

“The Betrayal of Journalistic Expression in Contemporary Reality: A Study in Light of Scriptural Texts and Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah, Compared with International Standards”

Abstract

The media today wields significant influence, shaping individual and collective consciousness and guiding public opinion, making words a noble trust and a profound responsibility. This power has led to phenomena that betray journalistic integrity, including fact distortion, rumor spreading, deliberate falsehoods, and exploitation of privacy, undermining trust and ethical values. This study, titled “The Betrayal of Journalistic Expression in Contemporary Reality: A Study in Light of Scriptural Texts and Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah, Compared with International Standards”, examines the concept of media betrayal within Islamic law, analyzes its contemporary manifestations such as manipulation, blackmail, and defamation, and reviews global examples like fabricated news scandals and data leaks. It compares Sharia-based guidelines with international journalistic standards to highlight convergences and divergences and proposes a Sharia-compliant media charter that balances press freedom with ethical and religious obligations. The study affirms that the word is a trust; its distortion is a betrayal of God and humanity, prohibited by Qur’anic and Prophetic injunctions. Ethical media is thus essential to foster trust, protect rights, promote social justice, and transform words from tools of deception into instruments of guidance and reform.

Keywords:

Journalistic betrayal, media integrity, misinformation, media responsibility, freedom of expression.

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, who commands justice and benevolence, forbids oppression and falsehood, and has entrusted the word as an **amanah** (trust) upon its bearers, binding them with a profound responsibility in shaping humanity and molding conscience. May peace and blessings be upon our Master Muhammad, the Messenger sent as mercy to the worlds, upon his family, companions, and those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment.

In our modern age, the media has emerged as a powerful and influential force, playing a central role in shaping public opinion and directing the course of societies, and even in reconstructing both individual and collective consciousness. Journalism—with its tools of dissemination and communication—has gone far beyond being a mere transmitter of information. It has transformed into a “fourth estate,” deeply involved in shaping values, perceptions, and attitudes. Along with this critical role, however, have appeared various forms of ethical deviation and unregulated practices: distorting facts, falsifying realities, spreading rumors, fabricating lies, and betraying the trust of expression and transmission. All of these fall under what may be termed “**the betrayal of journalistic expression**”, a destructive phenomenon that undermines the credibility of the press and corrodes the trustworthiness of the word itself.

Hence arises the urgent need to study this phenomenon through a **Sharī‘ah-based analytical perspective**: one rooted in the revealed texts, enlightened by the higher objectives of the Sharī‘ah, and balanced between freedom of expression on the one hand, and ethical and legal responsibility on the other.

Research Problem

Against this backdrop, the central problem of this study may be framed in the following question:

What are the Sharī‘ah-based regulations governing journalistic expression? When does journalism amount to a betrayal in the scale of Islamic law? And to what extent are contemporary media standards compatible with Islamic values in this field?

Research Questions

Based on the above problem, which revolves around the parameters of journalistic expression and the boundaries of trust therein, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Sharī‘ah-based concept of the betrayal of journalistic expression, and how is it grounded in Qur’ānic and Prophetic texts?
2. What are the most significant practical manifestations of betrayal of expression in contemporary journalism, and how do they affect media credibility?
3. What are the Sharī‘ah regulations governing speech, transmission, and critique, and how do they balance freedom of expression with moral responsibility?
4. To what extent do international media standards align with the Sharī‘ah-based regulations established by Islamic law?
5. How can a contemporary Sharī‘ah-oriented media charter be constructed to balance freedom of the press with adherence to religious and ethical values?

Research Objectives

In light of its central problem and research questions, this study aims to:

1. Establish the Sharī‘ah-based concept of the betrayal of journalistic expression, defining its meaning and limits in light of Qur’ānic and Prophetic texts as well as scholarly positions.
2. Identify and analyze the most prominent manifestations of betrayal of expression in contemporary journalism, along with their negative consequences for media credibility and for both the individual and society.

3. Specify the Sharī'ah regulations governing journalistic expression—whether in speech, transmission, or critique—in a way that safeguards balance between freedom of expression and ethical responsibility.
4. Compare international media standards with Sharī'ah-based regulations, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence.
5. Propose a foundational vision for a contemporary Sharī'ah-based media charter that achieves balance between press freedom and adherence to religious and ethical principles.

Research Significance

The significance of this study arises from several interrelated dimensions, summarized as follows:

1. **Global and Practical Significance:** Demonstrating the urgent need of contemporary societies for firm ethical and media regulations, amid the media explosion and its accompanying misinformation, fake news, and professional violations that threaten individual stability and societal security.
2. **Sharī'ah Significance:** Grounding the concept of betrayal of journalistic expression in Qur'ānic and Prophetic texts and scholarly discourse, thereby reinforcing the principle of **amanah** in speech and transmission, and clarifying the Islamic stance on lying, falsification, and rumor-mongering.
3. **Scientific Significance:** Enriching jurisprudential and media studies with a foundational vision that integrates Sharī'ah sources and contemporary media standards, addressing a knowledge gap rarely explored in academic research with such depth.
4. **Maqāṣidi and Practical Significance:** Serving the higher objectives of the Sharī'ah in safeguarding the word, protecting values, and preserving rights, while presenting a comprehensive practical framework that assists media institutions in formulating professional codes that regulate freedom of expression with ethical responsibility.
5. **Personal and Societal Significance:** Reflecting the researcher's personal contribution to a matter that concerns both his religious and professional conscience, while also enhancing public awareness of the importance of credibility and transparency in news dissemination, and fostering values of trust and media responsibility.

