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Understanding Moral Values in Modern Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

The article aims to undertake a narrative literature review on moral values interpreted in modern Islamic philosophy. In Islamic teachings, morality is defined by adherence to the principles outlined in the Quran. In contrast, societal morals are shaped by the prevailing norms and regulations within a community. The importance of moral education is paramount, especially in an era marked by widespread moral decline. To address this, a crucial step is integrating moral education within the academic framework, particularly for children, emphasizing moral principles derived from the Quran and Sunnah. Various methods are employed to instill these values, including habitual practice, storytelling, role modeling, and others.

Additionally, integrating moral values from Islamic philosophy plays a significant role in this educational process. This article explores these aspects, focusing on how modern Islamic philosophy interprets and applies moral values.

Keywords: Islamic philosophy, Islam, values, morals, ethics, education, Quran, Hadith, teachings, society.

Introduction

The moral landscape of Islam is characterized by its unyielding adherence to absolute values, with the Qur'an and the Sunnah standing as the quintessential arbiters of ethical judgment. These foundational texts are not mere historical documents but serve as the living constitution for all facets of human life, offering a balanced criterion for discerning righteousness from transgression. Within the Islamic worldview, humanity is viewed through a spiritual and moral lens, with the primary purpose of existence being the worship of Allah, the Lord and Creator. This divine connection is the guiding force for a successful life, both in the temporal realm and the hereafter.

Literature review

In modern foreign literature on Islamic philosophy, Islam provides a complete moral code for its believers, with the Qur'an and Sunnah serving as the basis for determining ethical principles (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022). In contrast, the post-modern world embraces relativism and subjectivism, viewing morality as relative and subjective, varying with time and space (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022). However, research suggests that the secularization of ethics, which rejects the role of religion in morality, has led to the dissolution of absolute moral standards and universal values (Harris, 2022). Islamic ethics, rooted in theism, offers a stronger foundation for moral inquiry, and provides universal and absolute moral obligations (Fraedrich, Althawadi, & Bagherzadeh, 2018).

Furthermore, Islamic education emphasizes the integration of spiritual and moral values to develop a balanced individual (Kasim & Yusoff, 2014). Overall, Islam's moral values are objective, absolute, and provide a comprehensive framework for ethical conduct (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022)

Islamic moral values, or akhlaq, are the bedrock of ideal behavior within society, reflecting a commitment to the highest good recognized by a community. Al-Ghazali, an esteemed Islamic scholar, viewed morality as an internal disposition that propels individuals toward commendable and praiseworthy actions. He emphasized that ethics is the science of the path followed by prophets and righteous predecessors (Al-Ghazali, 1967).

The essence of Islamic ethics lies in faith in Allah, where good conduct is both a reflection and a requirement of a complete faith (Umaruddin, 2003). The Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (saw) provide clear injunctions for practical life conduct, with the Prophet's own practices offering a model for exemplary moral character (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

Faith in Islam is a comprehensive act involving intellect, emotion, and the demonstration of these through actions. It is considered well-established when value judgments are harmoniously integrated into one's life (Dar, 1976). The Prophet (saw) not only preached the unity of Allah but also promoted moral qualities like justice, truthfulness, and piety, and encouraged his followers to emulate his noble character (Choudhury, 1993; Qur'an, 68:4; Qur'an, 33:21).

Good morals are seen as indicators of authentic faith, and the lack thereof suggests a deficiency in faith (Al-Bukhari, 1987; Abu Dawud, 2009). Islamic teachings also emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships, underpinned by the principles of universal brotherhood and moral conduct (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

Inculcating Islamic moral values in the young is paramount for shaping just and peaceful societies. Parents and educators bear the responsibility of imparting these values, ensuring children understand their accountability to Allah and society (Qur'an, 66:6; Al-Bukhari, 1987).

Muslims are urged to act as representatives of Allah on earth, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and to adopt a demeanor that truly reflects Islamic teachings (Qur'an, 3:110; Qur'an, 16:125).

The Qur'an provides moral guidance, touching upon every aspect of life, from daily rituals to societal norms, establishing an ethical framework for a dignified life (Umaruddin, 2003). It narrates the stories of past prophets and outlines a social order founded on justice and equality (Choudhury, 1993).

To address the contemporary crisis in Muslim education, there is a call for integrating traditional Islamic teachings with modern education to foster a generation with strong moral conduct (Raji, 1996).

