



## DECONSTRUCTING ISLAMIC CYBERCULTURE: MITIGATING INFERIORITY AND CANCEL CULTURE IN VIRTUAL SPACE

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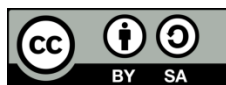
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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines how Islamic Cyber Culture can reduce feelings of inferiority and the spread of cancel culture in virtual spaces. In Indonesia, cancel culture has increasingly affected individuals through online rejection and public petitions, while legally remaining largely unregulated. Psychologically, this phenomenon is often rooted in inferiority feelings that encourage destructive digital behavior. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study analyzes relevant cases and literature through content analysis. The findings identify four Qur'anic components of Islamic Cyber Culture: justice and equality, ethical speech and interaction, the importance of knowledge and reflection, and avoiding slander and backbiting (fitnah and ghibah). The study also highlights five urgent challenges in Indonesia: social pressure and unrealistic expectations, rapid judgment and cancellation, self-censorship, polarization and weak dialogue, and technology-driven character assassination. These challenges can be minimized by reinforcing Islamic Cyber Culture through positive narratives, digital ethics awareness, and public education, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and wise online environment.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Cyberculture, Inferioritas, Cancel Culture, Virtual.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of cancel culture and inferiority are contemporary issues in the virtual space. Reporting from the central statistics agency, in 2021 more than 62% of Indonesians tend to spend time on the internet (Rakhmawati et al., 2021). This

data shows the massive number of internet users in Indonesia, which today has created several massive movements called cancel culture. This cancel culture issue is characterised by several cases that have occurred in Indonesia. Such as the boycott of Coldplay Band (2023), Uus Boycott (2022), Coki and Muslim boycott (2019) and several other examples. This phenomenon can be destructive when individuals or groups are criticised without providing opportunities for reflection, learning or improvement. Cancel culture can create an impartial atmosphere where individuals feel afraid to speak up or share their views, fuelling self-censorship and decreasing diversity of opinion.

Several studies and analyses have tried to identify the psychological aspects behind cancel culture behaviour (Lokhande & Natu, 2022). Some individuals who are active in cancellation may experience a need to feel powerful or gain social support from their group. This can stem from insecurity or the need to reinforce their group identity by showing assertiveness towards people or ideologies perceived as a threat. The correlation between cancel culture and inferiority creates a complex dynamic in digital spaces.

The public attacks and cancellations that often occur in cancel culture can deepen the inferiority feelings of the targeted individual or group (Kuai et al., 2022). Social media acceptance and validation are often the benchmarks of success in online environments, and when one is intensely criticised, it can damage self-image and increase insecurity. On a broader level, inferiority may encourage individuals to seek group approval, increasing the risk of going along with majority opinion, even if it goes against personal values or beliefs (Deriglazova & Pogorelskaya, 2023; Ng, 2022).

Furthermore, this correlation can also create an environment where people feel judgemental towards each other and measure social value based on popularity or fame on social media. Individuals who feel inferior may fall into the dynamics of cancel culture to seek recognition and avoid stigma. Meanwhile, cancel culture, in a paradoxical way, can induce inferiority in groups that are perceived to disagree with the norms that dominate public opinion (Dwarkanath et al., 2021; Tümlü & Şimşek, 2021). Therefore, understanding the correlation between cancel culture and inferiority is important for designing more constructive, inclusive and respectful approaches in online environments.

Deconstructing Islamic Cyberculture plays an important role in addressing cancel culture and inferiority in digital spaces. This approach opens the door to understanding the construction of meaning in online interactions, identifying the assumptions underlying inferiority, and detailing the power dynamics in cancel culture. As such, deconstruction is not only a critical analytical tool, but also the basis for formulating effective mitigation strategies, strengthening Muslim digital identities, and promoting inclusive and dialogic virtual spaces (Gazali et al., 2023; Ghani & Rahman, 2023).

The urgency of this research lies in the need to deeply and critically understand the phenomenon of deconstruction in Islamic Cyberculture, particularly in relation to mitigating inferiority and the impact of cancel culture in virtual spaces. The rapid growth of Islamic Cyberculture demands a holistic approach to explore the construction of meaning behind online interactions and provide a better understanding of the impact of cancel culture and mitigation strategies against inferiority. This research is expected to contribute in shaping effective strategies to face the challenges and formulate practical guidelines in developing healthy and inclusive virtual spaces for Muslim communities in the digital era.

