

## A Maqāsid-Based Framework for Managing Religious Offense: Insights from the Prophetic Sirah

Khairul Azhar Meerangani,<sup>1\*</sup> Mohammad Fahmi Abdul Hamid<sup>2</sup>, Muaz Mohd Nor<sup>3</sup>, Taufiqurrahman<sup>4</sup>

1. Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, University of Technology MARA, Malaysia
2. Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, University of Technology MARA, Malaysia
3. Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, University of Technology MARA, Malaysia
4. Faculty of Ushuluddin and Studi Agama, Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol, Indonesia

\* Corresponding author: [azharmeerangani@uitm.edu.my](mailto:azharmeerangani@uitm.edu.my)

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**Abstract:** Religious offense has become an increasingly volatile phenomenon in plural societies, often triggering polarized responses that oscillate between unconditional tolerance and uncompromising severity. Within Islamic discourse, the Prophetic model of coexistence is frequently invoked but is often reduced to selective narratives that obscure its contextual ethical logic. This study re-examines al-ta'ayush through a qualitative analysis of Prophetic responses to religious offense across both the Makkan and Madinan periods. The study aims to identify the ethical parameters governing these responses and to formulate a structured framework for analyzing religious offense in plural societies. Using qualitative textual analysis, the research examines a corpus of documented Sirah incidents drawn from classical prophetic biographies and authenticated ḥadīth sources that describe cases of insult, provocation, or hostility toward religion. The narratives were analyzed using thematic coding combined with a maqāsid-oriented analytical lens. The findings show that Prophetic responses were not uniform but structured by identifiable parameters, including intentionality, public-harm thresholds, authority configuration, consequential assessment (ma'ālāt), and balancing maslahah–mafsadah. These findings demonstrate that al-ta'ayush functioned as a context-sensitive ethical framework rather than a simplistic ethic of tolerance. The proposed parameterization offers an analytical tool for evaluating contemporary cases of religious offense in the public sphere while maintaining ethical coherence within Islamic normative thought.

**Keywords:** al-Ta'ayush; Prophetic Sirah; Religious Offense; Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah; Coexistence Ethics; Plural Societies

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary plural societies, religious offense has emerged as a recurring and increasingly sensitive phenomenon, particularly in the context of digital communication, political contestation, and identity-based discourse. Incidents involving insults, mockery, or perceived disrespect toward religious symbols, beliefs, or sacred figures often provoke intense public reactions, ranging from calls for dialogue and tolerance to demands for legal sanction and punitive measures (Mir & Anjum, 2025). These tensions reflect a broader governance dilemma faced by religious communities and public institutions alike: how to balance peaceful coexistence (*al-ta'ayush*), freedom of expression, and the protection of religious sanctity. In Muslim-majority yet religiously diverse societies such as Malaysia, such tensions are further shaped by historical sensitivities, constitutional arrangements, and competing public perceptions regarding fairness in the management of religious disputes (Abdul Aziz, 2024).

In this study, the term religious offense refers to acts of expression or conduct perceived as insulting, degrading, or provocatively disrespectful toward religious beliefs, sacred symbols, prophets, scriptures, or places of worship. In contemporary public discourse, these acts often intersect with related categories such as blasphemy, hate speech,



religious provocation, and incitement against religious communities. While these categories are not always legally identical, they share a common feature: the potential to generate social tension, mobilize identity-based reactions, and disrupt communal harmony. In the Malaysian context, public controversies involving statements or digital content perceived as insulting Islam or other religions have periodically generated national debate, police investigations, and policy responses aimed at safeguarding interreligious harmony. Such incidents highlight how religious offense operates not merely as an individual act of expression but as a socially consequential event embedded within broader institutional and political dynamics.

Scholarly discussions on religious coexistence have extensively examined themes such as tolerance, pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and conflict management from theological, sociological, and political perspectives (Husni et al., 2023). Within Islamic studies, works on *al-ta'āyush*, *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), and *ḥiwār al-adyān* (interreligious dialogue) often emphasize the prophetic qualities of compassion, patience, and ethical engagement with religious others. Meanwhile, studies in governance and the sociology of religion have highlighted the roles of legal frameworks, public institutions, and social narratives in shaping responses to religious offenses (Bensaid & Machouche, 2019). However, much of the existing literature tends to present the Prophetic model as uniformly tolerant, often overlooking the contextual diversity of the Prophet's responses, including instances where firmness and decisive action were deemed necessary to preserve social order, religious integrity, or communal security.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to re-examine the concept of *al-ta'āyush* through a contextual and *maqāṣid*-oriented analysis of the Prophetic Sirah. Specifically, the article aims to (i) identify and analyze the varying responses of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ toward acts of religious offense, (ii) derive normative parameters that distinguish between contexts requiring forbearance and those warranting firmness, and (iii) articulate a principled framework that can inform contemporary discussions on managing religious sensitivities in plural societies. Rather than advocating a singular mode of response, this study emphasizes the importance of situational ethics grounded in Prophetic practice and the higher objectives of Islamic law.

