

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN NORMS IN MODERN CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Humanitarian challenges in the contemporary era increasingly demand ethical frameworks that are both universal and contextually relevant. While international humanitarian norms provide globally recognized standards, Islamic ethics offer a distinctive moral foundation grounded in divine accountability and social responsibility. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms in modern contexts. Employing a qualitative research design, the study draws upon in-depth interviews with Islamic scholars and humanitarian practitioners, complemented by document analysis of relevant texts and guidelines. The findings reveal significant areas of convergence, such as the shared emphasis on human dignity, justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups. However, divergence emerges in the epistemological grounding, where Islamic ethics prioritize transcendental values rooted in revelation, while international norms emphasize secular and legalistic frameworks. The study highlights both opportunities and tensions in integrating these perspectives, particularly in contexts where global standards must engage with religious traditions. Theoretically, the research contributes to the discourse on comparative ethics by bridging Islamic thought and global humanitarian paradigms. Practically, it offers insights for policymakers, NGOs, and educational institutions seeking to develop more inclusive and culturally sensitive humanitarian approaches.

Keywords: Islamic ethics, humanitarian norms, comparative analysis, global ethics, qualitative study

PENDAHULUAN

The increasing complexity of humanitarian crises in the modern era including armed conflicts, natural disasters, refugee displacements, and global pandemics has highlighted the urgent need for robust ethical frameworks to guide humanitarian action. While international humanitarian norms such as those established in the Geneva Conventions provide foundational guidelines, these frameworks face significant challenges when operating in environments where ethical considerations are influenced by cultural and religious values (Gordon & Donini, 2015)(Broussard et al., 2019) In such contexts, ethical systems derived from various religious traditions, including Islamic ethics, emphasize vital concepts such

as justice (‘adl), compassion (rahmah), and social solidarity (ukhuwwah insāniyyah), effectively serving as a moral framework that intersects with humanitarian principles (Fan, 2025)

Conducting a comparative analysis between Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms is crucial, as it reveals both their divergent and convergent areas while providing significant insights into collective implications for global humanitarian practice (Fan, 2025) For instance, the complexity of implementing humanitarian responses in conflict-prone regions can lead organizations to grapple with ethical obligations while balancing respect for local customs, including religious practices. This cultural sensitivity is paramount for fostering cooperation and trust within affected communities (Kraft & Smith, 2018).

Furthermore, synthesizing Islamic ethics with international humanitarian frameworks may reveal pathways for enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions. By appreciating Islamic humanitarian ideals within the broader context of international norms, it becomes possible to enrich humanitarian efforts and ensure that they are ethically aligned, culturally appropriate, and practically effective (Lloydd, 2024). The integration of these ethical considerations can facilitate the development of innovative decision-making tools tailored to various humanitarian contexts, addressing the multifaceted nature of crises while remaining true to core humanitarian principles (Broussard et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the collaboration between Islamic ethics and international humanitarian norms represents an indispensable area of inquiry that can bolster the understanding and operational effectiveness of humanitarian initiatives globally. Such interdisciplinary studies are essential for navigating the complexities presented by contemporary humanitarian challenges and are vital in pursuing ethical and effective humanitarian action across diverse cultural landscapes (Müller, 2022).

The pressing need for systematic comparative analysis between Islamic ethics and international humanitarian frameworks has become increasingly clear within the contemporary humanitarian landscape. Despite the profound significance of both traditions, a notable research gap persists; existing scholarship typically centers on Islamic jurisprudence related to warfare, peace, and charity, or

on humanitarian norms from a secular legal standpoint (Maula, 2024) The infrequency of direct dialogues bridging these two paradigms limits the potential to explore how they may inform, challenge, or complement one another in addressing pressing humanitarian issues (Norton, 2024) This lack of comparative engagement poses a critical challenge, particularly within multicultural societies where humanitarian actors must diligently navigate the ethical demands of both secular and religious contexts (Maula, 2024).