Deconstructing Islamic Cyberculture reflects the intention to critically investigate and understand the construction of meanings, norms, and power dynamics in Islamic digital culture. Secondly, this research also aims to identify and address two critical phenomena, namely inferiority and cancel culture, that may affect Muslim communities in virtual spaces. Thus, this title indicates an attempt to understand as well as find solutions to the complex dynamics that occur in Islamic Cyberculture.

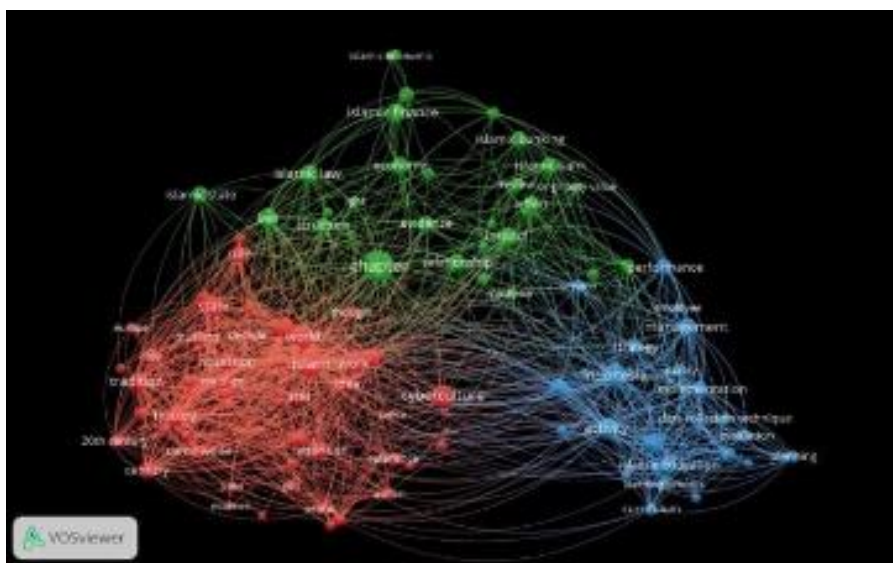
In order to keep the discussion substantive and produce new findings, the author uses intercultural communication theory and impression management theory. Intercultural communication theory studies communication interactions between individuals or groups from different cultures, involving an understanding of values, norms and language. In Cultural Dimensions Theory, national cultures are compared based on certain dimensions such as individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (Küçükkömürler & Özkan, 2022). This helps analyse cultural differences in communication and is important in addressing cross-cultural differences (Aririguzoh, 2022; Shrivastava et al., 2022). The central concepts are

"coding" and "decoding," referring to the way messages are sent and received in a cultural context. The theory emphasises cultural awareness to avoid communication errors and conflicts that can arise from stereotyping or prejudice (Orbe & Harris, 2022; Pocevicene, 2023).

Meanwhile, Impression Management Theory is a framework in communication studies that discusses how individuals actively control or manage the perceptions that others have of them (Mehra et al., 2023). The theory emphasises individuals' efforts to present themselves in specific ways, both in face-to-face and online situations, to create a desired impression. The key concepts in this theory involve "encoding" where individuals create messages expected by the audience and "decoding" where the audience interprets those messages according to the context. By analysing impression management strategies, such as information concealment or positive branding, the theory provides insight into the way individuals manipulate self-presentation to influence others' judgments and achieve specific communicative goals (Barbeisch & Krishnan, 2022).

In this level, the author will analyse 1,000 past articles that discuss Islamic Cyberculture using the Publish or Perish application. To visualise the data, the author will use the VosViewer application to bring up network analysis and density analysis, the following are the results:

**Figure 1.** Network Analysis





public discourse more dispersed and not monopolised by those with privileges. The issues raised have similarities, but previous research used public figures as mitigation efforts. While this research uses the context of Islamic Cyberculture as an instrument to alleviate cancel culture.