This article is premised on the assumption that *al-ta'āyush* in the Prophetic tradition is neither synonymous with unconditional tolerance nor reducible to reactive severity. Instead, it argues that the Prophet's responses to religious offenses were guided by discernible parameters, including the offender's intention, the scale of public harm, power relations, the socio-political context, and anticipated consequences (*ma'ālāt*). By employing a *maqāṣid*-based analytical lens, this study hypothesizes that a contextual reading of the Sirah offers a more balanced and sustainable model of coexistence; one that transcends simplistic binaries of “soft” versus “hard” responses and provides normative guidance for contemporary governance of religious diversity.

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of *al-ta'āyush* (peaceful coexistence) has been widely invoked in contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly in discussions on pluralism, interreligious relations, and social harmony. Despite its frequent usage, *al-ta'āyush* often remains conceptually under-theorized, functioning more as a normative slogan than as a structured analytical construct (Abd al-Hasan, 2014). Many contemporary discussions equate coexistence with tolerance, patience, or non-confrontation, without systematically examining the ethical boundaries, contextual variables, and normative limits that regulate such interactions. As a result, the concept is frequently invoked in public discourse while remaining insufficiently operationalized within scholarly analysis.

Within classical Islamic intellectual tradition, coexistence with religious others was not framed as unconditional accommodation or moral relativism. Classical scholars articulated social relations through a normative framework grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *maṣlaḥah*, and the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsīd*). Thinkers such as al-Ghazali linked ethical governance to the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, suggesting that social coexistence must operate within a structured hierarchy of moral priorities (Faisal, Jasni & Khalilullah, 2025). Similarly, classical discussions on *siyāsah shar'īyyah* recognized the legitimacy of differentiated responses to social

conflict based on intent, public harm, and the stability of communal order (Islam, 2018). These formulations indicate that coexistence within Islamic thought was conceptualized as a contextual ethical practice rather than a static moral disposition.

The Prophetic Sirah provides the primary empirical basis for operationalizing these ethical principles. Historical accounts demonstrate that the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ responses to religious difference and provocation varied according to situational factors, including the vulnerability of the Muslim community, the intention of the actors involved, and the anticipated consequences for communal stability (Nabi & Parray, 2025). Classical scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized the importance of contextual awareness (*al-waqi'*), outcome assessment (*al-ma'ālāt*), and priority-setting (*al-awlawiyyāt*) in interpreting prophetic actions (al-Qaradawi, 2010). These interpretive principles suggest that Prophetic responses were shaped by ethical reasoning that balanced mercy, justice, and social order.

Parallel discussions on coexistence have also developed within contemporary political philosophy and sociology of religion. Liberal theorists such as John Rawls conceptualize coexistence through principles of fairness, public reason, and procedural justice, while deliberative models associated with Jürgen Habermas emphasize communicative rationality and dialogue as mechanisms for managing pluralism (Abu Bakar & Qureshi, 2020). These frameworks have significantly influenced contemporary governance discourse on religious diversity. However, they generally assume the negotiability of moral commitments and institutional neutrality, which may not fully capture the normative structures of religious ethical systems where sacred values remain central to social legitimacy.

A review of existing scholarship indicates that studies on Islamic coexistence tend to follow three dominant trajectories: normative theological reflections on tolerance, sociological discussions of interreligious relations, and political analyses of pluralism within Muslim societies (Luther, 2025). While these studies contribute valuable insights, they often remain descriptive and rarely develop a systematic analytical framework grounded in Prophetic practice. The absence of such a framework leaves a significant gap between classical ethical reasoning and contemporary debates on religious offense and social harmony. To clarify this research gap, Table 1 summarizes representative strands of existing scholarship and highlights the analytical space addressed by the present study.

