Catcalling in Qur'anic Perspective on Limits Theory of Muhammad Shahrur

Tasya Avanti Digdayani
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya
Tasya01pky@gmail.com

Taufik Warman Mahfuz
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya
taufikwarman27@gmail.com

Nor Faridatunnisa
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya
Norfaridatunnisa@iai-palangkaraya.ac.id

Abstract

Catcalling is a trendy issue nowadays. This phenomenon often positions women as victims. Ironically, at the same time, some people still consider catcalling as a normal thing, even making it part of jokes and compliments. The fact that society still underestimates catcalling cases is that various actions that lead to these actions tend to occur frequently until now. This research aims to reveal the Qur’anic view of catcalling, which conducts research work using a literal research model or library research (library research) using a descriptive-qualitative method. The approach used in this research is Muhammad Shahrur’s theory, namely the theory of nazhariyyah al-hudud (limit theory). In the case of catcalling, it is the reading of catcalling using threshold theory. The results
showed that based on the reading using Muhammad Sayahrur’s theory, it was found that the minimum limit was close to adultery and the maximum limit of adultery. So that a temporary conclusion can be drawn, catcalling is prohibited because it is included between the minimum limit and the maximum limit from the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 11.

Keywords: Catcalling; Muhammad Syahrur; Theory of limits.

Abstrak

Catcalling merupakan trend isu pada masa sekarang. Fenomena ini, seringkali memposisikan perempuan sebagai korban. Ironisnya, pada saat yang bersamaan justru beberapa pihak masih menganggap catcalling adalah hal yang lumrah, bahkan menjadikannya bagian dari candaan dan pujian. Fakta bahwa masyarakat masih memandang remeh akan kasus catcalling, adalah beragam tindakan yang mengarah pada aksi tersebut cenderung sering terjadi sampai sekarang. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkapkan pandangan al-Qur’an tentang catcalling, yang melakukan kerja penelitian menggunakan model penelitian literal atau penelitian pustaka (library research) dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif-kualitatif. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori Muhammad syahrur yaitu teori nazhariyyah al-hudud (teori ambang batas limit), dan dalam kasus catcalling adalah pembacaan terhadap catcalling menggunakan teori ambang batas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan berdasarkan pembacaan menggunakan teori Muhammad Syahrur, ditemukan batas minimal yang mendekati zina dan batas maksimal terjadinya zina. Sehingga dapat ditarik kesimpulan sementara, catcalling adalah hal yang dilarang, karena termasuk di antara batas minimal dan batas maksimal dari hasil penafsiran pada Q.S. Al-Hujurat ayat 11.

Kata Kunci: Catcalling; Muhammad Syahrur; Teori Hudud.

Introduction

The Qur’an is a miracle and guidance for Muslims; its impact on women is that after Islam came and the revelation of the Qur’an occurred to the Prophet, it slowly made the status of women increasingly elevated. The era of jahiliyah saw women as a marginal class, even as victims of sexual slavery. The revelation of the Quran to the Prophet actually teaches about the glory of a woman who has the same rights as men in terms of religion, property, honor, reason, and soul, which are guaranteed and all protected in Islam. Islam views men and women with equal equality according to their respective natures, although biologically, they have many differences (Sari et al., 2023). Gender and sex are two different meanings but are always considered to have the same meaning. The term gender is a social order or structure that is not innate, involving
roles assigned and expected, such as culture, social status, religious ideology, politics, law, and economics by society to men and women. The term sex itself focuses on a person biologically, whether differences in hormones, physical anatomy, and those related to reproduction or other biological characteristics (Madhiya, 2021, pp. 2-3).

