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**DEFAMATION OF FAMILY REPUTATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA  
ACCORDING TO POSITIVE LAW AND ISLAMIC LAW: A CASE STUDY  
AT TERNATE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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**Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the handling of family defamation cases on social media from the perspectives of positive law and Islamic law, using a case study at the Ternate Police Department. The increasing number of cases over the past five years indicates that social media has become a new arena for conflict, significantly affecting family reputation. This research employs a qualitative approach with a juridical-empirical method. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review. The findings reveal that the Ternate Police adopt a combination of litigative approaches based on the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) and the Indonesian Penal Code (KUHP), alongside non-litigative approaches through restorative justice mechanisms. From the Islamic law perspective, defamation is seen as a violation of *hifz al-ird* (protection of dignity), which can be resolved through principles such as *islāh* (reconciliation) and social repentance. The application of criminological theories—strain, differential association, broken windows, and deterrence—strengthens the understanding of offender motives and patterns of deviance in digital spaces. In conclusion, addressing family defamation requires an integrative approach that combines legal enforcement, Islamic ethical principles, and adaptive social responses to digital-era challenges.

**Keywords:** Defamation, Islamic Law, Positive Law, Social Media



## INTRODUCTION

Social media has repositioned public communication spaces: it removes geographical barriers, viralizes content in seconds, and sharpens the legal consequences of every word posted. In Indonesia, the massive penetration of the internet (77.02% of the population by 2024). APJII. (2024) makes the virtual realm not only contain positive interactions such as knowledge collaboration and the digital economy but also illegal practices, including defamation that affects individuals and families as the smallest social unit. Data from the Ternate City Police Department shows an increase in defamation reports from 50 cases (2020) to 150 cases (2024), totaling 500 reports over the past five years (APJII 2022). This figure emphasizes that social media is no longer just a mirror of expression, but rather a real arena of legal disputes (Purba, I.D. 2023).

In the realm of positive law, the main provisions are held by Article 27 paragraph (3) and Article 45 paragraph (3) of Law No. 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to the ITE Law. Although it provides a legal framework, this article is still debated due to multiple interpretations, the risk of criminalization, and the difficulty of digital forensic evidence. The normative research conducted by Lex Privatum in 2024 emphasizes the suboptimal interpretation of the article, especially when authorities must distinguish between constructive criticism and insults that damage reputation. (2024). The limited revision of the ITE Law No. 1 of 2024 does clarify the elements of the offense, but its implementation in the field is still hindered by the capacity for digital forensics and public literacy. (IN Saizu. 2024).

Meanwhile, Islamic law has already drawn a clear line through the prohibition of ghibah, fitnah, and qazaf, which protect hifz al-‘ird



(guardianship of honor). The 2024 study on the phenomenon of virtual ghibah emphasizes that acts of dishonoring, even online, are still classified as major sins and violations of human rights according to maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah (Zulfa E.A. 2024). Thus, defamation of family becomes a cross-normative issue requiring a synthesis between state legal instruments and Islamic ethics so that law enforcement is not merely repressive but also restorative. (Sujono, Sudarto, & Hiskia Ady Putra. 2024)

At the practical level, the Ternate Police Department is trying to implement restorative justice (RJ) based on Perpol No. 8 of 2021. (Indonesian National Police. 2021). However, its effectiveness remains fluctuating; a 2023 criminology study noted that the success of RJ in defamation cases only reached 42% because perpetrators often reject online mediation and victims tend to demand reputation rehabilitation in public spaces (Rahman, H., & Salim, A. 2023). This condition indicates a research gap: (1) the lack of empirical studies analyzing the mechanisms of the ITE Law and Islamic law principles concurrently in the family context in island regions; (2) the limited models of RJ based on local religious wisdom measured by indicators of the success of victims' psychosocial recovery.

The development of communication technology also demands clarification of the concept of "family-centered defamation." (Putri, W. 2022) Unlike individual insults that only hurt personal dignity, online harassment of one member often erodes the entire household's reputation because family reputation in Indonesia is still viewed as a collective social capital. The 2023 National Cyber Crime Statistics recorded 3,758 social media-based defamation complaints, placing it second after online fraud, with the largest distribution



pattern among teenagers and young households. This trend confirms that the intensity of reputation attacks is now shifting from the private realm to the more open cyber domain, necessitating legal frameworks that are sensitive to familial relationships. (Polri. 2023)

On the evidentiary side, Indonesia's digital-forensic readiness is still lagging behind. A study by the International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice (May 2025) shows that there are only 147 certified digital forensic experts actively handling electronic cases across the police force; this number is far below the ideal ratio of 1 expert per 500,000 internet users. Technical obstacles such as metadata volatility, the need for digital chain-of-custody, and the difficulty of obtaining mirror images of foreign servers often lead officials to rely solely on screenshots as evidence, even though their validity is prone to be questioned in court. (Liputan6.com. 2020). Without the enhancement of forensic laboratory capacity and the standardization of inter-agency procedures, the ITE Law has the potential to be ineffective in protecting victims in family cases. (Sari, D. P., & Putra, A. 2025).