Study Focus	Representative Works	Methodological Approach	Identified Gap
Normative discourse on tolerance and coexistence	`Abd al-Hasan (2014); Husni et al. (2023)	Conceptual/theological analysis	Limited operational framework for analyzing real cases of religious offense
Classical ethical frameworks ( <i>maqāṣid, siyāsah</i> )	Islam (2018); Faisal et al. (2025)	Normative legal and ethical analysis	Limited application to contemporary coexistence governance
Prophetic ethics and interreligious relations	Nabi & Parray (2025).	Historical-descriptive	Lack of systematic parameterization of Prophetic responses
Political theory of pluralism	Abu Bakar & Qureshi (2020).	Political-philosophical analysis	Insufficient engagement with religious ethical systems

Table 1: Mapping Existing Studies on Islamic Coexistence

Building on this gap, the present study positions itself at the intersection of classical Islamic ethics and contemporary coexistence discourse by distinguishing between its material and formal objects of analysis. The material object of this research is the Prophetic Sirah, specifically incidents involving religious offense, coexistence, and conflict management. The formal object, however, concerns the ethical logic governing the Prophet's responses,

examined through a *maqāsid*-based analytical framework. By transforming historical narratives into structured ethical parameters, this study seeks to bridge classical Islamic moral reasoning with contemporary interdisciplinary discussions on managing religious diversity.

Accordingly, this study proposes a parameter-based model of *al-ta'āyush* derived from contextual analysis of the Prophetic Sirah. Unlike descriptive or apologetic approaches, the framework developed in this article aims to articulate the normative logic that differentiates between pedagogical leniency, strategic restraint, and principled firmness. Through this approach, the study contributes to a more analytically grounded understanding of coexistence within Islamic thought and offers a conceptual tool that engages broader scholarly debates on religious pluralism and ethical governance.

### 3. Methods

The analytical framework employed in this study integrates contextual Sirah analysis with *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, emphasizing ethical intentionality, public interest, harm prevention, and outcome-oriented reasoning. Rather than treating Prophetic actions as isolated precedents, this framework conceptualizes them as context-sensitive ethical responses governed by discernible parameters. This approach enables the articulation of a principled model of coexistence that is normatively grounded in Islamic tradition while remaining analytically compatible with contemporary interdisciplinary discourse on religious diversity and ethical governance.

#### 3.1 Material Object

The material object of this study is the Prophetic Sirah, with particular focus on documented incidents involving religious offense, interreligious interaction, and conflict management during both the Makkan and Madinan periods. The unit of analysis consists of specific Sirah narratives that illustrate the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ responses toward acts of insult, provocation, hostility, or misunderstanding related to religion. These incidents were selected because they represent varied ethical responses ranging from pedagogical leniency to strategic restraint and decisive intervention. Such variation provides an empirical basis for examining how contextual factors shape Prophetic responses. The selection process followed a purposive, criterion-based approach to ensure that the analyzed cases directly address the research objective of identifying the ethical parameters governing *al-ta'āyush*.

#### 3.2 Corpus and Selection Criteria

To strengthen methodological transparency, this study analyzes ten documented Sirah incidents that explicitly involve acts interpreted as religious offense, provocation, or hostility toward Islam or the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The cases were drawn primarily from classical Sirah sources and authenticated ḥadīth compilations commonly used in academic research. Three operational criteria guided the selection of cases:

- a. Presence of a religious offense indicator: The narrative must contain an identifiable act of insult, mockery, provocation, or hostility directed toward religious beliefs, the Prophet, or the Muslim community.
- b. Clarity of historical documentation: The incident must be documented in established Sirah literature or authenticated ḥadīth collections with sufficient narrative detail to allow contextual interpretation.
- c. Relevance to Prophetic response patterns: The narrative must describe the Prophet's response in a manner that allows analysis of ethical reasoning or decision-making processes.

Historical variation across sources was addressed through cross-referencing between Sirah works and ḥadīth reports where available. Table 2 summarizes the corpus of analyzed sirah incidents:

Case	Incident Description	Period	Primary Source
1	A Bedouin urinating in the mosque	Madinan	Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

2	Ta'if persecution episode	Makkan	Ibn Hisham Sirah
3	Mockery by Quraysh elites	Makkan	Ibn Ishaq
4	Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf provocation	Madinan	Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari
5	Hypocrite agitation under Abdullah ibn Ubay	Madinan	Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari
6	Jewish provocation incidents in Medina	Madinan	Sirah literature
7	Treaty violation by Banu Qurayzah	Madinan	Classical Sirah
8	Individual insults in public gatherings	Makkan	Sirah narrations
9	Verbal hostility in Medina	Madinan	Hadith collections
10	Public provocation by hostile poets	Madinan	Sirah reports

Table 2: Corpus of Analyzed Sirah Incidents

When multiple narrations existed, priority was given to accounts widely cited in classical Islamic historiography and supported by established scholarly discussion.