Notably, previous studies offer important insights, but their scope remains limited and often disconnected from the broader discourse. For instance, Sheikhalizadeh and Piralaiy (2017) emphasize the role of Islamic charitable practices such as zakāt and waqf in community development initiatives, while Levina et al. (2016) scrutinize humanitarian principles through the lens of global governance frameworks (Norton, 2024) Additionally, underlines the effectiveness of qualitative methodologies in investigating ethical discourses, albeit without establishing a comprehensive connection between religious and international perspectives (Norton, 2024). These works, although they provide foundational insights, do not deliver an explicit comparative analysis of Islamic ethical frameworks with international humanitarian norms, especially within the modern humanitarian contexts that necessitate cross-cultural sensitivity and ethical inclusivity.

In light of these considerations, it is critical to establish a comprehensive methodological framework that facilitates meaningful dialogue between Islamic ethics and international humanitarian approaches. Such a framework could potentially unveil synergies and divergences, informing humanitarian action that honors both secular imperatives and the ethical dimensions rooted in religious traditions. The integration of Islamic perspectives into the humanitarian discourse can enhance efforts to address complex crises such as refugee situations and disaster response, ultimately fostering a more inclusive approach to humanitarian practice (Norton, 2024).

The knowledge gap in understanding how Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms align or diverge raises critical concerns in addressing pressing humanitarian challenges. Although both frameworks

emphasize core tenets such as human dignity and justice, their epistemological foundations are fundamentally distinct; Islamic ethics are often grounded in divine revelation and specific religious texts, whereas international humanitarian norms typically stem from secular legal traditions and human rights frameworks (Houbeish, 2021) This divergence limits the potential for developing integrative humanitarian strategies that honor both religious and universal ethical commitments. In failing to effectively address this gap, humanitarian practices risk alienating faith-based communities while overlooking essential universal norms of protection and justice (Wang, 2021)

This study aims to bridge this gap by undertaking a qualitative comparative analysis of Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms within contemporary humanitarian contexts. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify areas of convergence and divergence between these two ethical systems, (2) examine the interpretations and applications of these frameworks by scholars and humanitarian practitioners, and (3) explore the implications for crafting more inclusive and culturally sensitive humanitarian policies (Contreras et al., 2019). By engaging in this comparative analysis, the research aspires to contribute significantly to the discourse on comparative ethics, global governance, and humanitarian studies (Wang, 2021).

The originality of this study lies in its approach to social sciences and humanities (SSH) by linking Islamic ethics with international humanitarian principles. Prior scholarship has recognized the need for ethical guidance tailored to the unique contexts faced by humanitarian actors but has often neglected the interplay between these paradigms (Bempong et al., 2019) Notably, the integration of insights from both ethical traditions could enhance the operational effectiveness of humanitarian responses, particularly in multicultural settings where respect for diverse beliefs is paramount (Wang, 2021).

In summary, the focus of this research on comparative ethics not only illuminates the ethical frameworks in humanitarian responses but also underscores the necessity for dialogue between Islamic and international humanitarian norms. This dialogue is essential for fostering collaborative humanitarian efforts that

effectively address the complexities faced by humanitarian actors today (Lee et al., 2022)

In the present study, we establish a comprehensive framework that transcends conventional narrative descriptions, offering a critical and dialogical analysis of Islamic ethics within contemporary humanitarian challenges. This research contributes to the field of comparative ethics by situating Islamic moral paradigms alongside international humanitarian standards, thus enhancing the discourse on global humanitarian ethics and providing practical insights for practitioners in Muslim-majority contexts (Tania et al., 2024)

The originality of this research lies in its theoretical contributions that amplify the understanding and application of Islamic ethics as a complementary framework rather than a competing paradigm. Such positioning enriches the ethical dialogue and fosters culturally resonant practices in humanitarian work, particularly given the significance of Islamic values in numerous humanitarian settings and their implications for ethical standards (Houmine, 2024) By exploring the intersections between Islamic ethical frameworks and broader humanitarian norms, this study underscores the need for local agency and solidarity in crafting effective humanitarian responses, aligning with emerging discourses advocating for localized approaches to aid (Décobert, 2023)