Gender issues that continue until now have led to various problems, such as sexual harassment against women (Rahman, 2017), and the hegemony of the male role that is considered superior to women has created an attitude that excludes women. Islam actually teaches that men and women are not differentiated only in terms of their respective biological identities but based on the role of both, namely the good and bad deeds performed (Alfitri, 2020). Unilateral prioritization by men who feel superior to women has historically given birth to a culture that places men in the upper strata, sole ruler, central, and everything (Dzuhayatin, 2020). Patriarchal culture has developed as a system and idea (Aprilandra & Krisnani, 2021), where male dominance in society is no longer seen as a phenomenon but becomes normality because men are considered to have a higher position than women. The exclusion of one gender and society's view of patriarchy has led to cases of violence and oppression against women, acts of violence and oppression where women as victims include acts of assault, sexual violence, and various forms of treatment both physically and verbally. The issue of sexual harassment cases that have developed recently and have been widely discussed is verbal harassment or catcalling. Verbal harassment catcalling is often underestimated by society because most victims are women (Qurratuaini et al., 2022).

The term "catcalling" means whistles, calls, and comments of a physical and sexual nature made by men to women in public spaces (Muarani, 2022, p. 4). Women are vulnerable to catcalling and feel uncomfortable and unsafe when in public spaces, which can limit their space. The act of catcalling is found in the UK, America, and other Western countries. The habit of catcalling usually occurs in certain areas, such as beaches and pedestrian areas, by saying words men to women, such as "Hey, gorgeous where are you going?" to more blatant sexual references, such as "You’ve got a great body sweetheart!" (Fadillah, 2021, p. 146).

Catcalling, in Indonesia, itself is usually carried out in the form of whistles or comments that are considered impolite towards women, such as "Hi, pretty, where are
you going?”, "alone neng, here I temenin,” and at a serious level can sometimes potentially lead to sexual comments; if the victims who get catcalling are indifferent and indifferent, then the catcalling action can develop with comments such as “waduh, beautiful neng don't be arrogant,” “neng, don't be shy dong” and other comments that make the victims uncomfortable. Catcalling usually occurs on the highway, at bus terminals, and sometimes even at a stop (red light); the fact is that not only women, in general, are victims, but women who wear hijab with religious appearance also have the potential to get catcalling action (Puspitasari, 2019, p. 14). The legal sanctions for catcalling in Indonesia are found in articles of Law No. 44/2008 on pornography, which explains that catcalling can be considered a criminal act, and articles 34-35 directly explain the sanctions for catcalling perpetrators. The crime of verbal sexual violence can also be charged with articles in the Criminal Code, among others: crime against decency article 281, Criminal Code crime of insult or defamation article 45 paragraph (1) of Law 19/2016 concerning amendments to Law 11/2008 concerning ITE on social media (Sumarta Setiadi, 2022, p. 15). The law applied in Indonesia is a solution for the community, especially women who are victims of violence (Rafii'e, 2023).

A review of previous research on the theme of catcalling found several studies, including the title "Analysis of the Catcalling Phenomenon on Women's Mental Condition in an Islamic Perspective" by Adesti Novita Sari and friends, explaining catcalling in the form of verbal, namely in the form of words, praise, ridicule, seduction, and even words aimed at teasing women. The results of the study further concluded that verbal sexual harassment or catcalling can affect a woman's mentality. Ida Ayu Adnyaswari Dewi writes another article about catcalling in her research, it is said that the act of whistling, calling as "Sayang," "gek," "handsome," or "cantik," as well as unwanted verbal comments are included in catcalling, the results of research on catcalling further concluded that the act of catcalling is not a joke or compliment, those who experience “catcalling” feel angry, disgusted and afraid when experiencing "catcalling" (Dewi, 2019). In another study written by Saffana Zahro Qila and friends, the results found that catcalling in verbal form aims to tease its victims, sometimes even victims of catcalling in the form of physical touches on certain body parts (Qila et al., n.d.).
The mention of *catcalling* in the Qur’an does not find verses that specifically discuss the term, but some verses in the Qur’an contain values and principles that are relevant to assessing *catcalling behavior*. An example of a Qur’anic verse that is considered appropriate to *catcalling* behavior is in surah al-Hujurat verse 11 discusses actions not to scoff at each other, make fun of, mock, and call each other bad names (Muna & Subekti, 2020, p. 174). Surah al-Hujurat verse 11 teaches anyone to avoid behavior that degrades and reproaches others (Wiranata, 2017). Although this verse is understood to refer to a general context, the principles contained in this verse can be applied to *catcalling* behavior. The act of catcalling in society tends to be underestimated as an act that has no sexual element (Rahayu & Legowo, 2022). However, based on research on *catcalling*, not only does it have a sexual element, but more than that, even uncomfortable calls or comments are categorized as *catcalling*. The purpose of this research is to explain *catcalling* in the Qur’an using Muhammad Syahrur’s approach (Mustaqim, 2017). The use of Muhammad Syahrur’s theory, namely *nazhariyah al-hudud*, is considered relevant in this study because it seeks to interconnect the scientific theories of tafsir, linguistics, and modern science (Kirana et al., 2022). The focus of the research is catcalling terminologically, a review based on Qur’anic interpretation and Muhammad Syahrur’s “limits” in contemporary Qur’anic theory (Syarbin, 2018).