Islamic ethics, or akhlaq, is an essential aspect of the Islamic tradition, deeply rooted in the concepts of character and the soul's state. It is intrinsically linked to the relationship between the Creator (khaliq) and the creature (makhluq), and among

creatures themselves (Mohd, 2003). Akhlaq is considered neither the soul nor the action but the state of the soul that influences human behavior. It can be developed through deliberate practice and training (Mohd Nasir Omar, 2003).

The term khuluq, related to akhlaq, is mentioned in the Qur'an as representing a high standard of character, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). This standard is seen as an inward cause that leads to outward actions. Good character results in good actions, while a poor character leads to undesirable actions (Mohd Nasir Omar, 2003).

Islamic ethics is not only a study of character but also a practical science applied to actions towards God, family, and society (Muhammad, 1983; Hovanniasian, 1983; Sheila, 1984). It encompasses a wide range of human interactions and is derived primarily from two sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), which together form the foundation of scriptural morality (Fakhry, 1991).

The subject of Islamic ethics is further explored in the works of early Muslim philosophers like Al-Farabi and Ibn Miskawayh, and later scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who emphasized the well-being of the soul and the importance of safeguarding it against vices (Ansari, 1989). Islamic jurisprudence also contributes to this field, focusing on the objectives of Shariah to promote the preservation and fulfillment of human life (Abu Ishaq, 2005).

Islamic traditions, like other religions, have their own input or interpretations of moral and democratic values. Practically speaking, students may consider how the ethical code of Islam, such as Zakat and an interest-free economy, may contribute to solving global issues/problems and seek justice for Muslims and non-Muslims internationally. For instance, teachers and students may address the problems of poverty, security, pandemics (such as COVID-19), social inequality, neo-colonialism, hyper-consumerism, racism, fascism, climate change, and the stigmatizing of religious ideas and practices (Saada, 2023). By the same token, it is important to prepare Muslim youngsters to appreciate the global diversity of normative cultural and religious ideals about what constitutes a good society, a good person, and a meaningful life (Saada, 2023).

This enables them to negotiate the possible tensions between the local and the global and between the particular and the universal (Avest, Kurt, and Gürlesin, 2021) in a peaceful, rational, and dialogical manner. In other words, Muslim educators may want to avoid religiously moral relativism that ignores universal moral principles, and the inclination to support exclusionary theology that may undermine efforts for world peace and justice (Sachedina, 2009). QCA (2001, p. 1) confirm that religious education can contribute to citizenship education by "providing opportunities for pupils to see how individual, group, and political choices, policies and actions, e.g., human rights, are inextricably linked with and influenced by religious and moral beliefs, practices and values.".

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is a combination of library research and hermeneutic analysis. The primary focus is on comprehensive library research, which involves the collection and examination of relevant literature, including academic papers, books, and authoritative sources on Islamic values. This approach allows for a thorough understanding of the existing body of knowledge and contributes significantly to the depth of the study.

In addition to library research, a hermeneutic methodology is employed to enrich the analysis. Hermeneutics, the art, and science of interpretation are particularly useful in understanding complex texts and contexts. This method involves interpreting literature, especially religious texts, and teachings, to uncover deeper meanings and insights. By applying hermeneutic principles, the study goes beyond mere description to explore the underlying principles and nuances of Islamic values.

The combination of these methods provides a robust framework for the study. While library research offers a solid foundation of existing knowledge, hermeneutic analysis allows for a more nuanced and insightful exploration of the texts, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of Islamic values. This integrative approach ensures both the accuracy of information and the depth of interpretation, crucial for a scholarly examination of Islamic teachings and practices.

Results and discussion

**Islamic Values: Foundations and Applications in Socio-Economic and Moral Contexts**

Islamic values, as espoused in the teachings of Islam, are fundamentally derived from Al-Quran and Sunnah, the guiding texts of the religion (Ratten et al., 2017). These values emphasize socio-economic justice and human equality, encouraging Muslims to be diligent and engaged in their endeavors. This approach reflects the essence of Muslim characteristics and the importance of religion in achieving wealth and prosperity through the judicious utilization of resources. This discussion on Islamic values references prior research along with insights from the Quran and Sunnah.

The core of Islamic values originates from the Quran, which is considered the divine revelation of God. It contains profound statements and wisdom, offering a timeless and universal guide for faith-based aspirations and actions. The Sunnah, which recounts the practices and moral conduct of Prophet Muhammad, the last messenger of Allah, further complements these teachings. As noted by Basir et al. (2022), the Quran and Sunnah collectively emphasize a moral code aimed at developing upright characters with genuine human virtues. A notable verse from the Quran encapsulates this, stating, "We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as an unequalled mercy for all worlds" (Al-Anbiya', 21:107).