The perspective of Islamic law enriches the discourse through the concept of *hifz al-‘ird*—protection of honor—which places the prohibition of *ghibah*, *fitnah*, and *qazaf* as violations of collective rights and major sins. The study "Spill the Tea: The Phenomenon of Virtual Gossip" (Sidiqah & Syahidin, 2024) emphasizes that digital gossip has an equivalent—if not greater—impact because its content is documented and easily shareable. The *maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah* approach encourages resolutions that not only criminalize the perpetrators but also rehabilitate the dignity of the victim's family through public apologies,



content removal, and digital ethics education—steps that align with the principle of *maslahah*.

The efforts of restorative justice (RJ) mandated by Perpol No. 8/2021 and reinforced by the RJ Articles in the 2023 Criminal Code have opened up non-litigation spaces. However, the latest regulatory reconstruction found that the implementation of RJ is still hindered by the uncertainty of success indicators, particularly in measuring the recovery of online reputation, which is intangible in nature. (Edi, N., Pieris, J., & Simanjuntak, N. 2023 Without a psychosocial evaluation framework and digital literacy, the mediation process often ends in a deadlock because the perpetrator is reluctant to remove viral content, while the victim demands measurable repair in the public space.

Starting from this gap, this research proposes a hybrid model that synergizes digital-forensic evidence, updated ITE Law norms, and *maqāsid* principles to facilitate comprehensive family reputation recovery. This approach is expected to produce operational guidelines for investigators at the Ternate Police Resort, ranging from hash value proof standards to social repentance protocols and policy recommendations for enhancing digital literacy based on local wisdom. Its contribution not only bridges normative gaps but also offers contextual RJ practices in island regions with a majority Muslim culture, making law enforcement against family defamation more just, inclusive, and sustainable.

The aim of this research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of how cases of defamation of family honor through social media are handled by law enforcement officers at the Ternate Police Department, referring to the applicable positive legal provisions, particularly the Electronic Information and



Transactions Law (ITE Law), and to examine the relevance and contribution of Islamic legal norms, especially from the perspective of family honor protection (hifz al-'ird), in an effort to build a more just, humane, and value-based legal approach. This research also aims to identify the extent to which the integration of positive law and Islamic law can produce a dispute resolution model that is not only repressive but also restorative, thereby addressing the social challenges posed by the misuse of social media in the context of family life in Muslim communities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. The Concept of Defamation

Defamation is an act that damages a person's reputation in the eyes of the public through false and harmful statements, whether written (libel) or spoken (slander) (Ratnawati, A. B. 2021). In the context of Indonesia, defamation can also occur in the digital realm, particularly on social media. This definition is reinforced by Law No. 19 of 2016 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE), Article 27 paragraph (3), which states that any person who intentionally and without right distributes, transmits, and/or makes accessible electronic information containing insults and/or defamation may be subject to criminal sanctions.

This concept becomes important in legal studies because it touches on two dimensions: the protection of individual or family dignity and the regulation of freedom of expression in the digital space. Within the family scope, defamation not only harms one person but also has implications for the collective reputation held within the context of social values in society.



## 2. Family Reputation and Social Dignity

Family reputation is part of the social structure and cultural values embedded in Indonesian society. In sociological terms, the family is a collective entity whose social identity can be influenced by the actions of its individual members as well as by external societal perceptions (Hidayat, R., Marsono, D., Susanto, S., & Sadono, R. 2020). Therefore, the defamation experienced by one family member on social media will also tarnish the family's reputation as a whole. Family reputation is part of "social capital" that is maintained through principles of mutual respect and collective norms.

This concept is closely related to the theory of social capital (Putnam, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, and norms in maintaining social stability. If a family's reputation is damaged in the digital public sphere, the family's social resilience will also be affected

## 3. Positive Law: ITE Law and Aspects of Cyber Crime

In Indonesian positive law, defamation through social media is categorized as a cybercrime. Article 27 paragraph (3) and Article 45 paragraph (3) of Law No. 19 of 2016 are the legal basis often used to take action against perpetrators of defamation and slander in the online world. However, these articles are often criticized for being open to multiple interpretations and prone to misuse to silence public criticism (Nasution et al., 2023).

