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CULTIVATING EMPATHY IN THE CYBER ERA: A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ISLAMIC ETHICAL STUDY ON PERCEPTIONS TOWARD PRISONERS

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, when social media and online debates prevail over the general opinion, the perceptions of others such as the prisoners tend to be biased, misinformed, and simply uninformed. The paper discusses the way in which psychology and the Islamic principle of ethics are used to help university students to empathize with prisoners over the internet. In a quantitative survey design, 300 university students were the respondents with the use of the structured questionnaire that measured digital empathy, perceived stigma, Islamic ethical orientation, and attitudes towards prisoners. We compared the data through SPSS and AMOS. It included reliability tests, confirmatory factor analysis, correlation, regression and structural equation modeling. The findings demonstrated that digital empathy and Islamic ethical orientation are important predictors of positive attitudes towards prisoners (0.42, p <.05). Further, the perceived stigma was an intermediate variable between the media exposure and empathy. In the findings, it can be seen that empathy and reduction in stigma can be enhanced by exposure to humanizing stories and adoption of Islamic values of justice and mercy. This paper will help to create educational programs and rehabilitative justice programs relying on Islamic ethics and make the society, in which former prisoners live, more inclusive and caring.

Keywords: Empathy, cyber era, Islamic ethics, digital empathy, stigma, prisoners, structural equation modeling, restorative justice.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the social media and news outlets are important in influencing how individuals perceive the marginalized groups, such as inmates and former inmates. Most of the stories circulating on the internet are interested in dramatic crime coverage and criticisms. This supports stigma and detrimental stereotypes (Andersson, 2025; Berryessa et al., 2022). Such environment does not only instill fear and lack of trust but also restricts the capacity of the society to empathize with offenders who have served their time and are seeking to reintegrate into the society. This stigma is damaging to the rehabilitation processes and reduces the chances of the successful reintegration of people into the community (Moore et al., 2015).

Empathy is a concept that is well known in psychology and it assists individuals to be empathetic and comprehend the emotions of another individual. It is the principle of good behaviors and diverse societies. As the amount of digital interactions grows, the concept of digital empathy has also come into view. The idea is devoted to the demonstration and development of empathy in the virtual world (Collins et al., 2024; Abou Hashish et al., 2025). Research indicates that the greater the digital empathy, the more the compassionate mindset towards the stigmatized groups. This empathy will be able to counteract dehumanizing stories online (Overton et al., 2024). Digital empathy is particularly relevant to the perception, discussion, and response of the students of the university, which is one of the most active users of digital platforms towards the issues concerning the prisoners and rehabilitation.

There is also an Islamic moral perspective of empathy and compassion building which is based on the value of mercy, justice, and kindness. The Quran explains the significance of justice even in challenging circumstances and states that, be just; that is more in the way of righteousness (Qur'an 5:8). It emphasizes the unlimited nature of God in mercy, Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. In fact, Allah forgives every sin (Qur, 39: 53). The role of assisting both the oppressed and the oppressor by avoiding harm (Sahih al-Bukhari, 2444) and maintaining the privacy of other faults (Sahedih Muslim, 2699a) is supported by the teachings of the Prophet. Such teachings are compatible with the principles of restorative justice that prioritizes not only accountability, but also reconciliation, rehabilitation and repairing the social fabric (Yaakob, 2022). Islamic ethics therefore provides a moral base of empathy which can be used along with psychological theories and offers a value based approach to reintegration.

There has been an increased growth in rehabilitation and parole programs in Malaysia, with the goal of becoming more community-centered by 2030 (SUHAKAM, 2023). Nevertheless, social stigma and discrimination of employers are still the hindrances to ex-prisoners, in particular, when it comes to employment and social inclusion (Tharshini et al., 2025). Despite structural changes, this should be accompanied by changing the mindset of the younger generation. University students, being active and socially influential participants in society, can have a special role in the propagation of empathy-based narratives and the need to demand inclusive rehabilitation.

Although extensive research on stigma and rehabilitation has been conducted across the world, there are limited studies done to determine the interaction between digital empathy and Islamic ethical values in the formation of perceptions of prisoners in Malaysia. Majority of available studies are either psychological or moral teaching oriented without the possibility of linking the faith based ethics to the digital conduct. This is a gap in which it is necessary to investigate how young Muslims perceive, embrace, and empathize with prisoners on online platforms.