Ezzani et al. (2021) describe Islamic values as a system integrating spiritual obligations with fundamental principles like transparency, responsibility, accountability, morality, and trustworthiness. A key aspect of these values is the devotion to Allah's path, referred to in Arabic as 'Mardhatillah'. Implementing Islamic values signifies a commitment beyond material responsibilities to others; it represents a profound duty to Allah. Islamic values adhere to the principles demonstrated in the Quran and the personal practices of Prophet Muhammad, known as 'Uswatun hasanah'. His exemplary characteristics, such as truthfulness (Siddiq), trustworthiness (Amanah), conveyance of the message (Tabligh), wisdom (Fathonah), steadfastness (Istiqmah), and contentment (Qanaah), are integral to these values.

Graph 1 presents a conceptual map developed through Scopus AI, offering a visual representation of the interlinked themes and concepts prevalent in modern foreign literature on Islamic philosophy and moral values. Central to the map is 'Islamic Moral Values,' depicted as a foundational node, from which various related themes emanate, illustrating the broad influence and applicability of these values across different domains.

Graph 1. Conceptual map of Islamic moral values and their intersections with contemporary ethical discourses
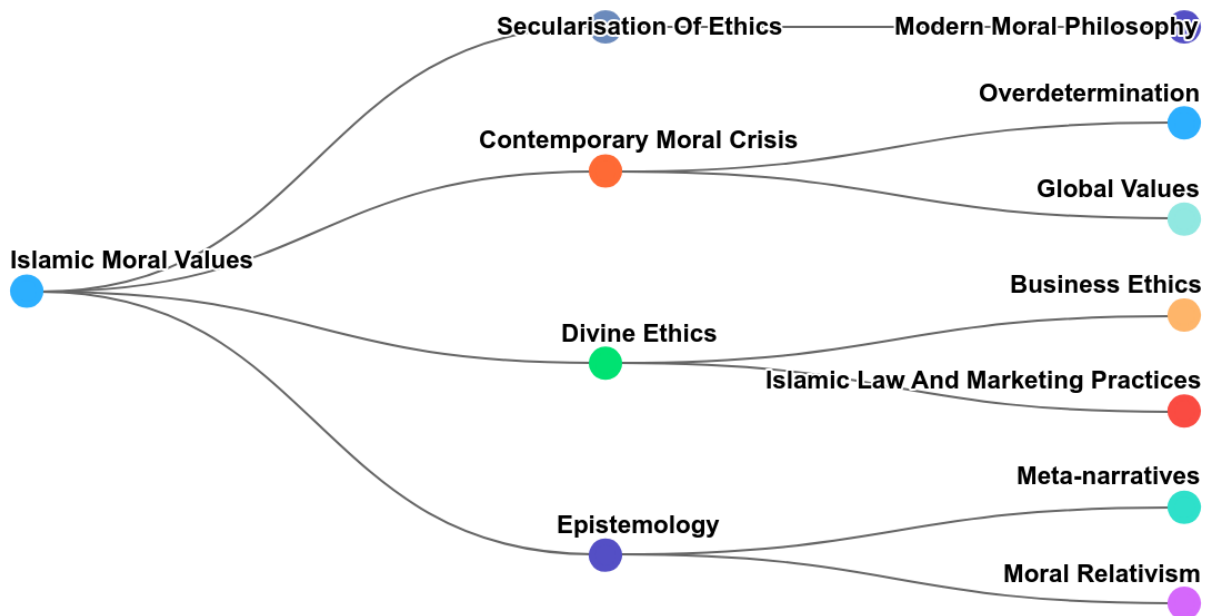
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Islamic values encompass various dimensions that guide Muslims in their faith and actions. These values are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and are essential for personal growth and community welfare.

Amanah (Trustworthiness): As Ascarya et al. (2015) highlight, Muslims are called to have faith in Allah (taqwa) and to fulfill their religious duties, classified into fardhu ain (individual obligations) and fardhu kifayah (communal obligations). Trustworthiness in Islam extends beyond personal conduct to encompass social responsibilities, encouraging interpersonal relationships built on trust. This value is underscored in the Quranic verse from Surah Al-Talaq:3, emphasizing reliance on Allah for provision and guidance.

Siddiq (Honesty): Honesty, according to Ghoniyah & Hartono (2014), is about being true to oneself and maintaining a positive, grateful attitude as a servant of Allah. The Quran urges honesty and justice, as stated in Surah Al-An'am:52, advocating fairness and integrity in all dealings.