### 3.3 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative textual-analytical research design grounded in interpretive analysis of classical Islamic sources. This design was selected because it enables a contextual examination of the meanings, ethical reasoning, and situational dynamics embedded in Prophetic practices rather than merely cataloging historical events. The qualitative approach is particularly suited to normative and conceptual inquiry, as it allows the researcher to trace patterns of reasoning, contextual variables, and ethical considerations underlying the Prophet's responses. Through systematic interpretation of historical narratives, the study seeks to derive transferable ethical parameters rather than produce descriptive historiography alone.

### 3.4 Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study include classical Sirah literature, authenticated ḥadīth compilations, and selected works of Islamic historiography that document incidents of religious provocation and interreligious interaction. These texts provide detailed narrative accounts of the socio-political context, the actors involved, and the responses adopted by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Secondary sources include classical jurisprudential writings and contemporary scholarly works on Islamic ethics, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and coexistence discourse. These sources were used to contextualize historical narratives and support analytical interpretation. Since the study relies exclusively on textual sources, no human participants or respondents were involved.

### 3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through systematic textual extraction and thematic documentation of relevant Sirah incidents. Each narrative was examined to identify key contextual elements, including the actors involved, the type of offense, the socio-political setting, and the form of Prophetic response. These elements were recorded and organized into analytical categories to enable comparison across cases. This structured documentation process ensures traceability and methodological consistency when working with historical textual materials.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis combined with *maqāṣid*-based analytical reasoning. The analytical process proceeded through three stages:

- a. Contextual analysis: Each incident was examined to identify situational variables such as the intention of the actor, public impact, power relations, and potential consequences.

- b. Thematic coding: The Prophet's responses were coded according to observable patterns, including pedagogical leniency, strategic restraint, or decisive firmness.
- c. Parameter synthesis: Recurring patterns across cases were synthesized into broader ethical parameters that structure the practice of *al-ta'āyush*.

Table 3 summarizes the example of the coding process:

Case	Observed Context	Response Type	Derived Parameter
A Bedouin urinating in a mosque	Ignorance, individual misconduct	Pedagogical leniency	Intentionality parameter
Ta'if persecution	Hostility, but a fragile Muslim position	Strategic restraint	Consequential assessment
Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf provocation	Organized hostility	Decisive firmness	Public harm threshold

Table 3: Example of Coding Process

This coding process allows historical narratives to be transformed into analytical parameters while maintaining interpretive transparency.

#### 4. Results

The analysis of selected Prophetic Sirah incidents reveals that responses to religious offense were not uniform but varied according to identifiable contextual conditions. Drawing on the documented cases outlined in the methodology, the findings show that Prophetic responses followed recurring patterns shaped by factors such as the actor's intention, the scale of social impact, and the prevailing political context. Rather than emerging as isolated moral reactions, these responses exhibit a structured ethical logic observable across multiple incidents in both the Makkan and Madinan phases.

The results are presented in two stages. First, the study identifies three typological patterns of response observed in the analyzed narratives. Second, the analysis examines contextual variables that explain why different responses emerged across cases. By grounding these findings in specific Sirah events, the study demonstrates that the typologies and parameters derived in this research are directly traceable to textual evidence rather than conceptual abstraction.

##### 4.1 Typology of Prophetic Responses to Religious Offense

The qualitative analysis of the selected Sirah corpus reveals three recurring patterns in the Prophet's responses to religious offenses: forbearance and pedagogical leniency; strategic restraint despite provocation; and decisive firmness and punitive intervention. These typologies represent differentiated responses to varying contextual conditions rather than a single normative approach to religious offense (Mehmet, Mohd & Jihad, 2025). The first typology identified is forbearance accompanied by pedagogical instruction. This response appears primarily in cases where the offending act stemmed from ignorance, unfamiliarity with Islamic norms, or individual misconduct lacking hostile intent.

One frequently cited example is the incident of the Bedouin who urinated in the Prophet's mosque in Medina. When companions reacted with anger, the Prophet ﷺ instructed them to allow the man to finish and subsequently explained the sanctity of the mosque with patience and instruction. The event, narrated in classical hadith collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, illustrates a response grounded in education rather than punishment. A similar pattern appears in several incidents involving new converts or unfamiliar visitors who unintentionally violated communal etiquette. In such cases, the Prophet ﷺ responded with clarification and moral instruction, emphasizing gradual

learning and social integration rather than disciplinary sanction (al-Buti, 2010). These cases share identifiable indicators; the actor demonstrates a lack of malicious intent, the act involves individual misconduct rather than collective agitation, and the incident does not threaten broader communal stability.

The second typology involves strategic restraint in situations of provocation, particularly when immediate retaliation could produce greater social harm or escalate conflict. A notable example is the persecution experienced by the Prophet ﷺ in Ṭā'if during the Makkkan period, where he was physically assaulted and driven out of the city. Despite the severity of the provocation, historical accounts report that the Prophet chose restraint and expressed hope that future generations might embrace the message of Islam.

