

Islamic Social Ethics: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Social ethics constitute a fundamental aspect of Islamic education, as human beings are inherently social creatures whose interactions should be guided by moral values, self-discipline, and ethical responsibility. In Islam, social relationships are regarded not merely as worldly affairs but also as acts of worship with spiritual implications. The Qur'an and the Sunnah provide comprehensive ethical principles governing interpersonal relationships, emphasizing respect for human dignity, mutual compassion, justice, honesty, and moral integrity. However, rapid social transformation and the widespread use of digital media have significantly altered patterns of social interaction, giving rise to various ethical challenges, including cyberbullying, hate speech, slander, misinformation, and declining moral conduct among young people. This study aims to examine Islamic social ethics from the perspective of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and relevant scholarly literature, as well as to explore their relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach based on document analysis, literature review, and thematic analysis of primary Islamic sources and secondary academic references. The findings indicate that Islamic social ethics represent a comprehensive moral framework grounded in tawhīd (the oneness of God), akhlaq (moral character), adab (proper conduct), self-restraint, and social responsibility. Furthermore, the study identifies five fundamental pillars of Islamic social ethics: faith-based morality, ethical communication, prudent selection of social environments, self-control, and responsibility toward society. These principles remain highly relevant for promoting harmonious social relationships, preventing moral degradation, and fostering respectful interactions in both face-to-face and digital environments. Therefore, strengthening Islamic social ethics through education, exemplary conduct, and digital literacy is essential for cultivating morally responsible individuals capable of contributing positively to contemporary society.

Keywords: Islamic social ethics; akhlaq; adab; social interaction; digital ethics; Islamic education.

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INTRODUCTION

Social ethics constitute one of the fundamental topics in Islamic education because human beings live within networks of social relationships that require moral values, self-discipline, and ethical responsibility. In Islam, social interaction is not regarded merely as a worldly affair but also as an act of social worship with spiritual consequences. The Qur'an portrays humanity as diverse in ethnicity, nationality, language, and social background so that people may know and understand one another rather than despise or discriminate against each other. This principle demonstrates that Islamic social interaction is founded upon respect for human dignity, consciousness of piety (taqwā), and the cultivation of noble character (akhlaq) (Shihab, 2019).

The study of Islamic social ethics has become increasingly relevant because contemporary social transformation has significantly altered patterns of human interaction. Social relationships no longer occur exclusively within families, schools, mosques, or local communities but increasingly take place through digital media. This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, social media expands communication networks and facilitates the dissemination of knowledge. On the other hand, digital platforms may encourage hate speech, ghibah (backbiting), slander, cyberbullying, the normalization of promiscuity, and the erosion of courtesy and ethical conduct. Sintia (2023) reported that social media substantially influences adolescents' social ethics in terms of knowledge, behavior, and spirituality. Therefore, Islamic social ethics must be interpreted contextually to remain relevant in addressing contemporary social challenges (Sintia, 2023).

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, the concept of social ethics is closely associated with the principles of *akhlāq* (moral character), *adab* (proper conduct), *mu'āmalah* (social transactions), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification). *akhlāq* refers to moral qualities deeply embedded within an individual's character that consistently shape behavior, whereas *adab* emphasizes etiquette and proper conduct that reflect both personal discipline and social harmony. Nata (2015) explains that Islamic morality is not an autonomous ethical system but is fundamentally rooted in divine revelation and directed toward the cultivation of virtuous character (Nata, 2015). Similarly, Ilyas (1999) argues that the scope of Islamic morality encompasses ethical responsibilities toward Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, oneself, one's family, society, and the state (Ilyas, 1999).

Accordingly, Islamic social ethics extend far beyond manners of speaking or choosing friends; they constitute a comprehensive framework for shaping the moral character of Muslims in their social lives. The Qur'an provides a strong normative foundation for ethical social interaction. For example, Surah Al-Hujurat (49:10–13) emphasizes the values of brotherhood, reconciliation, respect for others, the prohibition of mockery, avoidance of negative suspicion, refraining from seeking others' faults, and abstaining from backbiting. These verses demonstrate that Islamic social ethics are built upon self-restraint in speech, control of prejudice, and responsible social relationships. Pranoto et al. (2016) found that the ethical principles contained in the Qur'an have direct implications for Islamic Religious Education, particularly in fostering harmonious, tolerant, and peaceful behavior among students. Their findings suggest that Islamic social ethics possess substantial educational value that can be effectively integrated into the teaching and learning process (Pranoto et al., 2016).

The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad also places considerable emphasis on the importance of social environments and the selection of companions. Munir (2015) argues that the internalization of Islamic values may weaken when individuals are surrounded by negative peer influences. Consequently, Islam not only focuses on individual moral development but also promotes the establishment of healthy and supportive social environments.

