connects *istighfār* with humility, avoidance of corruption, monopoly, dishonesty, data misuse, and other destructive economic behaviors. In contemporary digital contexts, ethical failure can include online fraud, data theft, algorithmic abuse, deceptive marketing, and exploitation. The spiritual dimension therefore performs at least three functions: it provides a moral compass, generates psychological resilience, and establishes a transcendent accountability mechanism.

7.6 Interaction among the Five Dimensions

The central analytical value of the framework lies not simply in identifying five dimensions but in explaining their interdependence. The digital dimension without the physical dimension produces nominal rather than substantive inclusion. Training an entrepreneur to use e-commerce has limited value if reliable internet, electricity, and logistics are unavailable. The digital dimension without the emotional dimension can generate transactions but not sustainable relationships. Digital market expansion requires trust, transparency, service quality, and reputation. The digital dimension without the political dimension risks unequal access, weak consumer protection, monopoly, data exploitation, and concentration of platform power. The political dimension without spiritual and ethical foundations may become procedural but not necessarily just. Regulations can exist while being captured by elite interests. The spiritual dimension without practical capabilities and infrastructure may produce moral aspiration without economic transformation. Consequently, empowerment emerges through interaction. A digitally literate entrepreneur requires affordable connectivity. Connectivity requires infrastructure

investment and governance. Digital transactions require consumer confidence. Consumer confidence requires honesty, transparency, and protection. Business expansion requires logistics. Financial access requires trustworthy institutions and permissible contractual arrangements. Long-term resilience requires innovation and psychological strength. Finally, all these components require a normative purpose defining what constitutes desirable economic development. The model thereby reconceptualizes digital transformation from a linear process of technological adoption into an ecosystem of mutually reinforcing capabilities.

8. From Profit Maximization to Maslahah-Oriented Digital Development

One of the study's most important conceptual shifts concerns the criterion of success. Conventional business frameworks commonly evaluate digital transformation through productivity, revenue growth, market share, cost reduction, customer acquisition, innovation, or profitability. These indicators remain economically relevant, but the Qur'anic framework proposes a broader criterion: *maslahah*. *Maslahah* can be understood here as multidimensional welfare encompassing economic prosperity, social justice, ethical integrity, and broader human benefit. Accordingly, a digital MSME strategy cannot be regarded as fully successful merely because online sales increase. The model requires additional questions. Has digitalization strengthened the entrepreneur's independence? Has it expanded fair market access? Has it created employment? Has it protected consumers? Has it reduced or intensified inequality? Has financing remained just and ethically acceptable? Has technology strengthened or weakened social trust? Has digital transformation contributed to sustainable welfare?

This does not imply a rejection of profit. Profit is necessary for survival, investment, innovation, and employment. Rather, profit is repositioned within a wider hierarchy of economic objectives.

The model therefore advocates profitability within responsibility, innovation within ethics, competition within justice, and technology within human purpose.

9. Theoretical Contributions

The study offers several theoretical contributions. First, it extends empowerment theory by introducing an explicitly normative and spiritual dimension. Conventional empowerment models focus primarily on capability, control, participation, and resource mobilization. The proposed framework argues that empowerment also requires ethical direction. Second, it extends technology-adoption theory. Diffusion and acceptance theories explain why technologies spread and why users adopt them. The Qur'anic framework introduces the question of whether adoption contributes to ethically desirable outcomes. Thus, technological usefulness must be complemented by normative legitimacy. Third, the model extends MSME theory by integrating technological, infrastructural, relational, political, and spiritual factors into a single architecture. Fourth, it extends the concept of competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is not conceptualized solely as superior cost efficiency, differentiation, market positioning, or value-chain performance. Ethical credibility, trust, responsible conduct,

and sustainability become potential sources of durable advantage. Fifth, the study contributes to Islamic economic thought by demonstrating how Qur'anic interpretation can engage with contemporary technological problems without reducing scripture to technical prediction. The Qur'an provides normative principles, while contemporary economic and technological scholarship explains changing institutional realities. Sixth, the study advances a model of Qur'anic value-driven digital transformation. This concept captures the theoretical movement from digitalization as technological modernization toward digitalization as ethically governed socioeconomic empowerment.