Another illustrative case concerns the activities of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy, the leader of the Medinan hypocrites, who repeatedly made statements that could be interpreted as undermining the Muslim community. When companions proposed punitive action, the Prophet declined, reportedly stating that such action could lead people to claim that "*Muhammad kills his own companions.*" This incident, documented in classical hadith literature, demonstrates a decision shaped by considerations of public perception and long-term social consequences (Yazdani, 2020). In the analyzed corpus, such restraint occurs when retaliation could damage public legitimacy, the Muslim community faced fragile political circumstances, or escalation risked intensifying intergroup conflict.

The third typology involves decisive firmness in response to organized hostility or threats to communal security. Unlike cases of individual insult, these incidents typically involved actions perceived as politically destabilizing or collectively harmful. One frequently discussed example is the case of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, a Medinan poet accused in classical sources of inciting hostility against the Muslim community and mobilizing opposition following the Battle of Badr (Ibn Hisham, 1994). Historical reports indicate that his activities were interpreted as contributing to broader political agitation, leading to decisive action taken against him (Supriadi & Islamy, 2023).

Another example is the episode involving the Banū Qurayzah tribe following the Battle of the Trench, in which their alleged violation of an existing alliance was treated as a serious security breach within Medina's political structure. Across such cases, firmness appears when several indicators converge: the offense involves organized or persistent hostility, the actions threaten collective security or political stability, and the Muslim community possesses sufficient institutional authority to enforce communal order (al-Siba'i, 1985).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Prophetic responses to religious offense were context-sensitive and situationally differentiated. The typologies identified above do not represent mutually exclusive moral positions but rather reflect a spectrum of responses calibrated according to contextual variables observable in the Sirah corpus. These typological findings provide the empirical foundation for the analysis of contextual variables and ethical parameters presented in the subsequent sections.

#### 4.2 Contextual Variables Shaping Prophetic Responses

The thematic analysis of the Prophetic Sirah corpus indicates that the Prophet's ﷺ responses to religious offense were systematically shaped by identifiable contextual variables. Rather than reflecting spontaneous or inconsistent reactions, variations in response correspond to recurring situational factors observable across multiple incidents. These variables served as contextual determinants that influenced the form and intensity of the response in each case. One of the most consistent variables across the analyzed cases is the offender's intent.

The Sirah narratives clearly distinguish between offenses arising from ignorance or misunderstanding and those motivated by deliberate hostility or organized provocation. For instance, the incident of the Bedouin who urinated in the Prophet's mosque in Medina illustrates an act of misconduct arising from ignorance rather than hostility. Classical hadith reports indicate that the Prophet ﷺ responded with instruction and patience rather than reprimand, emphasizing education and social integration (Sulaiman, 2021). By contrast, cases involving individuals such as Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, who, according to classical sources, engaged in sustained provocation and incitement against the Muslim community, elicited markedly different responses.

Such incidents demonstrate that the presence of persistent antagonism or strategic hostility was interpreted differently from acts of unintentional misconduct. Across the analyzed cases, the intentionality variable was identified using the following indicators: presence or absence of malicious intent, repetition or persistence of hostile behavior, and evidence of organized or strategic provocation. These indicators consistently influenced how the offense was interpreted and addressed.

A second contextual variable concerns the scale of impact generated by the offending act. The analysis reveals that responses differed significantly depending on whether the offense remained limited to an individual interaction or carried wider implications for communal stability. In several incidents involving verbal insults or isolated acts of mockery in Makkah society, the Prophet ﷺ adopted restrained responses despite hostility from Quraysh elites. These acts were treated as individual provocations rather than immediate threats to communal security (al-Tabari, 2002).

However, cases perceived to carry broader social consequences elicited more assertive responses. For example, incidents involving public incitement or mobilization against the Muslim community were treated differently from isolated insults (Shamsuddin, Long & Ramli, 2021). Operationally, the scale-of-impact variable was identified using indicators such as whether the offense occurred in private interaction or public space, the number of actors involved, and the potential to generate collective agitation or intergroup conflict. The presence of wider social implications increased the likelihood of a more assertive response.

Another significant variable concerns the configuration of political authority during the incident. Sirah evidence demonstrates that responses during the Makkah phase, when the Muslim community lacked political authority and remained socially vulnerable, were predominantly characterized by endurance and restraint. For example, during the early Makkah period, the Prophet ﷺ and his followers were subjected to various forms of ridicule and hostility by Quraysh leaders. Despite the intensity of provocation, responses remained largely non-retaliatory due to the absence of institutional authority and the risk of escalation.

