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The Concept of Morality in Islam as the Basis of Contemporary Social Ethics

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of moral learning methods on strengthening the faith of Islamic Morality in Islam is the primary foundation for shaping individual behavior and a civilized social order. However, in the context of contemporary society characterized by globalization, plurality of values, and ethical crises, the concept of morality often experiences a reduction in meaning and loses its transformative power in social life. This study aims to examine the concept of morality in Islam and its relevance as a basis for contemporary social ethics. This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach, analyzing primary sources in the form of the Qur'an, hadith, and the works of classical scholars and contemporary Islamic thinkers who discuss morality and social ethics. The results show that morality in Islam is not only oriented towards individual piety, but also has a strong social dimension, such as justice, honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect for others. These moral values are relevant as a foundation for social ethics in facing the moral challenges of modern society, including individualism, pragmatism, and the degradation of human values. This study confirms that revitalizing the concept of Islamic morality as a basis for social ethics has strategic urgency in building a harmonious, just, and dignified society.

Keywords: Islamic Morals; Social Ethics; Contemporary Society; Moral Values; Moral Education

Abstrak

Akhlik dalam Islam merupakan fondasi utama pembentukan perilaku individu dan tatanan sosial yang berkeadaban. Namun, dalam konteks masyarakat kontemporer yang ditandai oleh globalisasi, pluralitas nilai, dan krisis etika, konsep akhlak sering mengalami reduksi makna dan kehilangan daya transformasinya dalam kehidupan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep akhlak dalam Islam serta relevansinya sebagai basis etika sosial kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (library research), dengan menganalisis sumber-sumber primer berupa Al-Qur'an, hadis, serta karya-karya ulama klasik dan pemikir Islam kontemporer yang membahas akhlak dan etika sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa akhlak dalam Islam tidak hanya berorientasi pada kesalehan individual, tetapi juga memiliki dimensi sosial yang kuat, seperti keadilan, kejujuran, tanggung jawab, empati, dan penghormatan terhadap sesama. Nilai-nilai akhlak tersebut relevan untuk dijadikan landasan etika sosial dalam menghadapi tantangan moral masyarakat modern, termasuk individualisme, pragmatisme, dan degradasi nilai kemanusiaan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa revitalisasi konsep akhlak Islam sebagai basis etika sosial memiliki urgensi strategis dalam membangun kehidupan masyarakat yang harmonis, berkeadilan, dan bermartabat.

Kata Kunci: Akhlak Islam; Etika Sosial; Masyarakat Kontemporer; Nilai Moral; Pendidikan Akhlak



Introduction

The development of global society in the contemporary era is characterized by rapid progress in science and technology, an unstoppable flow of information, and an increasingly high intensity of cross-cultural social interaction.(Suryono, 2019) This condition has had a significant impact on how people think, act, and behave in social life. On the one hand, this progress provides various conveniences and opportunities for improving the quality of human life.(Awailiyah et al., 2024) However, on the other hand, rapid social change also gives rise to various ethical issues, such as increasing individualism, weakening social solidarity, declining moral sensitivity, and the rise of deviant behavior that conflicts with human values. This phenomenon indicates a social ethical crisis that cannot be resolved solely through a positive legal approach or instrumental rationality.(Sumaryono, 2002).

In this context, the need for a value system that can serve as a guideline for social morals and ethics is increasingly urgent.(Uksan, 2022) Social ethics functions as a normative framework that directs relationships between individuals and groups in society so that they occur in a just, harmonious and dignified manner.(Mali et al., 2024) However, modern social ethics, heavily influenced by the secular paradigm, is often relative, contextual, and detached from the transcendental dimension. As a result, social ethics tends to lose its solid moral foundation and is vulnerable to pragmatic interests. This situation encourages the need to review alternative sources of values that are comprehensive, holistic, and possess strong moral legitimacy, one of which is Islamic teachings through the concept of morality.(Harjuna, 2018).