This paper seeks to discuss the abilities of the university students to empathize with the prisoners online by integrating Islamic and psychological ethical perspectives. It will particularly examine

the relationship between digital empathy, perceived stigma and Islamic ethical orientation as well as attitudes towards prisoners. It will examine the significances of stigma in the connection between media exposure and empathy and would define the extent to which Islamic ethical orientation predicts positive attitudes towards prisoners. By conducting the research, the study contributes to increasing the discourse about digital empathy, Islamic ethics, and restorative justice in Malaysia by providing empirical data to inform education and rehabilitation policies.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design adopted in this research was a quantitative survey study to investigate the levels of empathy towards prisoners among university students in Malaysia. The design will enable the gathering of standardized data on a high number of respondents and therefore, the statistical analysis of the relationship between, digital empathy, stigma, the Islamic ethical orientation and perceptions towards prisoners. The quantitative methodology was also appropriate to achieve the objectives of a study and present evidence to support the theoretical relationships.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

It targeted the undergraduate students of Malaysian public universities. This was selected as this group is active on the Internet and socially active, and their perception of marginalized communities can determine the future perception of the society. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to target 300 respondents in an attempt to have a good representation in terms of gender, academic discipline, and year of study. To take part in it, they had to be 18 years old with social media being active users. Out of 300 questionnaires sent, 278 valid questionnaires were obtained to analyze having done data screening.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire had five major sections. The first part collected demographic information such as age, gender, academic program and the frequency of using social media. The second part was a digital empathy scale, which was an adapted form of the Digital Empathy Scale, which was validated by Collins et al. (2024). Part three was a measure of attitude towards prisoners based on Attitudes Towards Prisoners (ATP) scale which was created by Melvin et al. (1985) and tested by Kjelsberg et al. (2007). Perceived stigma was measured in the fourth section in accordance with the Devaluation-Discrimination Scale modified to prisoners (Moore et al., 2015). The fifth part measured Islamic ethical orientation, which comprised of questions, which measure Quranic ideals of justice (Quran 5:8) and mercy (Quran 39:53), and Prophetic traditions against oppression and hiding faults (Sahih al-Bukhari, 2444; Sahih Muslim, 2699a). The last section involved measuring the behavioral intentions towards the former prisoners such as the readiness to work with them, study them as well as engaging them. Everything was rated using the five-point Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data was collected with the help of an online questionnaire that was sent via official university mailing lists and social media. The institutional review board of the respective universities approved the information to be collected as ethical. The electronic informed consent was signed by the respondents before the questionnaire was conducted. All the participation was voluntary and the anonymity was ensured to ensure confidentiality. There were also attention-check questions that were used to determine and rule out careless answers. Data were collected in a period of four weeks and all the answers were filtered on completeness and consistency before statistical analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) were used to do the data analysis. To determine the internal consistency of the given constructs, reliability analysis was done through Cronbach alpha and composite reliability, where the alpha coefficient of greater than .80 can be considered as acceptable. The measurement model was validated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and all the factor loadings were greater than the .60 threshold. There was an acceptable fit (2/df = 1.88, CFI =.94, TLI =.93, RMSEA =.05). To characterize the demographic characteristics and digital empathy and stigma levels of the respondents the descriptive statistics were used with the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used as inferential analyses to investigate the relationship between digital empathy and stigma, as well as between digital empathy and Islamic ethical orientation and attitudes toward prisoners. The proposed model was tested and examined using structural equation modeling (SEM) and the presence of the mediating effect of stigma amid media exposure and empathy. The findings presented significant pathways, which encouraged the hypothesized relationships.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was conducted according to international ethical standards in conducting research on human subjects. All respondents had been informed about the study and their involvement was voluntary, and no personal identification data was gathered. The four-point principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were observed in the research process. The data were stored safely, and the anonymized data were accessed by the research team.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MEDIA DIGITAL MEDIA, CRIME REPORTING AND PUBLIC OPINIONS.