In this context, peers exert significant influence on an individual's way of thinking, lifestyle, language, moral values, and behavioral choices. Islamic social ethics therefore encourage Muslims to be discerning in selecting their social environments while simultaneously maintaining courtesy, justice, and respect toward others regardless of social differences (Munir, 2015).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that social ethics play an important role in moral development and character education. Hernides (2019) explains that adolescent social interaction from the perspective of Islamic education should be

guided by the Qur'an and the Hadith, as these primary sources comprehensively regulate ethical behavior and interpersonal relationships (Hernides, 2019). Likewise, Lestari and Syaifurrohman (2024) found that proper social etiquette (adab) positively influences students' moral character and strengthens mutual respect among peers (Lestari & Syaifurrohman, 2024). Hanafi (2017) further emphasizes that Islamic education serves as the primary foundation for cultivating ethical behavior and developing individuals with noble character who are capable of interacting responsibly within society.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive method. This approach was selected because the study sought to obtain an in depth understanding of how the implementation of Islamic social ethics in everyday social life contributes to the development of interpersonal relationships within society. Through a qualitative approach, the researchers were able to examine social phenomena within their natural settings and explore the meanings embedded in the actions, policies, and practices adopted by individuals and communities.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: document analysis, literature review, and thematic analysis. Document analysis focused on the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith, which constitute the normative foundation of Islamic social ethics. These sources were examined to identify ethical principles governing interpersonal relationships. In addition, the study relied on a comprehensive literature review to obtain secondary data from books, scholarly journal articles, and previous studies addressing Islamic social ethics.

The literature review provided a broader understanding of the theoretical framework and practical implications of Islamic social ethics within contemporary society. Thematic analysis was subsequently employed to identify recurring themes emerging from the reviewed literature, including the importance of *akhlaq* (moral character), ethical communication, the selection of companions, and self control in social interactions.

Following data collection, the analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, relevant information was selected and organized according to the objectives of the study, while repetitive or irrelevant data were excluded to maintain analytical focus on the essential principles of Islamic social ethics.

The findings were then presented by organizing the data into thematic categories, including ethical social interaction based on Islamic teachings, exemplary educational practices, and the role of social environments in shaping ethical behavior. Conclusions were formulated continuously throughout the research process by reflecting on the meaning of the collected data and synthesizing the principal findings regarding the implementation of Islamic social ethics in everyday life.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, both source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed. Information derived from the Qur'an, the Hadith, and secondary academic literature was systematically compared to verify the consistency and accuracy of the evidence. These triangulation procedures enhanced the scientific credibility and trustworthiness of the study while providing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Islamic social ethics and its relevance to fostering just, dignified, and harmonious social relationships.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The findings indicate that Islamic social ethics constitute a comprehensive moral system governing interpersonal relationships based on the principles of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God), *akhlaq* (moral character), *adab* (proper conduct), and social responsibility. Islamic social ethics encompass not only outward manners and etiquette but also internal dimensions, including sincerity, intention, self-restraint, and accountability before Allah. Consequently, Islamic social ethics provide a broader moral framework than secular social ethics, which are generally based on social conventions alone.

The first finding demonstrates that Islamic social ethics are fundamentally rooted in the concept of *akhlaq*. Moral character represents an inner disposition that shapes external social behavior. Nata (2015) explains that *akhlaq* forms the foundation of Muslim character development. This finding suggests that ethical social interaction cannot be established solely through formal regulations but must be nurtured through moral education, habituation, and exemplary conduct. Likewise, Ilyas (1999) emphasizes that Islamic morality encompasses human relationships with Allah, oneself, and society. Accordingly, the quality of an individual's social interaction reflects both spiritual and moral maturity.

The second finding reveals that the normative foundation of Islamic social ethics is derived primarily from the Qur'an and the Hadith. Surah Al-Ḥujūrāt serves as one of the principal references because it prohibits mocking others, assigning offensive labels, harboring negative suspicions, seeking others' faults, and engaging in backbiting. These teachings demonstrate Islam's strong commitment to safeguarding human dignity and social honor. Shihab (2002) argues that the Qur'an provides guidance not only for ritual worship but also for establishing just, courteous, and dignified social relationships.

The third finding highlights communication as a central element of Islamic social ethics. Islam regulates communication through the principles of *qaulan sadīda*, *qaulan ma'rūfa*, *qaulan balīgha*, *qaulan maysūra*, *qaulan layyina*, and *qaulan karīma*. Dzulhusna et al. (2022) explain that these principles encourage individuals to communicate truthfully, appropriately, effectively, gently, clearly, and respectfully. Within social interactions, these ethical guidelines contribute to preventing interpersonal conflict, verbal violence, misinformation, and communication practices that undermine human dignity (Dzulhusna et al., 2022).