10. Practical and Policy Implications

The model generates important implications for governments, MSME support institutions, financial institutions, technology platforms, educators, and entrepreneurs. For government, digital MSME policy should move beyond numerical onboarding targets. Policy evaluation should examine whether enterprises develop genuine digital capabilities, increase productivity, expand markets, improve financial resilience, and achieve sustainable business outcomes. Infrastructure policy should integrate telecommunications, electricity, and logistics. Digital inclusion cannot be delivered through connectivity policy alone. Digital-literacy programs should progress from basic device usage toward business-oriented capability. Training should include e-commerce management, digital marketing, financial recording, cybersecurity awareness, data protection, customer service, digital payment management, information verification, and strategic use of business analytics. Financial inclusion should provide MSMEs with transparent, accessible, and ethically appropriate financing alternatives. Islamic fintech and other Shariah-compliant instruments can play an important role when they genuinely reduce financial exclusion rather than merely digitizing conventional forms of indebtedness. Platform governance should protect MSMEs from unfair competition and excessive dependency. Regulators should consider transparency, market concentration, consumer protection, data rights, dispute resolution, and equitable platform access. For MSME entrepreneurs, the model emphasizes that technology adoption should be strategic rather than symbolic. Joining a marketplace is not sufficient. Entrepreneurs need to integrate digital tools into inventory management, accounting, customer relationships, marketing, payment, financing, and decision-making. Trust should be treated as an economic asset. Honest descriptions, accurate images, transparent prices, secure data management, reliable delivery, responsive service, and fair complaint resolution can generate long-term reputational value. Islamic business ethics should likewise be treated as operational principles rather than ceremonial commitments. *Sidq, amānah, 'adl*, mutual consent, avoidance of *ribā*, and respect for consumer rights should be embedded in business processes. For educational institutions, digital entrepreneurship curricula can integrate technical competence with business ethics and Islamic economic values. Such integration would produce entrepreneurs who are technologically capable and normatively aware.

11. Societal Implications

The societal relevance of the model extends beyond individual firms. Digital empowerment can democratize market participation by enabling previously marginalized producers to become active economic participants. Rural enterprises, women entrepreneurs, community businesses, artisans, farmers, and small traders may gain access to consumers and financial services that were previously difficult to reach. However, inclusion requires intentional institutional design. Market forces alone may concentrate digital opportunities in areas with better infrastructure, education, and capital. The model therefore understands digital inclusion as a matter of distributive justice. A Qur'anic orientation further suggests that economic circulation should not become concentrated among already powerful actors. Digital ecosystems should facilitate the movement of economic opportunities across social groups. Community platforms, cooperative digital systems, crowdfunding, Islamic financial services, and inclusive marketplaces can contribute to this objective when properly governed. Digital transformation can consequently become an instrument for reducing geographical and socioeconomic inequalities rather than reinforcing them.

12. Research Implications and Future Agenda

The conceptual nature of this study opens substantial opportunities for empirical research. Future studies can operationalize the five dimensions as measurable constructs and test their relationships with MSME performance, resilience, competitiveness, financial inclusion, innovation, sustainability, and welfare. The digital dimension could be measured through digital literacy, platform utilization, digital financial capability, technology integration, and access quality. The physical dimension could incorporate connectivity reliability, electricity access, logistical quality, and infrastructure affordability. The emotional dimension could be operationalized through consumer trust, satisfaction, perceived integrity, reputation, and loyalty. The political dimension could include regulatory quality, government support, transparency, institutional trust, policy accessibility, and perceived fairness. The spiritual dimension could be measured through Islamic business ethics, *taqwā*-oriented economic behavior, ethical self-regulation, responsible effort, and spiritually grounded entrepreneurial resilience. Structural equation modelling could subsequently test whether these dimensions directly or indirectly predict sustainable MSME empowerment. Multigroup analysis could examine differences across urban and rural businesses, micro and medium enterprises, industries, gender, generations, or provinces. Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable because digital transformation is dynamic. Firms may initially adopt technology without realizing productivity gains until complementary capabilities develop. Comparative international studies could also test the framework across Muslim-majority economies. Indonesia, Malaysia, Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other contexts offer different combinations of infrastructure, digital maturity, Islamic financial development, and institutional governance. Mixed-method studies could combine quantitative modelling with interviews to understand

how entrepreneurs experience the interaction between technology, ethics, spirituality, and economic uncertainty. Future research could also examine emerging technological developments such as artificial intelligence, algorithmic marketing, embedded finance, digital currencies, blockchain, automated credit scoring, and platform-based work. These technologies intensify the relevance of questions concerning fairness, transparency, privacy, accountability, and human agency.

13. Research Limitations

The study should be interpreted in light of its methodological boundaries. First, the framework is predominantly conceptual and interpretive rather than causal and econometric. The study establishes theoretical relationships but does not empirically estimate the magnitude of the effects among the five dimensions.

Second, the interpretation of contemporary digital phenomena through Qur'anic principles necessarily involves contextual reasoning. The study does not claim that classical exegetes discussed contemporary technologies. Rather, it derives normative implications from their interpretations and contextualizes these implications within modern economic circumstances. Third, Indonesia constitutes the primary institutional context. Although the underlying Qur'anic principles have broader relevance, implementation may differ across countries because of regulatory, infrastructural, cultural, and technological variations. Fourth, digital transformation changes rapidly. Specific platforms, technologies, and business models may evolve, while the normative principles are intended to operate at a more enduring level. These limitations do not diminish the model's theoretical value; instead, they define a clear empirical research agenda.