Morality in Islam occupies a fundamental position. Islam exists not only as a belief system but also as a guide to life that regulates the relationship between humans and God (ḥabl min Allāh), their relationships with each other (ḥabl min al-nās), and their relationship with the environment.(Antika, 2025) The concept of morality in Islam encompasses universal values such as honesty, justice,



trustworthiness, compassion, responsibility, and tolerance, all of which are oriented toward developing individuals with noble character. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) even emphasized that his primary mission as a prophet was to perfect human morality.(Uksan, 2022)This shows that morality is not merely a complement to Islamic teachings, but rather the core of authentic religiousness.

However, in the practice of contemporary Muslim society, moral values are often not optimally internalized in social behavior. It is not uncommon to find a gap between an individual's religious knowledge and their moral practices in daily life.(M. Amin, 2016)The phenomena of corruption, social injustice, violence, hate speech, and low ethics in the public sphere are indicators that morals have not fully functioned as a basis for social ethics.(Destriana & Febriansyah, 2024)This situation shows that morality is often understood narrowly as a matter of individual morality, personal rituals, or simply norms of politeness, without being developed as a social value system capable of responding to the challenges of the times.

This is where the importance of reconstructing the understanding of morals in Islam as the basis of contemporary social ethics lies.(EF Irawan & Rohman, 2025). Islamic morality is not static or ahistorical, but rather has a high adaptive capacity to social change, as long as it adheres to the basic principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah.(Machendrawaty & Safei, 2001)Islamic moral values are universal and inclusive, making them relevant for implementation in pluralistic and multicultural societies. By placing morality as the foundation of social ethics, Islam offers an approach that emphasizes not only adherence to rules but also the development of moral awareness, social responsibility, and a sensitive conscience.(Firdaus, 2024).

The study of morality as the basis of social ethics also has strong academic significance. Until now, the study of social ethics has been dominated by Western philosophical perspectives, such as utilitarianism, deontology, or Aristotelian virtue ethics. While these perspectives make important contributions, they have



not fully addressed the moral issues of religious communities that rely on revelation as a source of values.(Ashari et al., 2025)Therefore, developing social ethics studies based on Islamic morality is an important effort to enrich the scientific body of knowledge and offer an ethical paradigm rooted in transcendental and spiritual values.

Furthermore, the discussion of Islamic morality as a social ethic also has practical implications in various areas of life, such as education, social life, politics, and economics. In education, morality can serve as a foundation for character formation in students, ensuring they are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and socially mature.(Kusyana et al., 2024)In social life, morality acts as a social glue that encourages mutual respect, mutual assistance, and justice. Thus, Islamic morality has the potential to be a normative solution to the ethical crisis plaguing contemporary society.(Hulawa, 2021).

Based on this background, this research focuses on examining the concept of morality in Islam and its relevance as a basis for social ethics in the context of contemporary society. This research is important to reaffirm that Islamic morality is not only oriented towards personal piety but also has a broad and applicable social dimension. By making morality the foundation of social ethics, it is hoped that a more just, civilized, and dignified society can be built, in line with universal Islamic values and the demands of modern life.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method, which aims to examine in depth the concept of morality in Islam and its relevance as a basis for contemporary social ethics. Data sources are obtained from primary literature in the form of the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and the works of classical scholars and contemporary Islamic thinkers who discuss morality and social ethics, while secondary sources come from books, scientific journals, and relevant academic publications. Data collection techniques are



carried out through documentation and systematic literature searches, then analyzed using descriptive-analytical analysis methods with a normative-philosophical approach. Data analysis is carried out by identifying, classifying, and interpreting the main concepts of Islamic morality to then contextualize them with the social reality of modern society, so as to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic morality as a foundation for contemporary social ethics.

Results and Discussion

The Essence of Morals in Islam: Theological and Normative Foundations

Morals in Islam are the main foundation that determines the quality of a person's religiosity and humanity.(Burlian, 2022)Conceptually, morality is not understood as merely situational outward behavior, but rather as a persistent inner state that shapes a person's tendencies in acting. Morality arises from the unity of faith, knowledge, and good deeds, so that good deeds in Islam always have both moral and spiritual dimensions.(HSM Amin, 2022)Therefore, morality is an important parameter in assessing human success as a servant of God and as a social being who lives side by side with others.