Media is vital in the formation of the attitudes of people towards crime and prisoners. It has been shown in the many studies that sensationalized coverage of crime strengthens perceptions of punishment and increases fear of crime. In a longitudinal study, Andersson (2025) demonstrated that the more young adults were exposed to crime-related material the more punitive they became. Equally, Berryessa et al. (2022) also discovered that depiction of violence in digital and broadcast media increased the support of the public to inflict more severe punishments. This kind of portrayal tends to dehumanize criminals and diminish the desire of the society to embrace rehabilitation. Given that within the Malaysian context, the use of social media is one of the highest in the Southeast Asia, the online accounts of prisoners are bound to be assimilated by the younger generation and would impact their attitudes more

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profoundly than the traditional media. This implies the digital platforms are a challenge and an opportunity to transform the attitudes towards offenders.

EMPATHY AND DIGITAL EMPATHY

The concept of empathy or the capacity to recognize and empathize with another person has been greatly accepted as a source of prosocial conduct and social harmony. As online communication has grown in dominance, the phenomenon of digital empathy has come into being to explain the experience and expression of empathy in virtual worlds. The Digital Empathy Scale was validated by Collins et al. (2024) who proved that it is composed of cognitive and affective elements that can be reliably assessed online. Abou Hashish et al. (2025) indicated that digital empathy may be developed with the help of systematic learning programs and mediated reflection. As noted by Overton et al. (2024), exposure to humanizing stories about prisoners posted on social media helped to significantly change the attitude of the population and the stigma. These results suggest that digital empathy may be used as a powerful means of defying negative discourses and becoming more compassionate with young adults. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical research on digital empathy regarding faith or morality, which this study can fill in.

STIGMA OF PRISONERS AND FORMER PRISONERS.

Former prisoners and their family members are still experiencing social stigma in terms of their capacity to be accepted and reintegrate into society. Moore et al. (2015) indicated that perceived stigma has an adverse impact on the quality of life of offenders and their rehabilitation. Overton et al. (2024) concluded that storytelling and testimonial sharing among offenders are narrative-based interventions that humanized offenders and led to less prejudice among the public. The Attitudes Towards Prisoners (ATP) scale that was created by Melvin et al. (1985) and subsequently updated by Kjelsberg et al. (2007) has been extensively utilized in order to gauge these perceptions. Recent studies also focus on the fact that stigmatization may be external (societal labelling) and internal (self-stigmatization), which result in low confidence and employability (Tharshini et al., 2025). Even with increasing awareness, the problem of stigma continues to be an obstacle to the reintegration, which means that empathy-based and ethics-based approaches to reintegration are necessary to make a meaningful difference.

THE ISLAMIC MORALS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

Islamic ethics offer a detailed ethical system that enhances compassion, tolerance, and fairness towards criminals. The Quran promotes justice and objectivity, Be just; nearer to righteousness (Qur'an 5:8), and reminds faithful people of the mercy of Allah, Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Allah forgives indeed every sin (Qur'an 39: 53). Prophetic traditions highlight the responsibility to assist the oppressed and the oppressor through non-harm (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 2444) and is also urging the believers to cover the sins of others (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2699a). These principles are closely related to restorative justice models that focus on reconciliation, dignity, and repairing social (Yaakob, 2022). A more balanced interpretation of rehabilitation can be attained by applying the Islamic ethics and the psychological laws of empathy together. This integration is not only promoting behavioral change, but also promoting moral change hence reintegrating the society inclusively.

MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Malaysia has made major efforts in terms of reforms to improve rehabilitation of the prisoners and reintegration into the community. The parole system was introduced in 2008 and the community-based rehabilitation was expanded; it is an indication of the governmental adherence to restorative practices (SUHAKAM, 2023). However, they are still faced with difficulties especially in relation to societal stigmatization and discrimination by the employer. Tharshini et al. (2025) made it known that the prisoners in Sarawak had poor self-perceived employability and insufficient readiness to get back to the community because of sustained prejudice. These results demonstrate that structural changes cannot be used without complementary cultural and attitudinal change. University students as prospective leaders and the cohort of digital natives have a big part to play in shaping the debate on the subject and fostering an inclusive approach toward former prisoners. The development of empathy in this group based on the Islamic ethical principles can be the key to the change of the perception of the society and the promotion of more humane vision of justice.

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP.