Furthermore, this dialogue seeks to illuminate the complexities arising from the unique ethical dilemmas faced by humanitarian practitioners operating in environments where Islamic ethical principles are prevalent. By acknowledging the nuanced relationship between local Islamic teachings and international humanitarian standards, we articulate a pathway toward cultivating ethical humanitarian practices that are intrinsically rooted in the cultural and moral fabric of the communities served (Wang, 2021). This research serves as a foundational contribution to perception shifts within humanitarian ethics while proposing practical frameworks for enhancing the effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of humanitarian actions across diverse contexts.

In conclusion, our efforts in this study aim to pave the way for an enriched ethical framework that advocates for inclusivity and cultural grounding in humanitarian practices, ultimately encouraging a more responsive and respectful

engagement with local contexts where Islamic ethics play a pivotal role in shaping humanitarian responses (Latief & Nashir, 2020)

METODE PENELITIAN

In this study, a qualitative research design using a comparative approach was employed to investigate the intersections and divergences between Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms. The qualitative orientation was strategically selected for its capacity to provide a profound and nuanced understanding of moral reasoning, textual interpretation, and practical applications in humanitarian settings. This approach is particularly pertinent as it captures the interpretative dimensions of ethics, allowing researchers to explore both the normative foundations and the lived experiences of humanitarian actors engaged on the ground in various contexts (Hunt et al., 2020a)

The research was executed in two main stages. The initial stage involved a comprehensive document analysis focusing on foundational Islamic ethical texts including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical jurisprudential works (fiqh) alongside pivotal international humanitarian instruments such as the Geneva Conventions, United Nations guidelines, and the principles set forth by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Such an analysis establishes a theoretical foundation for identifying the key ethical concepts, principles, and normative claims prevalent within both Islamic and international humanitarian traditions. As articulated by Lundberg et al., understanding these frameworks can aid in navigating the ethical dilemmas faced by humanitarian practitioners in complex contexts like conflict zones (Lundberg et al., 2017); and provide insights into the relational quality of ethical engagement essential for care in humanitarian missions (Hunt et al., 2018).

Moreover, the inclusion of texts related to both religious and secular humanitarian frameworks enriches the comparative study by revealing how Islamic ethics can complement and inform international humanitarian norms, rather than merely serving as an alternative narrative. This approach not only enhances the depth of ethical analysis but also addresses the pressing need for culturally universally relevant ethical guidelines in humanitarian efforts, as evidenced by

findings indicating that humanitarian practices often hinge upon a delicate balance of local ethical considerations and global standards (Lundberg et al., 2017; (Hunt et al., 2020) The synthesized insights from this qualitative research are anticipated to contribute significantly to discussions on the ethical ramifications of humanitarian actions, particularly in contexts where Islamic values profoundly influence ethical choices and norms (Singh, 2017)(Singh et al., 2022).

Therefore, the implications of this research extend beyond mere academic discourse; they resonate with real-world applications in humanitarian interventions that prioritize respect and dignity for all individuals affected by crises, as highlighted by various scholars in the humanitarian ethics literature (Craig et al., 2020)

In conducting this study, semi-structured interviews were effectively utilized to gather insights from two distinct groups: Islamic scholars possessing expertise in ethics, jurisprudence, and theology, along with humanitarian practitioners experienced in applying international humanitarian norms in crisis settings. This methodological choice aligns with the purposive sampling technique, which is particularly suitable for gathering comprehensive perspectives from individuals with relevant backgrounds and experiences (Whiffin et al., 2022) Altogether, fifteen informants were engaged, including experts from Islamic universities, NGO practitioners, and legal experts on humanitarian law, thereby ensuring robust representation of the varied viewpoints necessary for in-depth analysis (Finn et al., 2022)

Data collection was accomplished through an amalgamation of techniques, prominently featuring in-depth interviews, participant observation during humanitarian workshops, and comprehensive analysis of policy documents. This multi-faceted data collection strategy is well-documented as a means to enhance the validity of qualitative findings, particularly when the researcher immerses themselves within both academic and humanitarian contexts, thus facilitating a more nuanced understanding (Phillips et al., 2023) The researcher's presence in these diverse forums served not merely as a passive observer but as a critical instrument for data triangulation, fortifying the findings against biases inherent in single-method approaches (Glaw et al., 2017).