The theological foundation of Islamic morality stems directly from the Quran, which serves as a guide for the lives of Muslims. The Quran not only contains principles of faith and worship, but also outlines moral values that govern human attitudes and behavior in social life. Morality is positioned as a concrete manifestation of faith, so that the quality of a person's faith is reflected in the quality of their morality.(Ismail, 2023). Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ حُكْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

Meaning: "And indeed you (Muhammad) are truly on a high moral standard."(QS. Al-Qalam [68]: 4)

This verse emphasizes that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)



is held up as the primary role model for morality, making Islamic moral standards applicable and achievable in real life. The Prophet's exemplary conduct demonstrates that Islamic morality is not a utopian ideal, but rather a living, operational value in social reality.

Apart from the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW strengthens the normative dimension of Islamic morality through real practices in daily life.(B. Irawan et al., 2025)The Prophet exemplified morality in various aspects of life, from family relationships and social interactions to leadership and attitudes toward differences. This demonstrates that Islamic morality is broad and flexible, adapting to various social situations without losing its fundamental principles. Thus, morality serves not only as an individual guideline but also as an instrument for establishing a just and civilized social order.

Normatively, morals in Islam are integrated with the sharia system which aims to safeguard human benefit. Morals towards Allah foster spiritual awareness which gives birth to sincerity and obedience, while morals towards fellow human beings encourage the birth of an attitude of fairness, trust, honesty and responsibility.(Asih, 2024). Environmental ethics also receive serious attention in Islam, as humans are seen as caliphs entrusted with maintaining the balance of nature. This integration emphasizes that Islamic ethics is holistic and inseparable from other aspects of life.(Aldi et al., 2025).

In the contemporary context, understanding the essence of Islamic morality has become increasingly relevant amidst the ethical crisis gripping modern society. Islamic morality offers an ethical paradigm that is not only based on rationality and self-interest, but also rooted in transcendental values.(Karim, 2024)By utilizing revelation as a source of values, Islamic morality can provide a stable and consistent moral direction in the face of dynamic social change. Therefore, strengthening the theological and normative foundations of Islamic morality is a strategic step in establishing morality as the basis for social ethics. which is able to build a moral, just and dignified society.



The Social Dimension of Islamic Morality: From Individual Piety to Collective Responsibility

Morality in Islam has a social dimension that cannot be separated from the formation of individual piety. Islam views piety not only as a vertical relationship between humans and God, but also as a horizontal moral commitment to fellow human beings.(Sobary, 2007)Individual piety that is not reflected in social behavior is considered imperfect, because true moral values must have real implications in social life. Therefore, Islamic morality serves as a link between individual spiritual awareness and collective social responsibility.

The Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently emphasize the importance of the social dimension in religious life. Many Islamic teachings emphasize that ritual worship must be accompanied by good social morals, such as honesty, justice, empathy, and concern for others. From this perspective, the implementation of worship not only aims to foster personal piety but also educate individuals to develop social sensitivity. Social morals are a concrete indicator of the successful internalization of religious values in real life.(Siroj, 2006).

The social dimension of Islamic morality is clearly reflected in the concepts of brotherhood, social justice, and shared responsibility. Islamic brotherhood demands a sense of brotherhood that transcends differences in social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.(Haryanto et al., 2024)Islamic morality encourages every individual to prioritize the common good over personal interests, without eliminating individual rights. Within this framework, the value of justice is understood not only as a legal principle but also as a moral attitude that demands a commitment to truth and protection for vulnerable groups.(Royhan & Gaisan, 2024).

The transformation of individual piety into collective responsibility is also evident in the teachings of amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar. This principle affirms



that every individual has a moral role in maintaining the ethical quality of society.(Daryanto & Ernawati, 2024)Islamic morality does not condone apathy toward injustice, moral deviation, or social decay. Instead, Islam encourages active participation in creating a healthy and moral social environment. Thus, Islamic morality has a transformative character oriented toward sustainable social improvement.

In the context of contemporary society, the social dimension of Islamic morality faces serious challenges due to the strengthening of individualism, moral relativism and pragmatism.(Putera, 2020). Modernization and globalization often encourage people to judge actions based on personal gain or short-term interests, thus ignoring social responsibility.(Maulana, 2023)Islamic ethics presents a moral critique of this tendency by offering an ethical paradigm that balances individual freedom and social obligations. Values such as trustworthiness, honesty, and social concern are essential foundations for building just and sustainable social relations.(Shalawati & Sofa, 2025).