Finally, the research entitled "Analysis of the causes of inferiority feelings based on social media data with Word2Vec" (2022). The main causes of inferiority feelings are personal experiences, social interactions, love relationships, etc. People who feel inferior to their personal experiences are usually strongly influenced by their way of thinking and attitude towards life. The issues raised are related in that this article analyses that it is inferiority that causes cancel culture.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODE**

This article uses a type of qualitative method with a case study approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). The data collection technique used in this research is literature study observation with literature review (Creswell, 2021). In literature analysis, a researcher summarises and assesses existing information, identifies gaps in understanding, and provides a relevant foundation for future research (Pillai, 2019; Schilling, 2024).

The primary data source in this research is the previous five years of literature on cancel culture and the inferiority of digital society. Then the author also analyses several issues of cancel culture and inferiority in recent years to analyse the way out and formulate the ideal Islamic Cyberculture. Secondary data used in this article are scientific articles, reports and books. The results of the data will be analysed using content analysis techniques. According to Kumar et al., (2022), content analysis does not limit the text in the definition to written products, but also "other meaningful matter" with deep context. In Moleong (2019), the purpose of content analysis is to improve procedures to produce valid conclusions. Then, Holsi as described in Moeloeng explained it as any technique used to reach conclusions by finding the characteristics of messages and carried out objectively and regularly (Rachmad & Sasongko, 2023).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULT

##### **Qur'anic Value in the Deconstruction of Islamic Cyberculture**

The deconstruction of Islamic Cyberculture, with reference to Qur'anic principles, enables an in-depth analysis of the construction of meanings, norms, and power dynamics involved in online interactions. The application of Qur'anic values in deconstruction can guide Muslim communities to avoid fitnah, establish inclusive dialogue, and maintain the integrity of their digital identities. By combining Islamic wisdom with deconstruction methodology, it is hoped that a holistic and enlightened view of the role of Islamic Cyberculture in reflecting Qur'anic values in virtual spaces will emerge.

In the Qur'an, Allah provides an ideal level of Islamic Cyberculture with the values of justice and equality. In Q.S. al-Nisa verse 135 Allah says (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022):

*"O you who believe, be you who are truly upholders of justice, bearing witness for Allah even if it is against yourselves or your parents and relatives. If he is rich or poor, Allah knows better. So do not follow your lusts to deviate from the truth. And if you twist your words or are reluctant to bear witness, then surely Allah is All-Knowing of all that you do."*

In Tafsir Muyassar (2008), it is explained O those who believe in Allah and His messenger and carry out His laws, be you people who always uphold justice, bear witness for the hope of the face of Allah, even if it is against yourselves or your fathers and mothers or your relatives, regardless of the condition of the person being witnessed, whether rich or poor, because Allah is more concerned about them than you and knows better what will benefit them both. Do not let your passions and blind fanaticism lead you to abandon being just. If you change the testimony with your tongues, then you bring testimony that is not true or turn away from it by not presenting it or hiding it, then surely Allah is all-knowing no matter how small your actions are and will reward you according to these actions. Whereas in Tafsir Ringkas Kemenang (2016), in this verse Allah seems to say,

*"O you who believe! Be you upholders of justice in earnest among all mankind. Be honest witnesses for the sake of Allah, without any discrimination, either*

*against yourselves or against those who are very close to you, such as your mothers and fathers and relatives. Do not let this prevent you from acting justly."*

Then, in the deconstruction of Islamic Cyberculture, Allah also calls for ethical values of speech and interaction. In Q.S. al-Isra verse 53 Allah says:

*"Tell My servants to speak better (and true) words. Verily, the devil always stirs up strife among them. Verily, the devil is a real enemy to man."*

In speaking, the obedient servants of Allah should choose their words carefully and endeavour to use better expressions. If there are several sentences that have similar meanings, they should choose words that are pleasing to the ear and reflect politeness in communication, both when speaking with fellow Muslims and when explaining matters of belief to people who have not embraced Islam (Rozi & Zubir, 2024). In Tafsir Jalalain (2015), this verse seems to indicate that, "And convey to My servants) who have believed (that they should convey) to the disbelievers (better) words." Indeed, the devil causes discord (i.e., chaos) among them. Verily, the devil is a real enemy to man) manifests enmity. Shaping Islamic Cyberculture emphasises the importance of knowledge and reflection. This is explained by Allah in Q.S. Fushilat verse 40 which reads:

*"Those who deny Our signs are not hidden from Us. Are those who are cast into Hell better or those who come in peace on the Day of Judgement? Do what you will! Indeed, He is All-Seeing in what you do."*

