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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Ethical Obligations of Media in the Teleological Ethical System of Islam through the Hermeneutic Interrogation (Istinṭāq) of Quranic Verses

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

This study examines the ethical obligations of media within the framework of the Islamic teleological ethical system, based solely on interpretations of Quranic verses. Recognizing the media's powerful role in shaping public consciousness and influencing individual and collective behavior, the research aims to explore how Islamic ethical goals-particularly spiritual excellence and proximity to God-govern the conduct of media institutions. In contrast to modern secular perspectives that often rely on legal mandates or professional codes detached from metaphysical foundations, this study investigates an Islamic value-based paradigm in which media responsibilities are defined not only by truth-telling or public accountability but are ultimately directed toward achieving eternal felicity and human moral perfection. The goal is to articulate a Quranically grounded ethical structure for the media that responds to the moral demands of the age while remaining consistent with the final purpose (ghāyah) of human life as envisaged in Islamic teachings.

Method:

This research adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. The primary method of data analysis is content analysis of Islamic foundational sources. Quranic verses were the central texts examined, interpreted through classical exegetical works such as 'Tafsir al-Mizan' by Allama Tabataba'i. Complementary materials included relevant hadiths, particularly from 'Nahj al-Balagha', and the philosophical works of Islamic scholars such as Mulla Sadra and Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi. Ethical principles relevant to media conduct-including truthfulness (ṣidq), justice (ʿadl), and social responsibility-were extracted and interpreted within the teleological ethical model of Islam.

The research relied exclusively on Qur'anic data to derive a normative ethical framework. Verses such as:

- "Do not mix the truth with falsehood" (Qur'an 2:42),
- "Do not spy on one another" (Qur'an 49:12),
- "Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge" (Qur'an 17:36),

formed the core ethical indicators used to evaluate media obligations.

The teleological system of Islamic ethics was elaborated upon through comparative reflection against secular consequentialist and deontological models. However, the distinctive nature of Islamic teleology-centered on divine purpose and the final goal of proximity to God-was preserved throughout all analyses.

Findings:

The findings demonstrate that the Islamic ethical system integrates both deontological and teleological dimensions while emphasizing teleology as foundational. Ethical conduct in Islam is evaluated not merely by intention or immediate rule compliance but by its contribution to the ultimate spiritual aim: nearness to God and eternal felicity (sa'adah ukhrāwī). This model prioritizes consequence-based reasoning within the framework of divinely ordained goals.

From this perspective, media institutions are not neutral transmitters of information but are ethical actors responsible for cultivating virtue, preserving social order, and preventing moral decay. Three primary ethical obligations were identified through Qur'anic exegesis:

1. Truthfulness and Integrity in Reporting
2. The Qur'an condemns the mixing of truth and falsehood: "Do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth knowingly" (Qur'an 2:42). Media must avoid distortion, bias, or sensationalism that compromises factual accuracy.
3. Respect for Privacy and Human Dignity
4. Qur'an 49:12 warns against espionage and suspicion: "Do not spy on one another." This establishes a foundational norm for media to refrain from invasive reporting and sensational disclosures that harm personal dignity.
5. Social Responsibility and Knowledge-Based Reporting

The Qur'anic directive "Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge" (Qur'an 17:36) obligates media to report only verified, substantiated information and to consider the broader social consequences of dissemination.

Furthermore, the research identifies several structural challenges:

- Economic Pressures vs. Ethical Integrity: Media outlets often prioritize market appeal and profitability over truth due to commercial competition. This leads to practices such as exaggeration, sensationalism, and manipulation, contradicting Qur'anic injunctions.
- Freedom of Expression vs. Social Stability: While Islamic ethics recognizes freedom of expression, it also places it within a moral framework that values societal harmony and spiritual development. As such, unrestricted disclosure of information-particularly during crises-may lead to social unrest, a result inconsistent with Islamic aims.
- Ethical Ambiguity in Digital Contexts: The rapid spread of information through social media platforms intensifies ethical dilemmas regarding speed vs. accuracy, privacy vs. public interest, and popularity vs. truthfulness.

The Islamic teleological system thus calls for a multi-dimensional ethical awareness that evaluates not only the act itself but also its alignment with divine aims and its long-term social and spiritual effects.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that the teleological ethical system of Islam offers a purpose-driven, value-centric framework for media ethics, grounded in the Qur'anic worldview. Media obligations in this framework are not merely procedural or regulatory but are deeply tied to the metaphysical aim of human existence-proximity to God (qurb ilallah).

- Ethical duties such as truthfulness, justice, and social responsibility are inseparable from spiritual goals.
- Qur'anic verses offer clear normative guidance for media behavior, providing a comprehensive moral compass.
- Media should act as moral agents responsible for upholding dignity, safeguarding public trust, and contributing to societal virtue.

To operationalize this ethical model, the research recommends the following strategies:

1. Developing Ethical Guidelines: Formulate practical codes of conduct rooted in Qur'anic injunctions to address contemporary media challenges.
2. Promoting Moral Education: Equip media professionals with Islamic ethical training to enhance accountability and moral reasoning.
3. Establishing Oversight Mechanisms: Create independent Islamic ethical councils to monitor and evaluate media content based on spiritual and societal impact.
4. Encouraging Virtue-Based Recognition: Incentivize ethical excellence in media practice through public acknowledgment and institutional rewards.

The ultimate conclusion is that media should transition from being instruments of profit or mere information carriers to becoming agents of ethical cultivation and spiritual guidance. Aligning media practice with Islamic teleological ethics can lead to a more conscious, just, and spiritually meaningful media environment-one that supports both individual moral refinement and collective well-being.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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