**Theoretical Review**

This research uses a theoretical approach, namely the theory proposed by Muhammad Syahrur. Hudud theory (*the theory of limits*) is a scientific theory developed in mathematics, where Syahrur uses it as a tool to analyze the meaning of the Qur’an (Putra, 2022). The focus of further research focuses on the study of the theory of *halah al-hadd al-a’la duna al-mamas bi al-hadd al-adna abadam* (Syamsuddin & Dzikri, 2007).

**Methods**

The method used in this study uses *descriptive analytics* (Zaluchu, 2021). The *method used in this research is descriptive-analytic*, with a library research model, namely qualitative research, by taking and collecting information from literature studies such as
books, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts, notes, and so on in the form of writing. Research data can also be accessed through the internet, including e-books, journals, and articles in Indonesian, English, and Arabic that are relevant to the research. The primary data source of the research is the Qur’an and Muhammad Syahrur’s tafsir thoughts. In contrast, the supporting data sources are books that refer to the theme, magazines, newspapers, e-books, journals, and websites (Ridwan et al., 2021, p. 43).

Results

Catcalling: A Definitive Overview

Catcalling is defined as words, comments, calls, or whistles of a sexual nature; the act of catcalling is carried out by individuals or groups towards someone (victim) with an eye gaze that is harassing and creates discomfort (Muasran, 2022, p. 17). Catcalling in Indonesian is not interpreted textually as "catcalling" but is understood as a verbal call through actions in the form of whistling or teasing sentences that someone does to another person, and usually makes women in public spaces victims (Tauratiya, 2020). The ancient Egyptian history of catcalling, as informed by Liputan6 (Liputan6.com, 2019), catcalling was done by men to attract the attention of Egyptian women by whistling, with the depiction of men being on a boat traveling to a temple to perform a sacred ceremony, men will take off their clothes and whistle to women to attract attention, there is no punishment for such actions for men because it is considered a way to show interest. The definition of Catcalling itself varies (Alhakim, 2021). Catcalling is divided into two models, namely wolf whistling, where the first whistle has two high notes at the beginning, followed by a low note, and the second whistle is accompanied by a lascivious look followed by a compliment.

Catcalling is a form of objectification, not used as an indicator that proves one's intelligence, insight, or kindness but as a means to show others that one's physical appearance can attract attention (Huseini & Putri, 2021). Catcalling does not always use abusive, obscene, or offensive language but can be physical and lead to excessive sexual sensation; in some different categorizations, the wink of "interest" that a person makes to the opposite sex is even part of the act of catcalling. The definition of catcalling still
has a grey line of compliments or catcalls, as many people still consider catcalling as a compliment; there are pros and cons of catcalling as an act of "flirting" or an act to show compliments to someone. A compliment here is defined as an act of speaking kindly and frankly to someone who gives a positive impression. In contrast, catcalling is understood in modern times as an act of commenting, whistling, and calling that leads to sexuality (Santoso & Bezaleel, 2018). Catcalling is the act of making a person (the victim) feel uncomfortable and uncomfortable.