All interviews conducted were audio-recorded, subsequently transcribed, and thematically coded to extract meaningful insights. Prior to the initiation of data collection, ethical approval was secured to ensure that confidentiality was maintained and informed consent was duly obtained from all participants, adhering to established ethical standards in qualitative research (Usman et al., 2022)). This procedural rigor underscores the study's commitment to ethical considerations while also enhancing the credibility of the findings presented.

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HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The qualitative analysis conducted in this study uncovered notable convergences between Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms, particularly concerning fundamental humanitarian values such as the sanctity of human life, justice, and the protection of vulnerable populations. A striking example of this alignment is observed in the Qur'anic injunction stating, "whoever saves one life, it is as if he had saved all of mankind" (Qur'an 5:32), which resonates with the humanitarian principle of preserving life, as embedded in the Geneva Conventions. Both frameworks underscore a commitment to impartiality, advocating protection for civilians regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation, thus highlighting a universal moral foundation that can enhance humanitarian operations within Muslim-majority contexts (Salek, 2015).

However, the analysis identified significant divergences, particularly in the epistemological grounding of these ethical frameworks. Islamic ethics derive legitimacy from divine revelation and religious jurisprudence (fiqh), whereas international humanitarian norms are predominantly secular, rooted in Enlightenment rationality, human rights discourse, and international law. This divergence can precipitate tensions, especially when secular humanitarian interventions are operationalized within religiously conservative societies. For instance, while both Islamic ethics and humanitarian principles strive for neutrality, Islamic ethical perspectives may permit exceptions when such neutrality conflicts with the concept of divine justice (‘adl). In contrast, humanitarian law consistently upholds neutrality as a non-negotiable principle, which illustrates the complex dynamics at play when Islamic and secular humanitarian frameworks intersect (Ngwa, 2017).

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of community and responsibility in humanitarian efforts. Islamic ethics place significant emphasis on collective responsibility (farḍ kifāyah), charity (zakāt, ṣadaqah), and trust (amānah),

framing humanitarian action as a communal religious obligation (Kraft & Smith, 2018). In contrast, international humanitarian norms prioritize institutional responsibility, typically managed by states, NGOs, or intergovernmental organizations (Wurtz & Wilkinson, 2020). This divergence suggests that embedding Islamic principles within humanitarian frameworks can enrich practices by leveraging faith-based networks and community actors, ultimately enhancing local legitimacy and the sustainability of aid programs (Toro-Alzate et al., 2023).

Moreover, the research indicates variations in the interpretation of these frameworks by humanitarian practitioners and scholars (Hunt et al., 2020). Interviews revealed that Islamic scholars frequently regard humanitarian law as compatible with Islamic ethics, as long as it does not contradict fundamental religious principles (Cohen & Billig, 2021). Conversely, humanitarian practitioners emphasized the necessity of maintaining operational neutrality to preserve their credibility in volatile conflict zones (Brubaker, 2015). This finding underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue between religious leaders and humanitarian agencies to address potential contradictions and build trust within affected communities (Lin, 2021).

The evidence asserts that faith-driven community engagement not only underpins enhanced humanitarian responses but also reinforces social cohesion during crises. For instance, community-led interventions have shown to be both feasible and acceptable, enabling the effective participation of marginalized groups, particularly women (Arnott et al., 2022). In addition, intermediaries play a critical role in reconciling differing values between local faith communities and international humanitarian donors, thereby facilitating a more nuanced approach to aid provision (Kraft & Smith, 2018). This relationship is particularly salient in disaster contexts, where local faith actors contribute significantly to community resilience and recovery efforts (Wurtz & Wilkinson, 2020).

