

INFORMATION ETHICS IN ISLAM AND THE MODERN LIBRARY  
SYSTEM  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRIVACY, INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM,  
AND KNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBILITY

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#### ABSTRACT

The information ecosystem that has now been formed in a modern library is ethically complex due to the surveillance of the digital form, mediation of algorithms, epistemic fragmentation, and contentious truth regimes. Privacy, intellectual freedom, and fair access commitments are manifested in ethical codes of professional ethics raised by the American Library Association (ALA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). However, to a great extent, all these frameworks rest on the secular liberal-democratic theory. With these conventions, the Islamic civilization developed a complete-fledged moral epistemology that contextualizes the knowledge under a context of divine accountability, interpersonal justice, and general well-being.

In this paper, Amanah (trust), Adl (justice) and Satr (privacy) and Haqq (truth) and modern professional library ethics will be provided with a serious comparative analysis over Islamic information ethics. The investigation, which is founded on the mixed-method plan and is not premised on the statistical package, incorporates both qualitative research in the content of jurisprudence and the survey of Sindh, Pakistan librarians by hand. These findings imply that there are structural intersections in the privacy protection and epistemic responsibility, and ontological differences in the limits of the intellectual autonomy and ethical authority. The paper proposes an intercultural normative integration model of library ethics within the Muslim majority environments, and makes a theoretical contribution to the discourse of world information ethics.

**Keywords:** Information Ethics, Islamic Ethical Principles, Library Ethics, Privacy, Intellectual Freedom, Knowledge Responsibility, Ethical Information Management

#### Introduction

##### Ontology of Knowledge in Islamic Thought

Islamic epistemology does not view knowledge to be morally neutral. Tawhid, meaning unity of Godly authority, contains the ontological knowledge (Ilm) and, therefore, cannot be separated with the ethical responsibility (Al-Attas, 1980). The Qur'an repeatedly frames knowledge

as both empowerment and accountability. The command of verification (Qur'an 49:6) establishes epistemic responsibility, while the prohibition of spying (49:12) situates privacy as a moral imperative rather than merely a legal right.

When the information is not connected to the moral intent, classical commentators such as Al-Ghazali developed the moral purpose (niyyah) of

the knowledge dissemination, which leads to corruption. Ibn Khaldun went a step further in the history telling methodological skepticism whereby the sources must be proved and the context questionable centuries before the history writing today.

Hence, the structure of Islamic information ethics is teleological and virtue-based and is founded on ultimate responsibility to God.

### **Philosophical Foundations of Modern Library Ethics**

The modern library ethics, particularly those the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions has established, has been founded on the Enlightenment theory of liberalism and human rights. An intellectual freedom is an almost absolute value, which is grounded in freedom of expression and autonomy (Jaeger, Taylor, and Kettlich, 2015).

The information sphere of Luciano Floridi (2013) is premised upon the ethical environment of which the informational entities possess the ethical status. However, this paradigm is quite secular and anthropocentric.

Their conflict is not functional as they are more philosophical between the Islamic and modern. The Islamic ethics are more concerned with the moral responsibility and the common good in contrast to the contemporary ethics, which emphasize more on autonomy (Maslahah).

### **Research Objectives and Research Questions.**

#### **General Objective**

To compare and contrast Islamic principle of information ethics with the ethical practice in the modern library systems, privacy, intellectual freedom and knowledge responsibility.

#### **Specific Objectives**

1. To analyze core Islamic ethical principles related to information management (Amanah, Adl, Satr, Haqq).
2. To examine ethical standards in modern libraries (ALA, IFLA, and national library codes).

3. To compare Islamic perspectives on privacy with modern library privacy policies.
4. To evaluate Islamic views on intellectual freedom and censorship in comparison with contemporary library standards.
5. To investigate how libraries promote responsible knowledge use and academic integrity.
6. To assess librarians' awareness of ethical principles in information handling.

### **Main Research Question**

How do Islamic principles of information ethics compare with ethical standards in modern library systems regarding privacy, intellectual freedom, and knowledge responsibility?