Furthermore, the social dimension of Islamic morality has broad implications for public life, including education, economics, and politics. In education, social morality plays a role in shaping students' character, fostering tolerance, responsibility, and concern for their social environment. In the economic sphere, Islamic morality demands fair, transparent, and exploitative practices. Meanwhile, in political life, Islamic morality emphasizes the importance of trustworthy, just, and community-oriented leadership.(Kardinus, 2022). This shows that Islamic morality is not only a personal norm, but also a public ethic that is relevant to the development of modern society.

Thus, the social dimension of Islamic morality emphasizes that authentic religiosity must be realized through collective responsibility. Islamic morality fosters an awareness that every individual is part of an interconnected social structure, so that every action has moral implications for others. This understanding makes Islamic morality a foundation of social ethics capable of

addressing the challenges of contemporary society and fostering a harmonious, just, and dignified social life.

Islamic Morality as the Basis of Social Ethics: Theoretical and Practical Implications

Islamic morality, as the basis for social ethics, offers a holistic and sustainable normative framework for regulating social life. Theoretically, Islamic morality is based on the view that morality is not determined solely by social consensus or human rationality, but is rooted in transcendental values derived from revelation.(Rasyid & Tubangsa, 2024)By using the Quran and Sunnah as primary references, Islamic morality has clear, consistent ethical standards that are not easily distorted by pragmatic interests. This framework positions humans as moral beings responsible not only to others but also to Allah SWT, so that every social action has both ethical and spiritual dimensions.

Another theoretical implication of Islamic morality is its view of the close relationship between individual piety and social order. Islam rejects the dichotomy between personal morality and public ethics, as the two influence each other and cannot be separated.(Barizi, 2011)Good individual morals will contribute to the creation of a civilized society, while a just social system will support the growth of individual moral behavior. This perspective makes an important contribution to the development of contemporary social ethics, particularly in formulating moral concepts that balance individual freedom with collective responsibility.

The normative foundation of Islamic morals is also confirmed in the Al-Qur'an which orders humans to uphold the values of justice and goodness in social life. Allah SWT says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَإِلَّا حِسْنٌ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَا عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ

Meaning: "Indeed, Allah commands (you) to act justly and do good deeds, to give to your relatives, and He forbids evil deeds, evil and enmity."(QS. An-Nahl [16]: 90)



This verse shows that Islamic morality is not only oriented towards individual goodness, but also regulates social order comprehensively through the principles of justice, ihsan, and social concern.

Practically, Islamic morality has real implications in various aspects of social life. In education, Islamic morality can serve as a foundation for character development in students, fostering integrity, responsibility, and social awareness. Morally-oriented education emphasizes not only academic achievement but also ongoing moral development.(Juariah, 2023)In a social context, Islamic morality encourages the creation of harmonious, respectful, and just relationships, thereby strengthening social cohesion amidst diversity.

In public spheres, such as economics and politics, Islamic morality serves as an ethical guide for collective behavior. The principles of trustworthiness, honesty, and responsibility are essential foundations for just governance and economic practices. Islamic morality is also relevant in responding to ethical challenges in the digital era, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and the degradation of communication ethics.(Farid, 2023)By making Islamic morals the basis of social ethics, society has a moral compass capable of maintaining a balance between technological progress and human values.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that morality in Islam is a primary foundation that plays a strategic role in building a moral and civilized social ethic. Islamic morality is not only oriented toward developing individual piety but also has a strong social dimension in regulating interpersonal relationships. The theological and normative foundations of Islamic morality, derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, make it a comprehensive, consistent, and relevant value system that can serve as a guideline for contemporary social life.

Furthermore, challenges to modern social ethics, such as individualism, moral relativism, the crisis of role models, and the degradation of human values,



demonstrate the urgency of strengthening morality as the basis of social ethics. Islamic morality offers an ethical paradigm that balances individual freedom with collective responsibility and integrates moral and spiritual dimensions into social action. By embracing Islamic morality as the foundation of social ethics, society is expected to be able to build a just, harmonious, and dignified way of life, while simultaneously utilizing Islamic values as a transformative force in addressing the dynamics of contemporary social life.

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