Table 1. Comparative Principles of Islamic Ethics and International Humanitarian Norms

Ethical Dimension	Islamic Ethics (Qur'an & Fiqh)	International Humanitarian Norms (IHL/ICRC)
Source of Legitimacy	Divine revelation (Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence)	Secular law, human rights, Geneva Conventions
Principle of Life Protection	<i>Hifz al-nafs</i> (protection of life)	Protection of civilians under Geneva Conventions
Neutrality	Contextual, secondary to justice (<i>'adl</i>)	Absolute operational principle
Responsibility	Collective duty (<i>farḍ kifāyah</i>), charity, social trust	Institutional, state-based, organizational mandate
Human Dignity	Central, tied to accountability before God	Central, tied to universal human rights

To illustrate the convergences and divergences between the ethical frameworks of Islamic ethics and international humanitarian norms, the data were synthesized into a diagram of intersections. This diagram reveals three overlapping areas: shared values, unique contributions of Islamic ethics, and unique contributions of humanitarian norms. The shared values include core tenets such as justice, human dignity, and the protection of life, which are emphasized in both frameworks (Astra et al., 2024)). Meanwhile, the unique contributions of Islamic ethics encompass aspects like divine accountability, communal obligation, and religious legitimacy, signifying a strong moral foundation rooted in faith (Faiq & Sholahuddin, 2024)). In contrast, humanitarian norms offer elements such as legal frameworks, secular universality, and neutrality, which are critical for establishing a non-partisan approach in humanitarian contexts (Izzati, 2017)

The intersectional analysis underscores that both frameworks emphasize values such as justice and compassion. However, Islamic ethics draw upon the mobilization of faith-based duty, promoting a moral accountability to God, and facilitating engagement through religious practices (Mas & Karmila, 2023) On the other hand, humanitarian norms promote universality across various faith traditions and emphasize enforceability through international law, which structures operational guidelines for aid delivery, ensuring that assistance reaches those in need without discrimination (Annisa et al., 2022)

The divergences between these frameworks lead to distinct operational dynamics. Humanitarian practitioners often seek operational neutrality to maintain their credibility within conflict zones, while Islamic scholars may view humanitarian

law as compatible with Islamic ethics, provided that it aligns with core religious principles (Zainuldin et al., 2018) These contrasting perspectives highlight the importance of dialogue between religious leaders and humanitarian agencies. Such discussions are critical for reconciling potential contradictions and building trust within affected communities, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions (Norman & Ruhullah, 2024)

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discussions are critical for reconciling potential contradictions and building trust within affected communities, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions (Fan, 2025).

KESIMPULAN

This study revealed that Islamic ethical principles and international humanitarian norms intersect on fundamental values such as the sanctity of life, human dignity, and justice. These shared commitments provide a strong moral foundation for humanitarian practices, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts where religious legitimacy enhances social trust and acceptance of aid interventions.

Nevertheless, the two frameworks differ in their epistemological bases and operational emphasis. Islamic ethics derive authority from divine revelation and prioritize communal responsibility, while humanitarian law is grounded in secular universality and institutional mandates. These differences can generate tensions in practice, yet they also open opportunities for mutual enrichment by combining the spiritual legitimacy of Islamic ethics with the enforceability of international humanitarian standards.

The originality of this research lies in its comparative approach, which highlights both convergences and divergences between the two traditions. Theoretically, it contributes to the discourse on comparative ethics and humanitarian studies. Practically, it suggests that greater dialogue between religious scholars and humanitarian actors can foster culturally sensitive and globally legitimate practices. Future research should further explore this integration in specific humanitarian contexts to strengthen both academic inquiry and policy implementation

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