### **Sub-Questions**

1. What are the fundamental Islamic ethical principles related to information management?
2. How do modern libraries define and implement privacy protection?
3. What similarities and differences exist between Islamic ethics and modern library policies on intellectual freedom?
4. How do both frameworks address misinformation and responsible knowledge dissemination?
5. To what extent are librarians aware of Islamic ethical perspectives in their professional duties?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Islamic Epistemology and Information Ethics**

The information under the framework of the Islamic ethical thought is the religious trust (Amanah) which needs to be gained, retained, and educated in a responsible manner. Verification (Tabayyun), honesty (Haqq) and justice (Adl) are values of classical sources, e.g. the Quran and the Hadith, in relaying and consumption of information (Al-Ghazali, 2005; Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998). In *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali is teaching that the corruption in the society is inevitability without the moral purpose in the knowledge, whereas Ibn Khaldun is teaching that the approach of methodology of historiography

requires the critical approach and finding the knowledge in the context as a duty of morality (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). The issue that is highlighted in the current academic literature is the permanence of these principles in the ethical information behavior. Al-Attas (1980) notes that knowledge is not a pragmatic teaching and he views information ethics as being normative requirement and not as pragmatic command. Al-Qaradawi (1995) by Maslahah (public welfare) and the avoidance of harm restricts intellectual freedom of Islamic morality to create a continuum between what one may enquire and that which is unethical destruction.

*Qur'anic injunctions provide foundational guidance on ethical information management:*

*“O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, verify it, lest you harm a people in ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.” (Qur’an 49:6)*

*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized responsibility in speech and knowledge:*

*“Whoever conveys a false report is not of us; and whoever speaks without knowledge will bear the sin of what he utters.” (Sunan Abu Dawood, Hadith 3630)*

All these sources constitute a scheme of knowledge not as a practical competence but as a moral obligation with social and eschatological consequences imposing emphasis on privacy, truth telling and responsibility.

### **Modern Library Ethics**

Modern library ethics as stipulated in the codes of the American Library Association (ALA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) presuppose privacy, intellectual freedom, and equal access as inherent principles of the profession (ALA, 2017; IFLA, 2012). The ALA Code of Ethics is concerned about the privacy of the user information, professionalism, and interest in sharing the information with no discrimination. Similarly, the IFLA Code of Ethics binds the librarians to the freedom of expression, privacy, and integrity of delivering information (IFLA, 2015).

These frameworks, according to empirical evidence, tend to be predominantly secular and founded on the liberal democratic values and

presuppose autonomy as the ethical justification of the intellectual liberty (Jaeger, Taylor, and Kettlich, 2015; Tavani, 2016). The knowledge accountability is operationalized through the information literacy programs and anti-misinformation policies, which regard privacy as an individual right. Islamic ethics lack the philosophical foundation that guarantees the sense of responsibility in the metaphysical and communal surrounding, yet not in the civil and legal one (Floridi, 2013; Nissenbaum, 2010).

### **Comparative Analyses**

Convergence and divergence of the Islamic and modern information ethics are spoken in new literature. Beheshti (1989, 1990) and Cooke (2016) assert that when it comes to the end result of the operations, particularly those related to privacy and quality of information obtained, the reasons are opposed in their ethical nature. Islamic ethics is ontological and spiritual and modernity ethics is pragmatic and rights-based ethics which are found in the realms of liberal-democratic paradigms. The other strategy that Capurro (2008) proposes is intercultural approach, based on which it is possible to integrate ethics by acknowledging ontological differences but rendering normative practices consistent.