Catcalling that occurs in society is a form of verbal harassment that can make people affected by catcalling feel uncomfortable, afraid, and unsafe in public spaces. The Qur’an mentions the act of making fun of, mocking, mocking in surah al-Hujurat verse 11 so that it can be avoided by one another, and if understood, the verse has significance with the literal meaning of catcalling. The practical use of Muhammad Syahrur’s nazhariyyah hudud (Limits theory) theory is to find out the lowest limit and maximum limit of catcalling that can cause someone to take other actions. In some cases, it was found that women complimented men, most of whom were acquaintances or close friends of women, while men complimented women whom they usually did not know each other (Di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019, p. 8). This does not mean that women are prohibited from complimenting or flirting with the opposite sex in public; it is just that it is considered contrary to general norms in society about a woman’s dignity.

Catcalling behavior is viewed from the point of view of the perpetrator and the victim; the perpetrator's point of view tends to assume that catcalling is natural, trivial, and harmless, while from the victim's point of view, it tends to be understood that catcalling has interfered with freedom of activity in public spaces, they (victims) feel disturbed, cause emotional discomfort, and violate privacy and boundaries (Liyani & Farida Hanum, 2020, p. 18). Therefore, catcalling is definitively not only understood as unethical comments but also teasing whistles, comments such as beautiful, handsome, or compliments that a person gives to the opposite sex are included in catcalling behavior. The different perspectives of both perpetrators and victims have made the catcalling conversation lively because the terminological boundaries of catcalling are not agreed upon socially.
Catcalling can also be seductive chanting to someone (the victim), although it is not done seriously, usually done to the opposite sex to show attention (Srikandi & Widianti, 2022, p. 660). In some cases, both men and women as perpetrators of catcalling sometimes become ambiguous to determine the sanction for the act of catcalling due to differences in assumptions in society that are still called normatively found in society. Some people even still see cases like this as not serious, with the assumption that catcalling is a call, flirtation, invitation, and compliment that normally occurs in public spaces, but in fact, it has caused unrest for some parties who do not like it because it has caused disruption of freedom of activity in public spaces.

Catcalling in Qur’an and Tafsir Review

The Quran does not specifically mention catcalling. Al-Hujurat verse 11 mentions the impermissibility of doing bad things to others that are done with the aim of humiliating, as follows:

"O you who have believed, let not one people make fun of another people (for) they may be better than those who make fun of them, nor let women make fun of other women (for) they may be better than those who make fun of them. Do not reproach one another and call each other by bad names. The worst of calls is (calling the wicked) after believing. Those who do not repent are the wrongdoers."

Asbab al-Nuzul QS. Al-Hujurat Verse 11

Abu Jabairah ibn Adh-Dhahhak explained the above verse:

"In the past, there was a man who had two or three names; the man was often called by one of these names, and it caused him discomfort. Therefore, this verse was revealed, 'And call no one another by bad names..." al-Tirmidhi said: This hadith is hasan."

Al-Hakim narrated from Abi Jabairah saying:

"In the days of Jahiliyyah, derogatory nicknames were often used, until the Messenger of Allah once called a man by his nickname, then someone said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, he really hates that call. So Allah SWT revealed the verse, "and do not call each other by bad titles."

---

Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Tafsir Volume 17 Nomor 02, 2023 368
The narration of Ahmad informs that the above verse is talking about Banu Salamah. The meaning of the verse "And do not call each other by bad titles" relates to when the Prophet arrived in the city of Medina and among us there was no one but had two or three names, then when he called one of them by one of these names, they said, "O Messenger of Allah. He is not pleased with this call." So, the verse was revealed (As-Suyuthi, 2015).

**Socio-historical SURAH al-Hujurat verse 11**

QS. al-Hujurat verse 11 is based on the information of Asbab al-Nuzul. The verse was revealed about a person who had several nicknames. When the Prophet called one of his nicknames, the call was not liked. In ancient Arabia, it was common for a person to have several titles. In Arabic grammar (nahwu), there is the concept of ‘alam laqob, which is to indicate praise or reproach. However, for some, catcalling is a moral crisis in society, as it is an act that is not commendable to someone in the public sphere and causes anxiety for the community from both women and men.