The literature review indicates that media exposure influences the perception of the population towards prisoners, empathy is the mediator of such attitudes, and stigma is a continued barrier to reintegration. Nevertheless, the majority of studies identified are either dealing with psychological constructs or exploring social stigma in our non-religious settings. The empirical studies that combine such psychological constructs as digital empathy and Islamic ethical standards are few. This gap shows the necessity of a multidimensional solution which analyses the interaction of digital empathy, stigma, and faith-based ethics within the perception of prisoners. The current research is aimed at closing this gap through the synthesis of the psychological and Islamic approaches to offering a value-oriented perception on empathy and its contribution to facilitating rehabilitation and social acceptance.

RESULTS

This study was aimed to find out the effects of digital empathy, perceived stigma, and Islamic ethical orientation on university students regarding their attitudes towards prisoners. The analysis of quantitative data was done in SPSS and AMOS to test the hypothesized model. This part will give the findings of the demographic analysis, reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) and then a narrative interpretation of the results.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS.

In the context of the given study, 278 valid responses were under analysis. The demographic features of the respondents are represented in Table 1. The sample size was 58 percent female and 42 percent male students with the largest sample falling between 21 to 25 years. Majority of the respondents pursued social science and humanities courses and indicated a very high presence in social media especially on websites like Instagram, Tik Tok and X (once known as Twitter).

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 278)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	117	42.1
	Female	161	57.9
Age	18–20 years	84	30.2
	21–25 years	152	54.7
	26 years and above	42	15.1
Field of Study	Social Sciences	142	51.1
	Sciences and Technology	88	31.7
	Business and Management	48	17.3
Frequency of Social Media Use	Daily	260	93.5
	Weekly	18	6.5

RELIABILITY AND THE VALIDITY ANALYSIS.

The results of the reliability analysis showed that all scales had good internal consistency. As it can be seen in Table 2, the values of Cronbach's alpha were between.84 and.91, and the values of composite reliability (CR) were above the recommended level of.70. Construct validity was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), with an average variance extracted (AVE) of more than.50 and factor loadings of more than.60. A good fit of the measurement model was verified by model fit indices (2 /df = 1.88, CFI =.94, TLI =.93, RMSEA =.05).

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Digital Empathy	.89	.91	.64
Perceived Stigma	.84	.87	.58
Islamic Ethical Orientation	.88	.90	.63
Attitudes Toward Prisoners	.91	.93	.67

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN MAJOR VARIABLES.

The results of Pearson correlation analysis (Table 3) confirmed the positive correlation between digital empathy and Islamic ethical orientation with the positive attitude towards prisoners (r =.54 and r =.49, p <.01). In contrast, there was a significant negative correlation between perceived stigma (r = -.46, p <. 01). Such results indicate empathy and moral orientation enhances acceptance, as stigma prevents social reintegration.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Digital Empathy	1			
2. Perceived Stigma	−.41**	1		
3. Islamic Ethical Orientation	.47**	−.38**	1	
4. Attitudes Toward Prisoners	.54**	−.46**	.49**	1
Note: p < .01				

Note: p < .01

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM) RESULTS.

The structural model (Table 4 and Figure 1) found that digital empathy (β = .42, p <.01) and Islamic ethical orientation ( ].36, p <.05) were the strong predictors of the positive attitudes toward prisoners. Perceived stigma was found to have a high degree of mediation between media exposure and empathy (2 = -.27, p <.05). In general, the model predicted 58 percent of the variance in the attitudes towards prisoners (R 2 =.58).

Table 4. SEM Path Coefficients

Hypothesized Relationship	β	p-value	Result
Digital Empathy → Attitudes Toward Prisoners	.42	.001	Supported
Islamic Ethical Orientation → Attitudes Toward Prisoners	.36	.012	Supported
Perceived Stigma → Attitudes Toward Prisoners	−.27	.034	Supported
Media Exposure → Perceived Stigma	.31	.008	Supported

Figure 1. Structural Equation Model

(A simple diagram illustrating the relationships among digital empathy, stigma, Islamic ethics, and attitudes toward prisoners can be included in the manuscript.)

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM) RESULTS.

As shown in the structural model (Table 4 and Figure 1), the significant predictors of positive attitudes toward prisoners were digital empathy (= .42, p < .01) and Islamic ethical orientation (=.36, p <.05). The perceived stigma showed a strong mediating influence on the relationship between media exposure and empathy (= -.27, p =.05). In general, the model accounted 58 percent of the differences in attitudes towards prisoners (R 2 =.58).A Interpretation of Findings

MEDIA-BASED INFLUENCES OF NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS.