The fourth finding indicates that Islam places considerable emphasis on the selection of companions and social environments. Social environments significantly influence habits, patterns of thinking, and individual behavior. Munir (2015) explains that peers exert a substantial influence on personal character development. Positive friendships strengthen faith and moral character, whereas negative environments may encourage deviant behavior. Therefore, selecting appropriate companions is regarded not as discrimination but as a moral effort to preserve one's ethical integrity.

The fifth finding demonstrates that Islam establishes proportional ethical boundaries governing interactions between men and women. Islam does not prohibit social interaction between the sexes but regulates such interactions to ensure that relationships remain safe, respectful, and dignified. These ethical boundaries include lowering one's gaze, maintaining modest dress, exercising restraint in speech, avoiding *khalwah* (seclusion with a non-maḥram), and preserving honorable intentions. The principle of *'iffah* (modesty and chastity) applies equally to both men and women, indicating that moral responsibility within social interaction is shared rather than imposed upon one gender alone.

The sixth finding reveals that Islamic social ethics play a significant role in preventing backbiting (ghibah), slander (fitnah), negative suspicion (su' al-zann), spying (tajassus), and bullying. Such behaviors are regarded as violations of human dignity and threats to social well-being. Within educational settings, these values provide a strong foundation for anti-bullying initiatives by encouraging students to refrain from ridiculing others based on physical appearance, family background, socioeconomic status, academic performance, or social identity.

The seventh finding demonstrates that Islamic social ethics remain highly relevant within pluralistic societies. Islam promotes ukhuwwah islāmiyyah (Islamic brotherhood), ukhuwwah insāniyyah (universal human brotherhood), and ukhuwwah waṭaniyyah (national brotherhood). These principles emphasize that Muslims are expected to maintain harmonious relationships not only with fellow Muslims but also with humanity as a whole and with fellow citizens. Shihab (2007) argues that the Qur'an places considerable emphasis on humanitarian values and peaceful coexistence. Consequently, Islamic social ethics provide a valuable foundation for promoting tolerance, consultation, and social harmony.

The eighth finding indicates that Islamic social ethics should be extended to digital environments. Social media has transformed the nature of interpersonal communication, which now occurs not only through face-to-face interaction but also through comments, posts, private messages, videos, and digital information sharing. Sintia (2023) found that social media exerts both positive and negative influences on adolescents' social ethics. Therefore, the Islamic principle of guarding one's speech should be expanded to encompass responsible digital communication, including written content, visual media, recordings, and digital footprints.

Overall, the findings identify five fundamental pillars of Islamic social ethics: tawhīd, akhlaq, ethical communication (adab), self-control, and social responsibility. These pillars collectively form an integrated moral framework applicable to personal life, family relationships, educational institutions, society, and digital interactions.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic social ethics should not be understood merely as a set of etiquette or rules governing polite behavior. Rather, they constitute a comprehensive moral system rooted in the principle of tawhīd and directed toward establishing dignified social relationships. This finding supports Nata's (2015) argument that akhlaq represents the core of Muslim character formation. Accordingly, social behavior should be evaluated not only on the basis of outward actions but also in terms of intention, moral awareness, and its consequences for others.

The discussion concerning the normative foundations further reveals that both the Qur'an and the Hadith place considerable emphasis on ethical social life. Surah Al-Ḥujurāt provides concrete guidance by prohibiting ridicule, insult, negative suspicion, fault-finding, and backbiting. These prohibitions demonstrate Islam's commitment to protecting human dignity and social honor. This finding is consistent with Shihab (2002), who emphasizes that the Qur'an seeks not only to regulate ritual worship but also to establish a just, civilized, and morally responsible society.

The findings regarding communication indicate that many social conflicts arise from the inability to control speech and communicate ethically. The Qur'anic principles of qaulan provide an ethical framework for truthful, respectful, and constructive communication. Qaulan ṣadīda emphasizes honesty, qaulan ma'rūfa encourages appropriate speech, qaulan layyina promotes gentleness, and qaulan karīma highlights respect and honor. Within the contemporary digital environment, these principles remain

highly relevant for preventing hate speech, abusive comments, misinformation, and online communication that undermines human dignity.

The findings also indicate that friendship and peer relationships significantly influence moral development. This supports Munir's (2015) view that companions contribute substantially to an individual's faith and moral character. From the perspective of Islamic education, selecting appropriate social environments is intended not to isolate individuals from society but to protect them from influences that may undermine their ethical integrity. Consequently, Islamic moral education should encourage young people to cultivate healthy relationships, build constructive social networks, and resist behaviors that contradict religious values.