In contrast, during the Madinan phase, when the Muslim community possessed political authority and institutional governance structures, responses reflected greater regulatory capacity. Incidents such as conflicts involving hostile actors in Medina illustrate how the presence of communal authority expanded the range of available responses (Yildirim, 2006). This variable was identified through indicators including the political status of the Muslim community, the presence or absence of institutional authority, and the capacity to enforce communal order. The shift from Makkah vulnerability to Madinan governance significantly influenced the practical implementation of responses.

The final contextual variable identified is the degree to which an offense threatened communal order or security. The analysis indicates that acts perceived as personal insults or symbolic disrespect were treated differently from actions interpreted as endangering collective stability (al-Mubarakfuri, 2010). For example, personal insults directed at the Prophet ﷺ during public interactions were often met with restraint or dismissal. However, incidents involving alliance violations, incitement to violence, or collaboration with hostile forces were interpreted as security threats rather than mere offenses.

The episode involving Banū Qurayzah following the Battle of the Trench illustrates a case where alleged treaty violations were interpreted within a broader security context, leading to decisive intervention (al-Sakhawi, 1979). Operational indicators used to identify this variable include evidence of collective mobilization or incitement, actions that could destabilize political alliances or treaties, and activities interpreted as threats to communal safety. These indicators demonstrate that the perceived transition from personal offense to collective risk significantly altered the ethical and strategic calculus governing response (Sutrisno, 2023).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Prophetic responses to religious offense were consistently shaped by a matrix of contextual considerations. The interaction of offender intent, scale of impact, political authority, and perceived security threats produced differentiated response patterns observable across the Sirah corpus. These

contextual variables provide the empirical basis for the parameterization of *al-ta'āyush* developed in the following section.

### 4.3 Parameterization of *al-Ta'āyush*

Building upon the typological patterns and contextual variables identified in the preceding sections, the analysis yields a set of normative parameters that structure the practice of *al-ta'āyush* within the Prophetic Sirah. These parameters do not function as abstract moral ideals but rather as operational criteria observable across multiple documented incidents. They emerge inductively from thematic coding and cross-case comparison within the Sirah corpus, reflecting recurring evaluative considerations that shaped Prophetic responses to religious offense.

The first parameter identified is the Intentionality Parameter, which concerns how the perceived motivation behind an act influenced the form of response. Analysis of the Sirah corpus demonstrates that incidents associated with ignorance, misunderstanding, or unfamiliarity with Islamic norms were frequently addressed through pedagogical guidance rather than disciplinary measures. For example, the case of the Bedouin who urinated in the Prophet's mosque illustrates a situation where misconduct resulted from ignorance rather than hostility. The Prophet ﷺ responded by explaining the sanctity of the mosque and instructing the companions to address the situation calmly, thereby emphasizing education and integration rather than punitive action (Shukri & Azalan, 2023).

In contrast, incidents involving persistent provocation, such as activities attributed in classical sources to Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, were interpreted as deliberate antagonism and therefore elicited different responses. Across the analyzed corpus, intentionality was identified through indicators such as malicious intent, repeated antagonistic behavior, and evidence of organized provocation.

A second parameter emerging from the analysis is the Public Harm Threshold, referring to the extent to which an offence was perceived to affect communal stability. The Sirah narratives reveal a consistent distinction between offences confined to individual interactions and those capable of generating broader social consequences. Incidents involving isolated acts of mockery or verbal insult were often addressed with restraint, particularly during the Makkan phase when hostility from Quraysh elites did not immediately translate into institutional threats. However, when actions risked escalating into broader communal conflict, such as public agitation or incitement, the response pattern shifted toward more assertive intervention (Ashker, Mohamed & Fatmir, 2024). Operational indicators used to identify this parameter include the public visibility of the offense, the number of actors involved, and the potential for the incident to mobilize collective hostility or disrupt social cohesion.

The third parameter identified is the Authority and Responsibility Parameter, which reflects how the presence or absence of institutional authority shaped the available response options. Sirah evidence demonstrates that responses during the Makkan period, when the Muslim community lacked political authority, were largely characterized by restraint and endurance. For example, despite repeated verbal hostility and mockery from Quraysh leaders during the Makkan phase, the Prophet ﷺ refrained from retaliatory measures. By contrast, during the Madinan phase, when communal governance structures had been established, the Prophet's responses reflected a broader capacity to regulate social order and address destabilizing behavior (Azmi, 2019). Indicators used to identify this parameter include the political status of the Muslim community, the presence of institutional authority, and the capacity to enforce communal norms.