The theoretical approach used in understanding the ITE Law is the responsive law theory by Philippe Nonet and Philip Selznick (1978), which states that law should not only be a repressive instrument but also reflective of social values and societal development. In other words, the application of cyber



criminal law must consider the dimension of substantive justice, not just legalistic.

#### 4. Islamic Law: Ghibah, Fitnah, and Hifz al-'Ird

In the perspective of Islamic law, defamation falls into the category of major sins that violate human rights, particularly honor ('ird). The main concept used in this research is hifz al-'ird, which means preserving human honor, and is one of the primary objectives in maqāsid al-syarī'ah (the objectives of Sharia).

The prohibition of ghibah (backbiting), fitnah (false accusation), and qazaf (accusing someone of adultery without proof) is explained in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 12 and An-Nur verse 4. The principle of ta'zīr also provides space for the state or judge to impose punishment for actions that do not have a specific text but disrupt social order.

The theory underlying this approach is the theory of maqāsid al-syarī'ah developed by al-Ghazali and expanded by Jasser Auda (2008), which emphasizes the importance of the flexibility of Islamic law in facing contemporary challenges, including in the digital realm.

#### 5. Restorative Justice (Keadilan Restoratif)

The restorative justice approach in handling defamation cases has begun to be implemented through the Chief of Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021. RJ aims to repair the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, as well as restore the victim's reputation through peaceful and participatory mechanisms.

The theory used in this approach is the restorative theory by John Braithwaite (2002), which emphasizes that the perpetrator is not only punished but also encouraged to acknowledge their mistakes, apologize, and restore the moral losses experienced by the victim. In the context of the family, this



approach can be synergized with Islamic legal values, such as *ishlāḥ* (reconciliation) and dignified forgiveness.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses an empirical-qualitative approach aimed at examining and analyzing the implementation of positive law and Islamic law in cases of defamation of family through social media in the city of Ternate. The type of research is empirical legal research, with a normative and sociological approach. The normative approach is used to analyze various relevant legal provisions, such as Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE), articles in the Criminal Code (KUHP) that regulate defamation, as well as Islamic legal norms related to gossip, slander, and the preservation of family honor (*hifz al-‘ird*). Meanwhile, the sociological approach is carried out by directly observing law enforcement practices in the field, particularly at the Ternate City Police, through interviews with investigators, victims, perpetrators, as well as legal and religious figures.

The location of this research is at the Ternate City Police Department, specifically in the cybercrime unit, considering that this institution is the center for handling various defamation reports that occur through social media. The research was conducted over a period from July 21, 2024, to March 30, 2025. The research objects include regulations and positive legal practices used in handling defamation cases, Islamic legal principles regarding family honor, and studies of actual cases occurring in the city of Ternate. The research subjects consist of police investigators handling the cases, the victims' families, the defamation perpetrators, as well as Islamic law experts and legal academics



Data collection was carried out through four main techniques, namely observation of the case resolution process in the field, semi-structured interviews with informants, documentation study of archives such as police reports and digital evidence, and library study by reviewing books, scientific journals, and Islamic literature. The data obtained were then analyzed using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation in the form of narratives and tables, and conclusion drawing. In addition, a comparative analysis was also conducted to compare the effectiveness of the application of positive law with the values of Islamic law, including how the concept of *maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah* can contribute to preserving family honor and promoting the application of a more humane restorative justice approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that defamation of families through social media in the jurisdiction of the Ternate Police Department has significantly increased from 2020 to 2024. Based on data collected from the Special Criminal Investigation Unit of the Ternate Police Department, the number of reports rose from 50 cases in 2020 to 150 cases in 2024. Polres Ternate plays a central role in handling these cases through positive law enforcement in accordance with the ITE Law and the Criminal Code, as well as a restorative approach in some cases that allow for mediation.

**Table 1.**  
**Recapitulation of Handling Family Defamation Cases at the Ternate Police Department (2020–2024)**

Year	Number of Reports	Transferred to Court	Peace Through Mediation
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Year	Number of Reports	Transferred to Court	Peace Through Mediation
2020	50	15	35
2021	70	25	45
2022	100	40	60
2023	130	60	70
2024	150	70	80

This trend shows that law enforcement is beginning to shift from a peaceful approach towards litigation, although the mediation approach still dominates.

The four main types of cases found in this study are: (1) defamation and false accusations, (2) spreading family disgrace, (3) insults or hate speech, and (4) identity theft and spreading hoaxes. In many cases, the perpetrators use platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram to spread content that openly attacks the victims' family reputation.