In Tafsir al-Mishbah (2015), it is explained that those who express, "Allah is our Lord," as an acknowledgement of His majesty, and then carry out His commands steadfastly, will always get visits from angels who give notice, "You need not feel anxious about the difficulties that may befall you, nor should you grieve over the good that you cannot achieve. Instead, rejoice in the promise of paradise that has been announced to you through the revelations of the prophets and messengers." Then, one of the most important values in the deconstruction of Islamic Cyberculture values is to avoid slander and gossip. this step is a very urgent form of practice because the orientation of the message must be well constructed. Allah says in Q.S. al-Hujurat verse 12 which reads:

*"O you who believe, avoid many prejudices! Verily, some prejudices are sins. Do not find fault with others and let none of you backbite another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely you would be disgusted. Fear Allah, for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful."*

According to Ibn Katsir (2018), this verse indicates And do not find fault with others, that is, some of you against others. The use of the term "tajassus" generally indicates a negative or bad connotation, just as spies are referred to as "jaras" in Arabic. Al-Auza'i explains that "tajassus" refers to trying to find fault with others, while "tahassus" relates to trying to find out news of a group, even if the party concerned does not want the information to be known or intercepted. Tadabur, in this context, refers to the act of bringing down or devising a conspiracy. Therefore, the message of this verse is to avoid finding fault or plotting against others.

In the context of Islamic Cyberculture, values such as justice, ethical speech, seeking knowledge, and avoiding fitnah can guide Muslim behaviour online. Further interpretation and study by scholars can provide a deeper understanding of the application of Islamic principles in the digital world.

### **Inferiority and Cancel culture challenges in virtual space**

In Indonesia, the challenge of inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces is becoming an increasingly significant phenomenon along with the rapid growth of social media use. These challenges are reflected in the pressure to fulfil certain standards or expectations, especially among the younger generation. Inferiority can arise from comparing oneself to the perfect image presented in social media, creating pressure to constantly seek validation from others.

Meanwhile, cancel culture in Indonesia can be a serious challenge as people tend to easily engage in public cancellation of individuals or groups without providing space for constructive dialogue. This phenomenon can lead to opinion imbalance, self-censorship, and limit the diversity of opinions, which in turn can be detrimental to public health and social dynamics. The challenges faced in relation to inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces in Indonesia include several key aspects:

- 1) **Social Pressure and Unrealistic Expectations:** Social media use in Indonesia often creates social pressure and unrealistic expectations, especially among the younger generation. Dissatisfaction with self-image can trigger feelings of inferiority due to comparisons with unattainable standards of beauty or success (Ivan, 2023; Uwen & Ushie, 2022).

- 2) **Cancel culture and Quick Judgement:** Cancel culture in Indonesia can present serious challenges as society can engage in public cancellations without giving individuals a chance to understand or correct their mistakes. Quick and baseless judgements can harm individuals and inhibit diversity of opinion (Anjarini, 2020; Roseline et al., 2023).
- 3) **Self-Censorship and Restrictions on Freedom of Expression:** Due to the fear of public cancellation, many individuals tend to engage in self-censorship, reducing freedom of expression and harming diversity of opinion in virtual spaces (Burnett et al., 2022; Shen & Truex, 2021).
- 4) **Polarisation and Lack of Constructive Dialogue:** Cancel culture can cause polarisation of society by triggering conflicts in the absence of constructive dialogue. This can be detrimental to the social climate and make it difficult to find common solutions to problems (Butler, 2021; Menzner & Traunmüller, 2023).
- 5) **Utilisation of Technology for Character Defilement:** Another challenge is the utilisation of technology for character defamation, where false or manipulative information is spread to harm one's reputation (Antolini & Piccinini, 2023; Basid & Rahmah, 2023).

Issues such as social pressure, cancel culture, self-censorship, polarisation, and defamation of character that arise in Indonesian virtual spaces can be linked to inferiority issues involving feelings of lack of confidence or feeling unequal to the standards faced in the digital world. Social pressure and unrealistic expectations, for example, often lead individuals to feel inadequate when compared to the perfect image presented on social media.