The fourth parameter identified in the analysis is Consequential Assessment (*ma'ālāt*), referring to the forward-looking evaluation of potential outcomes before determining an appropriate response. Across several Sirah incidents, responses were shaped not only by the immediate offense but also by the anticipated social and political consequences of intervention. For instance, the case involving 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy, leader of the Madinan hypocrites, demonstrates how the Prophet ﷺ declined punitive action despite provocative statements in order to prevent negative perceptions that could undermine communal legitimacy. This illustrates how considerations of public

perception and long-term social cohesion influenced response selection (Khalil & Muneer, 2025). Indicators for this parameter include anticipation of reputational impact, risk of escalation, and potential effects on communal cohesion.

The final parameter identified is *Maslahah–Mafsadah* Balancing, which functions as an integrative evaluative mechanism. Rather than operating independently, the previously discussed parameters interact within a broader ethical assessment that weighs potential benefit against anticipated harm. For example, cases of restraint despite provocation, such as episodes during the Makkan period, illustrate situations in which avoiding escalation was perceived to yield greater communal benefit than immediate retaliation. Conversely, incidents involving perceived security threats, such as treaty violations in Medina, illustrate situations in which decisive action was deemed necessary to preserve communal stability (Labibah, 2025).

This parameter reflects the dynamic ethical reasoning underlying Prophetic decision-making, in which multiple contextual considerations were weighed simultaneously.

Parameter	Descriptive Function	Operational Indicators	Illustrative Sirah Context
Intentionality Parameter	Differentiates responses according to offender motivation	Presence of malicious intent; repetition of hostility	Bedouin mosque incident vs hostile provocation
Public Harm Threshold	Assesses the potential social impact of the offense	Public visibility; collective mobilization	Individual insult vs public agitation
Authority and Responsibility Parameter	Reflects the influence of political authority on response options	Institutional capacity; governance context	Makkan vulnerability vs Madinan authority
Consequential Assessment ( <i>Ma'ālāt</i> )	Considers long-term social and political outcomes	Risk of escalation; reputational impact	Restraint in cases of internal agitation
<i>Maslahah–Mafsadah</i> Balancing	Integrates competing considerations of benefit and harm	Comparative assessment of social outcomes	Context-dependent response calibration

Table 4: Parameterization of *al-Ta'āyush*

Collectively, these parameters constitute a structured descriptive model of *al-ta'āyush* as reflected in the Prophetic Sirah. Derived from systematic textual analysis, they provide an empirically grounded account of how coexistence was navigated across varying contexts of religious offense. These findings establish the analytical foundation for the interpretive discussion presented in the subsequent section.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *al-ta'āyush* in the Prophetic Sirah operates through a structured set of contextual parameters rather than a singular ethic of tolerance or restraint. The results identify three typological patterns of response: forbearance, strategic restraint, and decisive firmness, each shaped by recurring contextual variables such as offender intent, scale of harm, authority configuration, and threats to communal order. These variables were subsequently synthesized into five operational parameters: intentionality, public harm threshold, authority and responsibility, consequential assessment (*ma'ālāt*), and *maslahah–mafsadah* balancing. Taken together, these findings indicate that *al-ta'āyush* functioned as a context-sensitive ethical framework grounded in discernible normative reasoning rather than ad hoc moral reactions.

The findings also invite reconsideration of dominant narratives that portray Prophetic coexistence as either uniformly conciliatory or inherently punitive. Instead, the derived parameters reveal a framework characterized by calibrated responsiveness in which restraint and firmness operate as complementary ethical responses activated under different situational conditions. Such an interpretation challenges reductionist readings of the Sirah that extract isolated events without examining their contextual determinants (Abdullah & Mazahir, 2023). By employing a *maqāṣid*-oriented analytical lens, the present study demonstrates how Prophetic responses consistently balanced moral principles with social realities, thereby preserving ethical coherence across diverse circumstances.

From a conceptual perspective, the parameterization of *al-ta'āyush* suggests that coexistence within the Islamic ethical tradition is better understood as contextual moral governance rather than unconditional tolerance (Dees, 2024). The Prophetic responses analyzed in this study reveal a structured evaluative process in which intention, consequence, and communal welfare were assessed before determining an appropriate course of action. This approach positions *al-ta'āyush* as a dynamic ethical strategy capable of mediating between competing moral considerations, such as mercy and justice or patience and protection, without collapsing into relativism or rigidity.