Tabligh (Communicative): As described by Ebrahimi & Yusoff (2017), Tabligh involves being friendly, respectful, open, and passionate in communication. This quality is vital in leadership and business, ensuring transparent and accurate information dissemination for effective organizational functioning.

Fathonah (Wisdom): Fathonah signifies intellect, knowledge, and wisdom. Musyrifin (2020) interprets it as being wise, smart, innovative, and strategic. In business, this involves intelligent management and continuous innovation, aligning with Islamic business ethics.

Istiqamah (Steadfastness): Istiqamah represents reliability and striving for excellence. Islam encourages adherents to excel in their endeavors, as illustrated by a Hadith from Baihaqi and the Quranic verse from Al Nahl:90, which calls for justice and proficiency.

Qana'ah (Contentment): Qana'ah is about being content and controlling greed, as highlighted by Abdul Ghani (2005) and Ebrahimi & Yusoff (2017). It entails managing resources efficiently and with gratitude towards Allah.

Bravery: In Islam, bravery is a crucial virtue, involving standing up for truth, promoting good, and being steadfast in faith, as discussed by Islamic scholars like Imam An-Nawawi and Imam Ibn Hazm.

Consideration: Islamic ethics emphasize the welfare of all creatures and the environment. The Quran, particularly in Surah Al-An'am:6:38, urges mindful actions towards animals and the environment.

Experience: Sharing knowledge and experiences is vital in Islamic ethics. The Prophet's approach to community issues, as guided by Allah in Al-Quran, Surah Al-Maidah:5:49, illustrates the importance of responsible and informed decision-making in the community.

These dimensions of Islamic values provide a comprehensive framework for personal conduct and social interaction, deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and principles.

Moral Education in Islam

The Al-Quran, the central religious text of Islam, serves as a fundamental guide in the lives of Muslims, encompassing a wide range of moral teachings. In Islamic terminology, 'morals' are called 'akhlaq,' derived from the Arabic word 'khuluq,' meaning behavior, temperament, or character. Aisha's reference to the Prophet Muhammad's morals, stating that "the morals (of Rasulullah) are the Al-Quran," illustrates that the Prophet's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors were a direct reflection of the teachings of the Quran (Wahyudin, 2011).

In Islam, moral conduct is guided by the principles outlined in the Quran, and these morals are also reflected in societal norms and regulations. While most societal morals align with the Quran, they may deviate in some instances. A notable example of Quranic moral teaching is the emphasis on children's behavior towards their parents, as illustrated in Surat al-Isra': 23, which advocates respect and kindness towards parents. However, contemporary societal trends sometimes show a decline in these moral values, with children often lacking manners towards their parents, a situation exacerbated by parents indulging their children, thus neglecting the teaching of Quranic morals.

Morals hold a vital role in shaping individuals, communities, and nations, as the moral fabric of a society influences its rise or decline. Good morals foster prosperity, intellectual growth, and well-being (Elmubarok, 2011). The Quran presents life's problems in the form of values, and Muslims are tasked with applying these values in their daily lives. The application of these values is not uniform but varies based on the context, time, place, and the capacity of Muslims to adapt and innovate. Nonetheless, there is an underlying expectation that the Quran guides Muslims in their moral conduct.

The Quran and Hadiths set the normative standards for Islamic teachings, defining good morals as those by these texts. Several verses in the Quran exemplify moral virtues:

The following are a few verses about morals and morals in the Qur'an:

1. Be patient

"O you who have believed! Be patient and strengthen your patience". (Al-Imran: 200)

2. Trust

"Indeed, Allah told you to deliver the message to those entitled to receive it." (An-Nisa': 58)

3. Apologize

"So forgive them and leave them alone. Allah Likes those who do good". (Al-Ma'idah: 13)

4. Honesty

"O you who have believed! Fear Allah and speak the true words". (Al-Ahzab:70)

"O you who have believed! Fear Allah and be with those who are righteous". (At-Taubah: 119)

5. Istiqomah

"Then you (Muhammad) (in the right path), as instructed to you and (also) those who repent with you". (Huud: 112)

6. Gratitude

"Then remember me, I will also remember you. Be thankful to Me, and do not deny me". (Al-Baqarah: 152)

7. Meek

"So, speak the two of you to him (Fir'aun) with meek words. Hopefully, he is aware or afraid". (Thaha: 44)

8. Tawadhu'

"And humble yourselves towards those who believe who follow you". (Ash-Shu'ara: 215)

9. Spreading Goodness

"And do good (to others) as Allah has done well to you". (Al-Qasas: 77)

10. Devoted to parents

"And your Lord has commanded that you do not worship anyone other than Him and do good to both parents". (Al-Isra': 23)

In reinforcing the high moral standards and ethical conduct in Islam, various hadiths (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) provide deeper insight and practical guidance. These hadiths complement the teachings of the Quran, offering a practical framework for Muslims to implement these principles in daily life.