This inferiority can be a trigger for cancel culture, where individuals who feel inferior try to gain validation or improve their self-image by judging or limiting others' freedom of expression (Al-Zaman, 2021; Bali & Desai, 2019). Self-censorship can also be understood as a response to the fear of negative thoughts or judgements from others that might exacerbate feelings of inferiority. Polarisation and lack of constructive dialogue can also be influenced by inferiority, as individuals tend to choose to reinforce their own views as a form of protection against uncertainty or feelings of inferiority. The utilisation of technology for character defamation may,

in turn, be a way for individuals who feel inferior to cope with their feelings by harming the reputation of others as a form of comparison and distraction from their own dissatisfaction.

Social media use in Indonesia has a significant impact on society, especially the younger generation, by creating social pressure and unrealistic expectations (De Groote & Van Ouytsel, 2022; Pourni, 2022). Standards of beauty or success posted on online platforms often trigger feelings of inferiority among individuals who find it difficult to achieve. The affected self-image can lead to dissatisfaction and constant attempts to gain validation from others.

Cancel culture, as a serious challenge in Indonesia's virtual space, has a dangerous impact on freedom of expression and diversity of opinion. People engage in public cancellation without providing opportunities for constructive dialogue or deeper understanding of the issues raised. As a result, self-censorship is detrimental to the social climate and dampens the healthy exchange of ideas online.

The polarisation of society and lack of constructive dialogue is a result of cancel culture, which triggers conflict without a common solution. This makes it difficult to find a deeper understanding of differences of opinion and harms the social climate that should be filled with co-operation (Norris, 2023). In addition, the use of technology for character defamation further complicates the situation, with false or manipulative information that can quickly harm one's reputation. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from various parties to build digital ethics, improve social media literacy, and promote a culture of inclusive dialogue in Indonesia's virtual sphere.

Facing these challenges requires a concerted effort from the community, educational institutions and the government to build a better understanding of digital ethics, improve social media literacy and promote a culture of mutual respect and constructive dialogue in the virtual space.

### **Islamic Cyberculture in Tackling Inferiority and Cancel Culture**

Islamic Cyberculture, as a phenomenon that develops in the digital era, has an important role in overcoming the challenges of inferiority and cancel culture that

arise in virtual spaces. Firstly, through Islamic Cyberculture, Muslim communities can build a strong digital identity based on Islamic values that encourage simplicity, justice, and respect for diversity. Online platforms that integrate Islamic teachings can be places that encourage users to avoid harmful comparisons and value their own uniqueness.

Then, Islamic Cyberculture can act as an agent of change in the face of cancel culture by promoting the principles of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for dissent (Dalimunthe et al., 2023). These platforms can be a vehicle to empower people to voice their opinions without fear of public cancellation, while educating about the importance of acceptance and open discussion. Thus, Islamic Cyberculture can shape an environment that supports critical thinking and creates a positive atmosphere in virtual spaces.

Through Islamic Cyberculture, Muslim communities can utilise social media and online platforms to spread positive messages, shape narratives that promote goodness, and respond to cancel culture situations wisely. Education about digital ethics in the Islamic context can help reduce self-censorship and increase social media literacy, so that users are able to participate in online discussions with wisdom and intelligence (Malla et al., 2023). By integrating Islamic values in the virtual space, Islamic Cyberculture can be a positive force in shaping healthy online behaviour and supporting the growth of individuals and society as a whole. Through Islamic Cyberculture, Muslim communities in Indonesia have the potential to overcome various challenges arising from inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces:

**Table 1.** The role of Islamic Cyberculture in overcoming the challenges of cancel culture and inferiority

No	Challenge	The Role of Islamic Cyber Culture
1	Social Pressure and Unrealistic Expectations	Through Islamic Cyberculture, platforms can be built that promote diversity and Islamic values that emphasise justice, simplicity, and acceptance of differences. Muslim societies can embrace a strong digital identity by building a true understanding of Islamic values and staying away from unrealistic standards.