20. CONCLUSION

The study ultimately argues that the digital transformation of MSMEs should be understood as a project of human and economic empowerment, not merely technological modernization. The Qur'anic perspective broadens the meaning of empowerment by connecting capability with responsibility, innovation with morality, access with justice, leadership with accountability, and economic success with *maslahah*. The digital dimension provides knowledge, capability, technological adoption, and access. The physical dimension ensures that digital opportunities are materially accessible. The emotional dimension creates trust and durable market relationships. The political dimension establishes enabling institutions, fair regulation, oversight, and public accountability. The spiritual dimension provides the ethical orientation and inner resilience necessary to prevent economic capability from becoming detached from human purpose. Together, these dimensions produce a model in which technological advancement is not an end in itself. The study therefore challenges the assumption that more digitalization automatically means more development. Digitalization becomes development only when technological capability translates into broader access, productive independence, fair opportunities, trustworthy transactions, resilient enterprises, and socially beneficial economic

outcomes. From a Qur'anic perspective, empowerment also entails accountability. Economic strength should not produce arrogance, exploitation, monopoly, fraud, or indifference toward disadvantaged groups. Technological capability should instead expand opportunities for beneficial production and exchange. This normative orientation is particularly relevant as artificial intelligence, digital finance, platform economies, and algorithmic systems increasingly shape economic behavior. The fundamental question for future digital development is no longer simply whether societies can innovate rapidly, but whether they can govern innovation responsibly. The proposed model offers a framework for answering this question in Muslim economic contexts.

This research develops an integrative Qur'anic framework for the digital economic empowerment of MSMEs by synthesizing empowerment theory, MSME theory, technological innovation, digital transformation, Qur'anic thematic interpretation, and contemporary economic challenges. Its central finding is that sustainable digital empowerment requires five mutually reinforcing dimensions: digital, physical, emotional, political, and spiritual. The digital dimension establishes technological capability through literacy, adoption, and equitable access. The physical dimension provides connectivity, electricity, and logistical infrastructure. The emotional dimension creates trust and loyalty through truthful and just transactions. The political dimension establishes welfare-oriented policies, fair regulation, transparency, and accountability. The spiritual dimension anchors economic behavior in faith, *taqwā*, purposeful effort, *tawakkul*, gratitude, and moral self-correction. Within this framework, technology is an instrument, Qur'anic values constitute the ethical compass, institutional justice provides the enabling environment, and human welfare represents the ultimate socioeconomic objective. The contribution of the research is consequently not the claim that the Qur'an provides direct technical prescriptions for modern digital technologies. Its contribution is more theoretically substantive: it demonstrates how Qur'anic normative principles can reconstruct the objectives, governance, and ethical boundaries of contemporary digital economic transformation. For Indonesian MSMEs, this approach is particularly important because digitalization has become increasingly central to competitiveness, market expansion, financial access, and economic resilience. Yet the benefits of digitalization will remain incomplete if entrepreneurs lack capabilities, rural areas lack infrastructure, consumers lack trust, markets lack fairness, governments lack accountability, or technological progress lacks ethical direction. A genuinely inclusive digital economy must therefore empower rather than merely connect. It must build capability rather than simply distribute applications. It must create trustworthy economic relationships rather than merely accelerate transactions. It must reduce structural inequality rather than reproduce it digitally. It must encourage innovation while preserving justice. And, from the Qur'anic perspective developed in this research, it must ultimately place economic and technological progress within the wider pursuit of human dignity, social justice, responsible stewardship, sustainable prosperity, and *maslahah*. The Qur'anic value-based MSME

digital empowerment model thus provides a conceptual bridge between Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary digital-development discourse. It suggests that the future of MSME transformation in Muslim societies should not be framed as a choice between religious values and technological modernization. Rather, technological innovation can be incorporated into an ethically structured development paradigm in which digital capability, infrastructure, market relationships, governance, and spirituality reinforce one another. Such an approach offers a potentially significant contribution to Islamic economics, digital entrepreneurship, MSME development, technology-adoption research, and sustainable development. It shifts scholarly attention from the narrow question of whether MSMEs adopt digital technology toward the more consequential question of what kind of economic order digital technology should help create. The answer proposed by this study is an economic order characterized by capability, inclusion, justice, trust, accountability, resilience, ethical innovation, and spiritual purpose. Digital transformation, under such a paradigm, becomes not merely the modernization of business processes but a pathway toward comprehensive economic empowerment.

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