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah has sent me with the perfection of noble morals and completion of good deeds." (al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ 7073)

On the importance of good character: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The best of you is the best among you in conduct". This hadith, reported by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, underscores the significance of moral behavior in Islam, placing it at the forefront of a Muslim's virtues.

Regarding the impact of good behavior on the Day of Judgement: In a narration by Imam Al-Bayhaqi, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned, "The heaviest thing to be placed in the balance of a believing slave on the Day of Judgement will be good behavior. And Allah hates the one who uses bad language". This highlights the profound impact of ethical conduct in the afterlife and the divine disdain for indecent speech.

On piety and good conduct leading to paradise: A person once asked Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) what deed would lead a man to paradise. He answered, "Piety and good conduct", emphasizing the dual path of devoutness and moral integrity as key to eternal success.

The distinction of Muslims based on behavior: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The most perfect man in his faith among the believers is the one whose behavior is the most excellent; and the best of you are those who are the best to their wives". This hadith, reported by Imam Ahmad, not only highlights the importance of good conduct but also specifically addresses the treatment of women, underlining respect, and kindness as essential virtues.

Levels in Paradise based on manners: According to a hadith by Ibn An-Najjar, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "The dearest and nearest among you to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who is the best in conduct…" This shows that ethical behavior elevates one's spiritual standing, even in the afterlife.

Treatment of animals: In a hadith reported by Imam Ahmad, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Fear Allah when you treat the animals: take care of them, keep them in good health whether you ride on them or are raising them for their meat." This demonstrates Islam's comprehensive ethical framework, extending kindness and care to all creatures.

Compassion in animal slaughter: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also instructed, as reported by Imam Muslim, "…when you slaughter an animal, make your slaughter in the best manner. Let one of you sharpen his knife and give ease to the animal (to reduce the pain)." This highlights the importance of mercy and minimizing suffering, even in necessary acts like slaughtering food.

Reward for kindness to animals: In a hadith narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, when asked about earning rewards for treating animals well, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) responded, "Yes, surely you earn rewards whenever you treat any living being in a good manner." This underscores the principle that kindness to all living beings is valued and rewarded in Islam.

These hadiths collectively reinforce the comprehensive nature of Islamic ethics, covering aspects of personal conduct, social interactions, and even extending to the treatment of animals, thereby illustrating Islam's holistic approach to morality and ethical living.

Conclusion

A crucial aspect of a Muslim's life is the adherence to high moral standards, which is heavily emphasized in Islamic teachings. The development of students' morals is intrinsically linked to the educational system, playing a critical role in cultivating their best manners and personal characteristics. This development of moral values has become a key cultural aspect within communities. Educational institutions, particularly in regions undergoing rapid social changes like Aceh, are vital in fortifying these values amidst evolving lifestyles and social cultures. A decline in moral values, lifestyle choices, and social activities among adolescents has been observed, indicating a need for reinforced moral education.

Islam uniquely transforms its theological principles into practical moral values. Islamic Shariah aims to instill gracious behavior, refine characters, and contribute to the general wellbeing of individuals and societies. It emphasizes the importance of manners and morals in ensuring a safe, peaceful existence, encompassing beliefs, wealth, honor, and peace of mind. Islamic morality's essence is love - love for God and His creations. Islam establishes universal fundamental rights for humanity, backed by both legal safeguards and a practical moral system. The emphasis on welfare, individual and

societal, defines what is morally good in Islam. The Quran warns against excessive formalism, highlighting the importance of genuine love for God and humanity:

The following standards judge the moral conduct in Islam:
- Faith must be genuine and sincere.
- Actions must demonstrate charity and kindness towards others.
- Being good citizens and supporting social organizations.
- Maintaining personal integrity and resilience in all circumstances.

The moral teachings of Islam are not limited to personal virtues but extend to social responsibilities, calling for the establishment of virtue and the eradication of vice.

Muslims are encouraged to practice and promote exemplary behavior and to forbid wrong. The formation of the Muslim community ("Ummah") is centered on this organized effort to uphold goodness and combat evil. Islam's moral teachings cover a wide range, addressing the personal conduct and social responsibilities of a Muslim, shaping not just the individual character but also the collective ethos of the Muslim community.

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