The discussion regarding interactions between men and women demonstrates that Islam regulates social relationships through balanced ethical principles. Rather than prohibiting interaction, Islam establishes moral boundaries designed to protect dignity, prevent harassment, and avoid exploitation. The principle of 'iffah therefore applies equally to both men and women, emphasizing shared responsibility for maintaining modesty, respectful communication, appropriate behavior, and ethical interpersonal boundaries.

Furthermore, the study confirms that behaviors such as ghibah, fitnah, negative suspicion, tajassus, and bullying represent serious ethical violations within Islamic teachings. Beyond contradicting religious values, these behaviors damage psychological well-being and social cohesion. Accordingly, educational institutions should integrate these ethical principles into anti-bullying programs that emphasize mutual respect, forgiveness, conflict resolution, and restorative educational practices.

Within pluralistic societies, Islamic social ethics also serve important social functions. The principles of ukhuwwah islāmiyyah, ukhuwwah insāniyyah, and ukhuwwah waṭaniyyah demonstrate that Islam encourages peaceful coexistence while preserving religious identity. Islamic tolerance does not imply compromising religious beliefs but rather respecting the social rights of others, refraining from coercion or discrimination, and promoting justice. These principles are particularly relevant within multicultural societies such as Indonesia, where religious, ethnic, cultural, and social diversity constitutes an integral aspect of national life.

Finally, the rapid expansion of social media has broadened the scope of Islamic social ethics. Ethical responsibilities now extend beyond face-to-face interaction to encompass comments, social media posts, private messages, photographs, videos, and the dissemination of digital information. As demonstrated by Sintia (2023), social media functions both as a valuable educational resource and as a potential source of unethical behavior. Consequently, digital literacy should be integrated with Islamic moral education to cultivate responsible digital citizenship.

The implications of this study underscore the necessity of an integrated approach to Islamic social ethics education. Families serve as the primary environment for developing adab and moral values, whereas schools and Islamic educational institutions reinforce ethical communication, bullying prevention, and character education. Communities contribute by fostering consultation, cooperation, and tolerance, while digital platforms should function as spaces for da'wah, education, and moral development rather than for hatred, slander, and abuse.

Accordingly, Islamic social ethics may be understood as a contemporary model of character education capable of addressing current social challenges. This model is founded upon five essential pillars tawhīd, akhlaq, ethical communication, self-control, and social responsibility which collectively provide a framework for family education, school culture, youth development, digital literacy, and the promotion of social harmony. Islamic social ethics should therefore be implemented not merely as theoretical knowledge but through consistent role modeling, habituation, supervision, and ethical social practice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this literature review, the use of podcasts as a learning medium has a positive influence on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Podcasts, whether in audio or audiovisual formats, offer flexibility, accessibility, and convenience, allowing students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere according to their individual learning needs. These characteristics make podcasts highly relevant as instructional media in the digital era, particularly for supporting the teaching and learning process in Islamic Religious Education.

The findings further indicate that podcasts enhance students' understanding of learning materials by presenting content in a systematic, communicative, and repeatable format. The opportunity to replay instructional content enables students to reinforce their comprehension, strengthen memory retention, and improve long term learning outcomes. Consequently, podcasts function not only as media for delivering instructional content but also as effective learning tools that facilitate meaningful and sustainable learning.

In addition to improving cognitive achievement, podcasts positively influence students' learning motivation and interest. As an innovative instructional medium that differs from conventional teaching methods, podcasts attract students' attention and encourage greater engagement throughout the learning process. Their integration into classroom instruction creates a more dynamic and enjoyable learning environment while accommodating the technological preferences of today's digital-native learners. This variation in instructional media helps maintain students' concentration and reduces learning fatigue during classroom activities.

Moreover, podcasts promote independent learning by enabling students to regulate their own learning schedules and study environments according to their personal preferences. Such flexibility supports self-directed learning, which has become an essential competency in twenty-first-century education. Furthermore, podcasts assist teachers in designing more creative, interactive, and innovative learning experiences, thereby improving the effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge transfer.

In conclusion, podcasts represent an effective, innovative, and appropriate instructional medium for Islamic Religious Education. Their implementation contributes not only to improving students' cognitive learning outcomes but also to enhancing learning motivation, classroom engagement, and learner autonomy. Therefore, podcasts can be recommended as an alternative digital learning medium that supports more engaging, creative, and efficient educational practices. By optimizing the educational use of podcasts, both teachers and students can utilize digital technology to improve the quality of learning and facilitate the achievement of educational objectives in the contemporary digital era.

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