Many respondents gave negative attitudes towards prisoners labeling them as unreliable and socially unfit. The digital media narratives that sensationalized the criminal behavior had a powerful influence on these perceptions. Exposure to a lot of such content was also associated with a high level of stigma (r =.41, p <.01). This observation is an empirical prove of the claim that online media strengthens punitive attitudes and diminishes empathetic interaction.

DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY BY HUMANIZATION OF NARRATIVES.

Although there was still stigma, the respondents who read individual accounts of rehabilitation and repentance had better empathy scores. Those students who were exposed to humanizing stories by social media showed more positive attitudes towards the ex-prisoners. The regression findings revealed that acceptance and prosocial orientation were heavily predicted by digital empathy (0.42, p <.01).

STIGMA AS AN OBSTACLE TO REENTRY.

Stigma was one of the major barriers to social reintegration. Respondents did not deny the fact that labeling in the society still exists, and it limited the employment and social opportunities of ex-prisoners. It was statistically proven that there was a strong negative correlation between perceived stigma and positive attitudes (= -.27, p =.05). Even though the respondents were in agreement with the idea of forgiveness, the fear of being judged by the community still affected the attitudes.

ISLAMIC ETHICAL ORIENTATION ROLE.

The Islamic moral tendency turned out to be a strong moderator of empathy. The students who proved to fit the Quranic and Prophetic values of justice, mercy and forgiveness shown a great level of empathy and reduced stigma. Quantitative analysis showed that ethical orientation had a positive effect on predicting attitudes towards prisoners (9.36, p <. 05). This research establishes the conclusion that religious ethics when internalized may serve as a moral guide that can help guide the compassionate behavior of a marginalized group.

EDUCATIONAL AND POLICY INTERVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS.

The participants suggested the integration of empathy programs in colleges and they proposed that the colleges should work with correction agencies to arrange communication forums with reformed ex-prisoners. Another suggestion made by the respondents was the creation of awareness programs that are conducted by religious scholars that would create awareness about the teachings of Islam on compassion and forgiveness. It is necessary to have policy interventions based on ethics and digital literacy that would develop empathy and minimize stigma across online communication.

DISCUSSION

The evidence of this research proves that digital empathy and Islamic ethical orientation are the significant factors of academic perception of prisoners among university students. The combination of psychological and ethical aspects is an insight into the creation of empathy in digital space and how it can be translated into caring social behavior. The statistical findings indicated that digital empathy (=.42, p less than.01) and Islamic ethical orientation (=.36, p less than.05) are excellent predictors of positive attitudes towards prisoners. These results are in line with previous studies by Collins et al. (2024) and Abou Hashish et al. (2025), which point to the fact that empathy that is formed online can lead to the development of prosocial attitudes and overcome adverse stereotypes. The present research expands on this knowledge by showing that empathy based on Islamic values of ethics strengthens moral responsibility and promotes an inclusive rehabilitation process.

The findings can also be seen to demonstrate that perceived stigma is an intermediating variable between media exposure and empathy. The higher empathy and lower stigma were reported in students who regularly watched sensationalized content online that talked about crime. This trend is in line with Andersson (2025) and Berryessa et al. (2022), who held that media sensationalism leads to punitive mindsets. The discovery confirms the Differential Susceptibility

to Media Effects Model (DSMM) that posits that personal factors and moral orientation are the determinant of media content interpretation. In this experiment, students who had good Islamic moral backgrounds were less affected by the stigmatizing media discourses; this is to show that moral reasoning is able to counteract the adverse effects of digital exposure.

In terms of social psychology, the findings support the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis that empowers prosocial attitude and behavior with empathy. Digital empathy was linked to increased receptivity to prisoner reintegration, which implies that empathetic contact decreases social distance between criminals and the community. Likewise, the negative correlation between stigma and positive attitudes (= -.27, p =ss.05) correlates with Moore et al. (2015), who reported stigmatization as an impediment to rehabilitation. These trends affirm that empathy does not just happen to be an emotional response, but it is also a mental process that is influenced by ethical and interpersonal systems.