2	Cancel culture and Quick Judgement	Islamic Cyberculture can play a key role in promoting constructive dialogue and approaches based on Islamic ethics. Online platforms can be a place where people are taught to judge deeds and speech with wisdom, avoiding harmful and detrimental cancel culture.
3	Self-Censorship and Restrictions on Freedom of Expression	Through Islamic Cyberculture, an environment can be built that supports freedom of expression while maintaining Islamic ethics and norms. Strengthening digital identity based on Islamic beliefs can help people to feel comfortable and speak more freely without fear of public cancellation.
4	Polarisation and Lack of Constructive Dialogue	Islamic Cyberculture can be a means to build online discussion spaces that are inclusive and encourage constructive dialogue. The dissemination of Islamic messages that emphasise tolerance, understanding and cooperation can ease polarisation and motivate people to listen to each other.
5	Utilisation of Technology for Character Defilement	Islamic Cyberculture can form online communities that are committed to spreading true and positive information. Education on Islamic digital ethics and social media literacy can help people to be wiser in using technology and prevent useless character defamation.

Overall, the role of Islamic Cyberculture in overcoming inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces is not only significant but also provides a positive outlook for Muslim online interactions. By promoting Islamic values, such as justice, modesty, and tolerance, Islamic Cyberculture becomes a transformative force that can shape strong digital identities and overcome social pressures that encourage feelings of inferiority (Callan & Johnston, 2022; Himayatul, 2022; Jordá et al., 2021). Through online platforms based on Islamic ethical principles, people can embrace the uniqueness of each individual and avoid cancel culture by building constructive

dialogue. By continuing to voice positive messages, building awareness of digital ethics, and educating the public, Islamic Cyberculture is able to create an online environment that supports growth and goodness, permeating Islamic wisdom in this digital age.

## **ANALYSIS**

This article aims to detail and understand the role of Islamic Cyberculture in overcoming the two critical challenges of inferiority and cancel culture in cyberspace. Intercultural communication theory provides important insights in unravelling the complexity of intercultural interactions in Islamic Cyberculture. By analysing how Islamic cultural values, norms and beliefs interact with the dynamics of cyberspace, this research can provide insights into how cultural differences affect self-understanding and interactions with others in virtual spaces.

In addition, the integration of impression management theory is a key element in this research. In the context of Islamic Cyberculture, individuals tend to actively manage their self-presentation to create desired impressions and manage others' perceptions of Islamic culture (Cocq & Ljuslinder, 2020; Sándor, 2022). The use of impression management theory can provide a deeper understanding of the strategies that individuals or groups in Islamic Cyberculture use to overcome inferiority or avoid the impact of cancel culture.

Deconstruction, as a theoretical approach, provides a critical foundation to see how concepts in Islamic Cyberculture can be disaggregated, analysed and re-articulated. By adopting a deconstruction perspective, this research can dissect norms that might create inferiority or support cancelculture. An in-depth understanding of these critical aspects is expected to contribute to the formation of a more inclusive virtual environment and a better understanding of Islamic values (Arifin, 2022; Kambali et al., 2023).

Through a detailed investigation of the deconstruction of Islamic Cyberculture by utilising intercultural communication theory and impression management theory, it is hoped that this research can make a real contribution in formulating

more effective mitigation strategies against inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces, especially in the context of Islamic culture.

This research brings an innovative dimension by incorporating a deconstruction approach in analysing Islamic Cyberculture as a response to two fundamental challenges: inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces. Through the use of intercultural communication theory, this research not only explores the cultural differences that affect online interactions, but also details how values and norms in Islamic Cyberculture can be re-articulated and deconstructed to overcome inferiority.

In addition, this research enriches the analytical framework by integrating impression management theory, allowing for a deeper understanding of how individuals or groups within Islamic Cyberculture seek to manipulate self-presentation to respond to or avoid the impact of cancel culture. By presenting this perspective, this research is expected to provide new insights into the complex dynamics of Islamic Cyberculture in virtual spaces and create a foundation for more contextualised and effective mitigation strategies.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this study emphasizes that a deconstructive approach to Islamic Cyber Culture provides an important contribution in detailing and formulating mitigation strategies for two significant challenges inferiority and cancel culture in virtual spaces. Through the lens of intercultural communication theory, this research successfully identifies the role of Islamic cultural values, norms, and beliefs in shaping online interactions, while the application of impression management theory offers deeper insight into how individuals or groups within Islamic Cyber Culture manage self-presentation and respond to the impacts of cancel culture. These findings not only provide new perspectives on the complexity of Islamic culture in cyberspace, but also pave the way for the development of more contextual and effective mitigation strategies to build an inclusive virtual environment and promote cross-cultural understanding.

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