It has been revealed that in Muslim dominated contexts, librarians are more likely to be supportive of ideals within both of these models regardless of the formal practice, which, in fact, might not be very familiar with the terms of Islamic ethics (Samek, 2007; Sturges, 2009). This disjunction provides certain reasons to include the Islamic ethical theories in the professional education and library practice to create the culturally and ethically consistent information control model.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

The comparative ethics studies are not as systematic, where institutional policy alignment and practitioner cognizance are empirically investigated, despite both Islamic and modern ethics being theoretically rich. Existing research is little on how the Islamic epistemological values can be used to enlighten the contemporary library

government without compromising the practicality of intellectual freedom and privacy. The literature also lacks integrative models that can be extended to develop Islamic ethical norms into viable library policies that this study fulfills under the intercultural normative integration model.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This research will be premised on a mixed-method comparative study, which merges qualitative jurisprudential contents analysis and descriptive empirical survey studies. The qualitative dimension studies the normative Islamic ethical principles by referring to primary books, such as the Qur and the Hadith, and secondary books, such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Shatibi. The quantitative section will evaluate the awareness of the practising librarians regarding the problems of the ethical norms, privacy, intellectual freedom, and responsible knowledge management.

Although no statistical packages were applied, the methodological rigor of the research study is based on the fact that it is systematic in thematic coding and percentage analysis by hand. It would give the transparency and replicability and would be also consistent with the interpretive features of the qualitative inquiry particularly in the case of exploring the ethical norms enclosed in the religious jurisprudence and professional library standards.

### Population and Strategy of Sampling.

The sample in this study will consist of the professional librarians in the Sindh province that encompasses university libraries, library in the public and libraries in Islamic schools. According to the formula of Yamane with margin of error of five percent, the sample population of 222 respondents was determined as a good number of respondents at these institutional scenarios (Yamane, 1967).

The convenience sampling was selected due to the institutional access and logistics constraint. This non-probabilistic approach may decrease the generalizability; however, in the exploratory

comparative study (when the lists of the entire population are not readily accessible) it is sensible. This strategy allowed the researcher to communicate with a significant number of library professionals and simultaneously, the research was viable and data were gathered on time.

## Data Collection Methods

### Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative information was obtained through a jurisprudential analytical content study of the primary sources of Islamic religion like the Quran and the Hadith literature, classical and contemporary reference books like Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah and Al-Shatibi. Moreover, the official codes of ethics were analyzed in the American Library Association (ALA) and in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

An extraction became done through systematic coding followed by the identification of recurring themes and their reorganization into three key dimensions, which comprise privacy (Satr), intellectual freedom, and knowledge responsibility (Amanah and Haqq). This way, it was feasible to gain normative ethical principles which could be juxtaposed to the professional standards which are being adhered to in libraries nowadays in an effective manner.

### Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires whereby the sampled librarians were given structured questionnaires to fill. Data that was represented in the tool was the information that was related to the reality of the Islamic consideration of ethics in the practice of professionalism, the implementation of privacy and intellectual freedom policies, and actions that supported the responsible sharing of knowledge. The responses were tabulated manually and the descriptive analysis of the percentage analysis was carried out to identify the trends and the patterns of ethical awareness and practice. This strategy has been used to examine the relation between the Islamic ethical norms and the current library policies.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed in a duplicated way. Systematic thematic coding and content comparison on the qualitative part were performed in case of the qualitative part to come up with convergencies and divergence of Islamic jurisprudential norms and modern professional ethics. It ensured that subtle meanings of the religious texts were good and preserved by the use of manual code.