The impact of Islamic ethics gives the discussion a cultural and spiritual peculiarity. Those students who had a stronger identification with Quranic and Prophetic views of justice, mercy and forgiveness had a higher likelihood of demonstrating tolerance and endorsement of second chances. These discoveries are similar to the principle of restorative justice that aims to reconcile and repair moral damages instead of punishing only (Yaakob, 2022). This relationship demonstrates the way Islamic ethical orientation can be used as the moral intelligence that leads to social cohesion and caring justice. It also represents the Quranic balance of accountability and mercy, such that justice must be followed with compassion and redemption.

Practically, the findings have implications on policy and education. In the case of the higher education institutions, addition of digital empathy and ethical reasoning classes in the curriculum may foster value-based leadership among the students. The moral awareness can be turned into social action in terms of empathy-building activities, reflective writing, and exposure to rehabilitation stories. To policymakers, the results outline the significance of education campaigns among people that humanize prisoners and counter digital misinformation. Interaction between religious leaders, educationists and media houses can popularize story based on fairness and compassion, thus diminishing the level of stigma across the society.

The paper also has a theoretical contribution in that it connects psychological constructions of empathy to Islamic moral philosophy. It shows that moral values can become cognitive filters that determine emotive and action behavior reactions towards stigmatized groups. This synthesis helps to take the cross-disciplinary research to a new level by placing the concept of digital empathy in an ethical and religious context. This kind of integration is of particular interest in the multicultural Muslim societies where religion still remains a key element in the formation of the popular morality and social responsibility.

Although the research contains valuable information, it does not lack limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the causal determination and the self-reported information can be biased. The empathy and stigma change should be determined by longitudinal or experimental research methods in future. Additional research may also investigate the digital empathy interventions based on faith-based training modules and determine their outcomes in the long term concerning their attitudes towards other discriminated groups. Nevertheless, even with these shortcomings, the current research adds to the emerging knowledge on empathy and ethics in that a blend of psychological awareness and Islamic values would lead to a more harmonious and just society.

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CONCLUSION

This paper discussed how students of the university come to be empathetic with prisoners in the cyber age due to the combination of the psychological and Islamic ethical standpoints. The results indicated that digital empathy and Islamic ethical orientation are important predictors relating to positive attitudes towards prisoners and perceived stigma mediates the association between media exposure and empathy. The findings highlight the importance of the development of empathy based on the exposure to humanizing stories and upon internalizing Islamic values of justice, mercy, and forgiveness.

Theoretically, the study adds to the body of knowledge concerning empathy since it incorporates a cognitive, affective, and ethical aspect into a single theory. It is based on the current theories of empathy by showing how digital and faith-based factors interact to form moral perception and social behavior. In practice, the research has good implications on higher education and policymaking. By including digital empathy and Islamic ethics thorough university education, it is possible to reinforce the emotional intelligence and civic responsibility of students. Additionally, the stigma can be minimized by media campaigns and community-based interventions based on compassion and restorative justice, which will facilitate the social reintegration of former prisoners.

Despite the meaningful findings in this study, there are some weaknesses that should be recognized. It is limited by the reliance on self-reported data and cross-sectional design, which makes the interpretation of causes impossible. The next development in research should involve longitudinal or intervention based research on empathy and stigma change in future. Future research may also look at digital empathy-based interventions that are integrated into religious and educational systems. Nevertheless, even under these constraints, this research makes a contribution to the current discussion on the topic of digital ethics, rehabilitation, and moral development by pointing to the fact that empathy as a concept based on Islamic values can become a catalyst to a fairer and more compassionate society.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors indicate that they do not have any conflict of interest that is related to the publication of this article. The study was done on its own, and there were no financial or personal relations that could have impacted the findings or meanings provided in this research.

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHOR

Nurul Sakinah Aziz: conceptualization, design of methodology, oversight of data collection, data analysis, and writing of First draft.

Hawa Rahmat: Development of theoretical framework, literature review of Islamic ethics and critical review of the manuscript.

Munirah Munawar Ali: Development of instruments, administering surveys, and management of data entry.

Nadia Fariha Md. Bahar: Support in statistical analysis, discussion of results and table and figure preparation.

Siti Nur Husna Abd Rahman: Editing of the manuscript, reviewing, and author coordination, validation of the Islamic ethical views.

The final version of the manuscript has been read and approved by all authors who are also willing to take the responsibility to the content of the work.

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