**Comparative Review of Tafsir QS. Al-Hujarat Verse 11**

**Tafsir al-Azhar**

The explanation of the interpretation of al-Azhar says that SURAH Al-Hujarat verse 11 is a warning and advice regarding ethical norms and behavior in the association of life to the believers, at the beginning of the verse mentioned, Let not one people make fun of another people. Furthermore, the next verse is, Perhaps they (the mocked) are better than they (the mockers). This is understood as a subtle warning that the act of scoffing, mocking, and insulting is inappropriate behavior for a believer. A believer will have an awareness within himself. Only unbelievers tend to focus on other people's shortcomings while ignoring their own. And let not women (make fun of) other women (for) it may be that the woman (being made fun of) is better than the woman (making fun of). The next verse also mentions that women should not make fun of other women, in a hadith narration it is said, "Pride is rejecting the truth and looking down on people." (riwayat of al-Bukhari)
The behavior of mocking and looking down on others basically comes from the wrong view of feeling superior to others, when in reality, every individual is the same. Therefore, people need to realize that they also have weaknesses, mistakes, and errors. This verse does not only highlight the behavior and actions of men or women. Rather, as human beings, we are encouraged to behave well and have a humble attitude, as well as strive to improve the shortcomings that exist within ourselves. "Do not reproach each other and call each other by bad names." the prohibition expressed in this verse is about reproaching each other and using derogatory nicknames. This verse also prohibits calling each other bad names, where the custom of the jahiliyyah era was to give two or three titles to someone based on their behavior. Surah Al-Hujarat verse 11 is a command for believers, which confirms not to use derogatory calls but to speak in good and pleasant language, especially in communicating with others. "The worst of calls is (calling the wicked) after believing" (Hamka, 2015).

_Tafsir Fi Zhilal al-Qur’an_

Sayyid Qutb explains surah Al-Hujarat verse 11 that the teachings of the Qur’an guide a society that has high ethics and is civilized; every individual has a dignity that should not be humiliated. The act of insulting an individual means demeaning the dignity of the entire ummah because the entire congregation and its honor are an inseparable unity. The expression of the verse hints subtly that the outward values that men and women see in themselves are not the real values that are taken into consideration by humans. Included in insulting and reproaching is calling with a nickname that is not liked with that call because among the rights of a believer who must be given another believer is that he does not be called with a title that he does not like. The above verse is a teaching on true values according to Allah's judgment, touching on the bonds of brotherhood and unity and warning believers not to lose their morals. Thus, the above verses bring the principles of civility to a society that has high standards and noble honor (Quthb, 2014).

**Discussion**

_Contextualisation of QS. Al-Hujurat verse 11 against Catcalling Cases_
Asbab al-Nuzul of surah al-hujurat verse 11 is revealed in connection with a person who has two names or three names one day, the Prophet called by one of the names of the two, and then someone said to him that actually, he hated the nickname, related to this revealed verse 11 of surah Al-Hujarat (Zahra et al., 2020). Contextualisation of surah Al-Hujarat verse 11, with today's interpretation of the verse, is not only calling someone with a bad nickname but also related to calling someone with flirtation accompanied by lewd stares and comments that make someone feel uncomfortable. Calling someone in the form of a seductive whistle or sexual call will certainly make someone uncomfortable, insecure, and disgusted and can even make someone experience mental distress. Allah says in surah al-Isra' verse 32, "Do not approach zina. Verily (adultery) is an abominable deed and the worst way. The surah al-Isra verse 32 is understood to be a strict prohibition from Allah SWT that believers do not approach adultery because it is an abominable act. Therefore, the act of catcalling is an act that approaches adultery because there is a sexual element in it.

Application of Nazhariyyah al-Hudud Theory in Catcalling Cases

The theory of nazhariyyah al-hudud was introduced by Muhammad Ibn Da’ib Syahrur, a contemporary Muslim scholar who was born on March 11, 1938, in Damascus, Syria. His father was Deib Ibn Deib Syahrur, and his mother was Siddiqah bint Salih Filyun. Syahrur pursued his intellectual journey in primary and secondary education in his hometown at the Abdurrahman al-Kawakibi educational institution, Damascus. In 1957, Syahrur completed his secondary education; after completing primary and secondary school in educational institutions at the age of 19 years, he continued his studies in Civil Engineering (Handassah madaniyyah) in Moscow with a scholarship from the government of Syria in March 1957 A.D (Zaki Mubarok, 2007).