When placed in dialogue with contemporary theories of pluralism, the Prophetic framework exhibits both convergences and critical distinctions. Liberal political theory, particularly as articulated by John Rawls, conceptualizes coexistence through procedural fairness and public reason, emphasizing institutional neutrality in managing moral diversity. Similarly, deliberative models associated with Jürgen Habermas prioritize communicative rationality and consensus-building through dialogue. While these models offer important insights into pluralistic governance, they typically assume that moral commitments are negotiable within a neutral public sphere (Safran, 2023). The *maqāṣid*-based framework derived in this study departs from this assumption by recognizing the enduring role of non-negotiable sacred values in shaping ethical responses.

Rather than relying exclusively on procedural neutrality, the Prophetic model integrates normative principles with contextual reasoning. The parameters identified in this study, such as intentionality, harm thresholds, and outcome assessment, demonstrate how moral commitments and pragmatic considerations were simultaneously integrated within a coherent ethical framework. In this sense, the *maqāṣid*-oriented model complements liberal theories of pluralism by providing an ethical framework capable of addressing situations in which deeply held religious values remain central to social legitimacy. At the same time, it challenges the assumption that neutrality alone is sufficient to resolve conflicts involving sacred commitments.

To illustrate the operational relevance of the proposed framework, the parameters derived in this study can be applied to contemporary cases of religious offense in Malaysia. Public controversies involving statements or digital content perceived as insulting religious beliefs have periodically generated debate regarding the appropriate balance between freedom of expression and protection of religious harmony (Latifah et al., 2024). For example, consider a case involving a social media post perceived as mocking Islamic religious practices, which subsequently triggered widespread public criticism and a police investigation. Applying the five parameters identified in this study provides a structured analytical approach:



Figure 1: Evaluative Framework for Assessing Religious Offense Based on the Parameters of al-Ta'âyush

To clarify how the parameters identified in this study function in practice, Figure 1 illustrates the evaluative sequence through which contemporary cases of religious offense may be assessed. The framework operationalizes the Prophetic principles of *al-ta'âyush* by guiding the assessment of intention, scale of harm, authority context, anticipated consequences, and the balancing of *maslahah* and *mafsadah* before determining an appropriate response. Through this structured evaluation, responses to religious offense can move beyond purely reactive or emotive reactions toward a more principled ethical assessment. The framework, therefore, functions not only as an interpretive tool for historical analysis but also as a conceptual guide for evaluating contemporary controversies involving religious sensitivities.

The discussion also highlights several directions for further scholarly inquiry. Future studies may empirically examine how the parameters identified in this research operate within different legal and cultural contexts. Comparative studies across Muslim-majority and minority societies could provide further insight into how ethical frameworks derived from the Prophetic tradition interact with contemporary governance structures. Additionally, interdisciplinary engagement with fields such as conflict resolution, media studies, and legal theory may help refine the operationalization of *al-ta'âyush* in modern institutional settings. Expanding the analysis to include post-Prophetic historical precedents may also shed light on how these ethical parameters were interpreted and adapted in subsequent Islamic governance traditions.

## 6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *al-ta'âyush* in the Prophetic Sirah cannot be adequately interpreted through simplified narratives of unconditional tolerance or reactive severity. Through a qualitative, *maqâsid*-oriented analysis of selected Sirah incidents, the findings reveal that Prophetic responses to religious offenses followed a structured ethical logic shaped by contextual differentiation. The analysis identifies three recurring patterns of response:

forbearance, strategic restraint, and decisive firmness, whose application depended on situational factors such as offender intention, scale of social impact, authority configuration, and perceived threats to communal order.

A key contribution of this study lies in articulating five operational parameters that structure the practice of *al-ta'ayush*: intentionality, public-harm threshold, authority and responsibility, consequential assessment (*ma'ālāt*), and *maslahah-mafsadah* balancing. By synthesizing these parameters into a coherent analytical framework, the study advances *al-ta'ayush* from a largely normative concept into a structured model of contextual ethical governance. This framework bridges classical Islamic ethical reasoning with contemporary interdisciplinary discussions on pluralism, political philosophy, and governance of religious diversity.

In practical terms, the framework provides a structured evaluative lens for assessing contemporary cases of religious offense. Rather than framing such cases in binary terms of tolerance or punishment, the parameters enable a calibrated ethical assessment that considers intention, the scale of harm, institutional responsibility, and potential social consequences before determining an appropriate response. This study is subject to certain limitations. The analysis is confined to selected Prophetic Sirah narratives and does not extend to post-Prophetic historical applications or systematic empirical testing in contemporary contexts. Future research may build upon this framework by examining its applicability within modern legal systems, media environments, and interreligious governance settings. Comparative studies across different Muslim and non-Muslim societies may also further test the analytical robustness and adaptability of the proposed model.

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