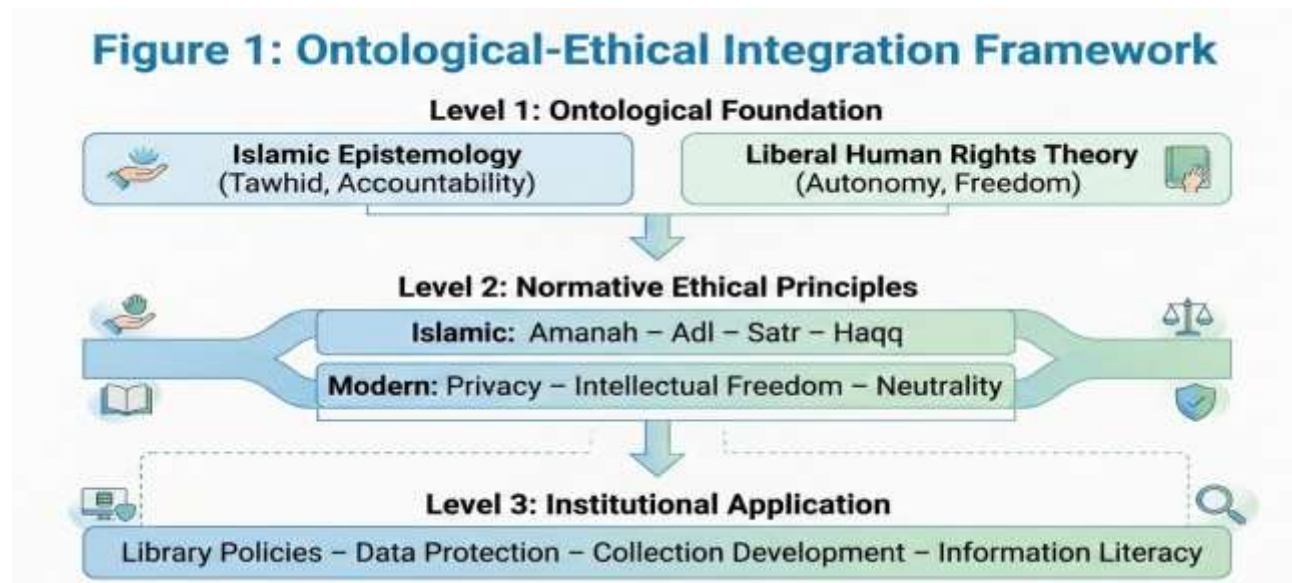
Under the quantitative section, the answers in the questionnaires were summarized and manually analyzed as well as percentages. Descriptive statistics assisted in gathering data concerning the awareness level, practice and adherence to ethical standards of librarians. A blend of these strategies

gives the research a comprehensive comparative study of the bridging theory frameworks of ethics and empirical data of professional practice.

### Ethical Considerations

The research was done in a rigorous way concerning the ethics. The respondents were requested to participate voluntarily and informed all the respondents since they gave their consent prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The participants received a great deal of confidentiality and privacy that was also in harmony with the principle of ethical information management, the essence of the Islamic and modern library ethics.

### Intercultural Normative Integration Model



This framework demonstrates that convergence at the normative level and institutional level is significant and convergence at the ontological one is insignificant. The Islamic ethics is founded on the divine command and the modern library

ethics are founded on the theory of social contract and the discourse of human rights. According to the model, institutional practice may even be applicable in situations where philosophical justifications are different.

**Table 1**  
**Jurisprudential-Professional Comparative Matrix**

Dimension	Islamic Ethical Basis	Modern Library Basis	Convergence	Structural Divergence
Privacy	Prohibition of tajassus (spying); Satr; dignity preservation	Confidentiality of patron records	Strong	Divine vs civil grounding
Intellectual Freedom	Encouraged but conditioned by Maslahah	Anti-censorship, autonomy-centered	Partial	Moral boundary debate
Knowledge Responsibility	Tabayyun (verification); Amanah	Information literacy; anti-misinformation	Strong	Eschatological accountability absent

The protection of privacy according to the matrix is the most successful convergence area. The two paradigms do not condone unauthorized surveillance and state secrets. The liberty of intellect is the initial area of normative objection, and the Islamic jurisprudence permits the

restrictions on the communal harm but the present-day models reject the restrictions on content. There are significant structural parallels of knowledge responsibility, but Islamic ethics establishes an obligation within eschatological responsibility.

**Table 2**  
**Demographic Composition of Respondents**

Institutional Type	Frequency	Percentage
University Libraries	110	50%
Public Libraries	70	32%
Islamic Institutions	42	18%
Total	222	100%

Eighty five per cent of the respondents provided a resounding support to harsh confidentiality policy. Every three people were supportive of broad intellectual freedom, whereas one out of three favored a more limited restriction based on cultural or religious norms. Fifty-five per cent of them expressed express understanding of the Islamic ethical terms and a greater per cent was expressively approving intuitively.

These findings demonstrate implicit convergence of ethics in areas where theoretical consciousness continues to be unequal.