Syahrur grouped the theory of nazhariyyah al-hudud into two parts. First, al-hudud fi al-ibadah (restrictions relating to pure ritual worship), in which there is no room for ijtihad. Aspects related to al-sya’air are accepted without question, and their understanding remains rooted from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to the present. For example, the way of prayer, fasting, and hajj in Islam today is the same as it was in
the time of the Prophet. Second, al-hudud fi al-ahkam (limits in law). Muhammad Syahrur applies the mathematical analysis approach (al-tahlil al-riyadli) in the concept of hudud that he offers. This approach takes inspiration from the theory developed by a scientist named Issac Newton, especially in the formulation of function equations formulated with $Y = F(X)$ if there is only one variable and $Y + F(X, Z)$ if there are two or more variables. The theory of al-hudud fi al-ahkam is divided into six elements, namely the position of the minimum limit, the position of the maximum limit, the position of the minimum and maximum limits together, the position of the minimum and maximum limits together at one point or straight position or the position of determining the specific law (ainiyah), the position of the maximum limit with one point approaching a straight line without contact, and the last position of the “positive” maximum limit cannot be passed and the “negative” lower limit can be passed (Syamsuddin & Dzikri, 2007).

In the case of catcalling included in the theory of al-hudud fi al-ahkam (legal limits) to apply the theory that Muhammad Syahrur, the limit used, has put forward is the position of the maximum limit with one point approaching a straight line without contact, namely the position of the result area in the form of an open curve with an endpoint that tends to approach the Y axis and meet in an infinite area (‘ala la nibayah). While the base point, which is located in the infinity area, will coincide with the X-axis. Shahrur’s theory of positional boundaries is applied to the physical relationship between men and women. Physical interaction occurs between individuals of different sexes, starting from a low level of limitation where there is no direct touch between the two and ending at the highest limit, namely actions that involve sexual intercourse.

The lowest limit is in the form of no contact, as in the case of catcalling, which starts from giving comments, whistling, and even winking. This stage then has the potential for the possibility of "committing acts that lead to adultery," so the theory of nazhariyyah al-Hudud, in this case, can be applied to read the catcalling model. The act of adultery is part of Allah's boundary, and one is not allowed to stop at the boundary or touch its territory, even being close to the boundary because stopping at the boundary point of adultery has the possibility of committing an act. Theoretically, this limit of
Allah’s law is on a straight line that one will reach its highest point the closer one gets to it. This theory is very relevant to the relationship between men and women (Syamsuddin & Dzikri, 2007).

In the case of *catcalling*, which is at the lowest level before adultery. This is of particular concern regarding the impact of *catcalling* itself. Although it is a form of verbal harassment, in fact in the field, facts that start from comments smelling of sexuality, whistling, or winking can lead to adultery beyond the limit. Sexualized comments have crossed the line into adultery and made the victim feel unsafe in public spaces, uncomfortable, frightened, and even mentally damaged. This is the limit of *catcalling*, according to Syahrur’s theory, so it must be considered if it enters the realm of sexuality and goes to the maximum limit. Comments that are just idle compliments or random greetings that make the victim uncomfortable are considered *catcalling*.

**Summary**

*Catcalling* is not only the act of making sexual comments, whistles, or calls, but singing compliments that are sexualized and cause discomfort is also *catcalling*. *Catcalling* is a moral crisis experienced by humans by performing actions to demean or harass someone in a public space. Therefore, surah al-Hujurat verse 11 provides guidance that Islam maintains polite social interactions, respects a person’s dignity, and avoids degrading actions. The *minimum limit* theory using Syahrur’s approach concludes that *catcalling* cases are actions that have the potential to carry out further actions to the highest stage. This is based on the definition that *catcalling* is giving comments, whistles, or things that have a sexual element. *Catcalling* is the lowest limit, and if it increases, it will become the maximum limit that leads to a bad sexual act.
Reference


Madhiya, N. (2021). Prodi Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Tafsir Program Pascasarjana Magister (S2) Institut Ilmu Al-Qur’an Jakarta 1442 H/2021 M.


Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Tafsir Volume 17 Nomor 02, 2023