Interviews with the victims show significant psychological impacts, including stress, shame, and anxiety, even in children. On the social side, the victim's family experiences ostracism and discrimination in their surroundings. The perpetrators generally act out of emotion, revenge, or internal conflict, without realizing the legal consequences of their actions.

Polres Ternate has systematically carried out legal procedures, starting from reporting, investigation, prosecution, to submission to the prosecutor's office. In the investigation process, digital evidence such as screenshots and recordings are used as the main pieces of evidence. When the perpetrator uses a fake account, the investigator collaborates with the Cyber Crime Team of the North Maluku Police to conduct digital forensic analysis. This process includes tracking IP, metadata, and the perpetrator's digital activities



**Figure 1.**

**Flowchart for Handling Defamation Cases by the Ternate Police**

Field findings in this study are analyzed using four criminological theories to comprehensively understand the causes and patterns of handling family defamation cases on social media. First, the strain theory developed by Robert K. Merton explains that social pressure resulting from the mismatch between individuals' expectations to uphold family honor and the limitations of ethical means in the digital space drives some people to commit violations. When formal or dialogical conflict resolution channels are difficult to access, individuals choose shortcuts such as insults or spreading slander on social media as a form of venting. Second, Edwin H. Sutherland's differential association theory shows that deviant behavior is learned through interaction with an environment that is permissive of negative norms. In this context, perpetrators are often exposed to digital communities (such as social media groups) that condone hate speech, making the learning of defamation behavior something normal and repetitive.

Next, the case handling pattern by the Ternate Police can be analyzed through Wilson and Kelling's broken windows theory, which states that tolerance for minor offenses will trigger more serious violations. Polres Ternate, through the cybercrime unit, implements a responsive policy towards every



report of defamation, even if it is minor, such as sarcastic comments or insinuating posts, to prevent it from escalating into more serious social conflicts. This action serves as an early form of enforcing digital order. Lastly, Cesare Beccaria's deterrence theory emphasizes that strict, swift, and certain law enforcement can prevent others from committing similar offenses. In practice, the legal process at the Ternate Police Department demonstrates seriousness in conveying legal consequences to offenders, whether through summonses, investigations, or public outreach. Thus, the approach taken is not only repressive towards the perpetrators but also preventive through digital education, restoration of social relations, and the development of legal awareness in the community. This approach reflects integrative efforts in realizing a fair, adaptive, and socially restorative legal system in the digital era.

Some of the main challenges in handling cases are the difficulty of digital evidence, the low legal literacy of the public, and the slow response from social media platforms. In addition, many victims are reluctant to report due to social stigma. To address these challenges, the Ternate Police Department has conducted legal education, strengthened the capacity of investigators in digital forensics, and established cross-sector cooperation.

**Table 2.**  
**Main Challenges and Law Enforcement Solutions**

<b>Main Challenge</b>	<b>Implemented Solution</b>
Fake and anonymous accounts are difficult to trace	Cooperation with the Cyber Crime Team.
Low legal literacy in society	Education and socialization of the ITE Law
Digital evidence is easily manipulated	Strengthening digital forensic units
Stigma against victims	Legal and psychosocial support



Based on the research findings, the Ternate Police Department has shown a strong commitment to enforcing the law against defamation of family on social media. Through the integration of positive law, restorative approaches, and cross-institutional collaboration, case handling is conducted comprehensively. However, technical and social challenges still need to be addressed through structural, educational, and adaptive technological approaches. This research reinforces the urgency of the importance of synthesizing state law enforcement and the Islamic ethical approach (*hifz al-'ird*) to create justice that is not only legally formal but also social and spiritual.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that cases of family defamation through social media have shown a significant upward trend in the past five years. Social media has become a new space for family honor conflicts, which not only have legal implications but also social and psychological ones. The main motives of the perpetrators are dominated by internal conflicts, momentary emotions, and ignorance of the legal consequences of digital speech. The handling of the case by the Ternate Police reflects a commitment to protecting citizens through a combination of litigation and mediation approaches, but still faces challenges in digital evidence and the restoration of the victim's reputation.

From a normative aspect, the application of Article 27 paragraph (3) of the ITE Law and relevant articles in the Criminal Code serves as the positive legal basis used in handling the case, although in practice, it still faces issues of multiple interpretations and an imbalance between freedom of expression and protection of honor. On the other hand, Islamic law provides a moral and



spiritual foundation through the prohibition of ghibah, fitnah, and qazaf, which reinforces the importance of preserving *hifz al-'ird* (honor). The Islamic approach is not only oriented towards punishment but also towards the restoration of social relations through the principles of *ishlāh* and public repentance, which can be productively integrated with the restorative justice approach within the positive legal system.

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