### Conclusion and Recommendations.

This was a significant contribution to the science of intercultural information ethics in that it demonstrated that Islamic ethical epistemology of

morality and contemporary professional library ethical epistemology do not necessarily oppose and even contradict one another. Rather they are sharply defined normative frameworks, which share common ethical interests, but need not share the same philosophical assumptions. The Islamic information ethics founded on Amanah (trust), Adl (justice), Satr (privacy) and Haqq (truth and right) puts emphasis on accountability to God, accountability to moral righteousness and welfare of the community. The current professional library ethics defined by the American Library Association (ALA) and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), however, emphasize on the rights of individuals, secular legal demands and professional neutrality. However, the relative

examination of this research demonstrates that convergence will take place in the group of practicable institutional methods particularly in the field of user privacy, responsible knowledge sharing and promotion of equitable access to information. The fact itself that the convergence under consideration exists indicates the feasibility of the contextual integration, where the libraries, that operate in the societies where most of the population is represented by Muslims, will be enabled to balance the professional ethics with the normative principles attributed to the cultures and religion.

The primary point of departure, as the analysis suggests, is moral boundary of intellectual freedom, which deals more with ontological variations of authority, accountability and limits that can be allowed in the case of information dissemination. Even though modern professional ethics has generally encouraged the broad freedom of individuals in the pursuit and conveyance of knowledge, Islamic epistemology governs freedom amid the obligation to God and the welfare of the community, and moral and ethical restrictions to the practice of knowledge that is possible to cause harm or spread falsehood. This difference does not imply that the professional policies are incompatible, on the contrary, this difference is the predictor of the necessity to pay due attention to the contextualization of the professional policies so that the practices of the secular character were adapted in such a manner that the moral imperatives specific to a certain culture have not been breached by the ethical universals.

This study provides a practical and theoretically plausible library practice in the Muslim majorities in the societies through the development of an integration model. The model targets three aspects that are closely related which include privacy protection, promotion of intellectual freedom within the ethics, and augmentation of knowledge responsibility through moral responsibility and professional custodianship. Such a framework will assist in developing library policies, staff training interventions and practices in operational procedures that are not only able to capture both professional concepts but also the Islamic ethical value and consequently contribute to raising

morality and cultural relevance of the institutional practices. Also, it gives librarians a standard of norm to identify the right route to overcome the hard ethical situations that may possibly occur in the digital age which include misinformation, user confidentiality, as well as equal access to resources of knowledge.

In addition to contribution to conceptual knowledge, this study generates feasible recommendations to librarians, policymakers and learning institutions. Firstly, the library administrations in the Muslim majority environments are supposed to inculcate the values of Islamic ethics into the professional development and continuing education programs to make people more aware of the culturally specific normative frameworks. Second, the book of policy and codes of codes should explicitly state the elements of ethics that were founded on the Islamic jurisprudence and the current library standards to entail the agreement between the institutional policy and the morality trend that forms the society. Three, the librarians should also be educated on the responsible knowledge management practices that center on the checking of information, safeguarding against damaging as well as the promotion of intellectual honesty. Fourth, the measures concerning community involvement in the future library projects would require consideration of the measures, which would enlighten the users about the ethical use of information, their right to privacy, and the social responsibilities of knowledge sharing. Finally, the library and information science education programs delivered in the countries with Muslim majority should incorporate the comparative information ethics courses so that to be able to produce culturally sensitive and ethically competent professionals capable of adopting professionally sensitive responses to culture-related problems and challenges.

In conclusion, this paper proves that, despite the fact that Islamic epistemology of morals and modern professional library ethics cannot be considered similar in their ontological background, they complement each other at the practicality level. By locating the points of intersection and disjunction and offering viable

recommendations, this research would offer not only theoretical knowledge about ethically coherent library operation but also the practical recommendations on the same. Consequential empirical studies are based on the results, particularly in the studies of how intercultural ethics could be applied to the library systems in an organized way and what would the reaction of the librarians and users would be to such situation sensitive policies. Lastly, the article contributes to the body of debate of information ethics since it demonstrates that normative pluralism do not necessarily damage the professional integrity; on the contrary, it can make the library practice more morally and culturally lit in the globalized, information-soaked society.

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