Key Terms

Given the broad scope of concepts associated with this topic, it is necessary to clarify the principal terms frequently used in this study:

1. **Freedom of Expression:** The right of an individual or institution to express opinions and disseminate information, constrained in the Islamic perspective by Sharī'ah regulations and ethical responsibility (Al-Sharif, 2000, p. 13).
2. **Journalistic Expression:** Material published through various media channels with the purpose of informing, influencing, or guiding, with a direct impact on shaping public opinion.
3. **Contemporary Media Standards:** The professional and ethical rules regulating journalism, ensuring integrity and transparency, though differing in reference points across cultural contexts (Abu El-Ezz, 2023, pp. 150–153).
4. **Media Trust (Amānah I'lāmiyyah):** Commitment to truthfulness and accuracy in transmitting information without distortion or exaggeration, embodying a major Sharī'ah value (Al-Zuhaili, 2000, p. 215).
5. **Betrayal of Expression:** Any deviation in speech or transmission from truthfulness and trust—whether deliberate or unintentional—making it a form of lying in the scale of Islamic law (Rahmani, 2017, p. 10).

6. **Media Charter:** A reference document that governs journalistic practice by ethical and professional principles, ensuring respect for truth and protection of rights and sanctities (International Federation of Journalists, 2019).

Previous Studies

A number of previous studies have addressed freedom of expression and media ethics from various perspectives. However, none has directly examined journalistic betrayal as a Shari'ah-based and professional issue.

1. **Abd al-'Aziz al-'Ubaydi (2023), The Principle of Freedom of Expression between Islamic Shari'ah and Positive Law: A Comparative Study** –analyzed Shari'ah texts and secular laws, but did not engage with media ethics or journalistic betrayal (Al-).
2. **Inji Abū al-'Izz (2023), Digital Media Ethics between Theory and Practice** – highlighted the gap between theory and practice in digital media, yet overlooked Shari'ah foundations and the problem of betrayal in journalistic expression.
3. **Sayf al-Dīn Ḥasan al-'Awaḍ (2022), The Reality of Media Ethics in the Arab World: An Applied Study on Sudan as a Model** –emphasized the lack of ethical and legal frameworks in Arab media but did not explore journalistic betrayal or propose a codified charter.
4. **Bassām Aḥmad al-Sharīf (2019), Media Professional Ethics Worldwide between Theory and Practice** –provided global insights into media challenges, though it neglected Shari'ah references and the betrayal dimension.
5. **Ibrāhīm Raḥmānī (2017), Regulations of Freedom of Expression in Islamic Shari'ah** –offered a jurisprudential framework for freedom of expression, but did not address betrayal in journalistic practice or its institutional implementation.
6. **'Abd Allāh Aḥmad Mūsā al-Samārah (2017), Regulations of Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Islamic Shari'ah: A Comparative Study** –compared Shari'ah regulations with Jordanian law, yet left aside the notion of journalistic betrayal and its codification in a media charter.

Summary:

Previous works have enriched the field of freedom of expression and media ethics but have not treated journalistic betrayal as a standalone issue nor proposed Shari'ah-based solutions. The present study fills this gap by grounding the concept of betrayal in Islamic principles, documenting its manifestations, and suggesting a contemporary Shari'ah-based media charter.

Research Methodology

- **Inductive Method:** To collect Shari'ah texts and contemporary media standards related to the subject.
- **Analytical Method:** To analyze the texts and scholarly positions and relate them to the realities of media practice.
- **Comparative Method:** To compare Shari'ah regulations with modern media standards.

Scope of the Study

- **Subject Scope:** The research is limited to the issue of betrayal of journalistic expression, without addressing other forms of expression.
- **Spatial Scope:** It focuses on journalism in its various forms within the Islamic world, with references to selected international models.
- **Temporal Scope:** It addresses the contemporary era, while drawing upon established Shari'ah foundations.

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Section 1: The Conceptual and Sharī'ah Framework of the Betrayal of Journalistic Expression

1.1. The Concept of Journalistic Expression

Journalistic expression is not merely a mechanical transmission of news or a simple rephrasing of content; rather, it is a cultural, ethical, and social instrument, where truth intersects with public interest, and freedom balances with responsibility, thereby establishing credibility and sustaining trust between the media and society. In this context, journalistic expression is defined as the organized means of conveying information and ideas to the public in accordance with facts, while ensuring honesty, accuracy, and objectivity (Pritchard, 2016, p. 22).

The journalist, in performing their role, acts as a custodian of the message of the community and society, grounding the meaning in a nexus between professional, ethical, and Sharī'ah-based dimensions, while highlighting the impact of words on public understanding and awareness. Every news item transmitted, and every content drafted, carries ethical and social dimensions, necessitating strict adherence to regulations that preserve public interest and protect against media deviations or misinformation (Abu Al-Ezz, 2023, pp. 45-47).

2.1. Betrayal of Expression in the Light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah

The word is a profound trust and a serious responsibility in the framework of Sharī'ah, for it reflects the heart, serves as a beacon of truth, and functions as a means of influencing minds and hearts. From this standpoint, the betrayal of journalistic and written expression constitutes a violation of this trust, for an individual will be held accountable before Allah Almighty: "Not a word does he utter but there is a watcher ready [to record it]" (Qaaf: 18). Although the tongue and the pen may outwardly appear free, they are bound by the principles of truth and justice. Any transgression of these principles is considered a betrayal of expression and a deviation from the requirement of trust.

Betrayal in expression is not merely a trivial professional mistake; it is a violation of Sharī'ah norms, a transgression against honesty and justice, and a breach of societal trust granted by the public to the writer or media professional. The Qur'ān explicitly warns against forms of betrayal in speech and writing, as evident in the following prohibitions:

Lying in speech: "So We place the curse of Allah upon the liars" (Āl'Imrān: 61), which serves as a warning against exploiting words or writing in falsehood, invoking Allah's curse and punishment.

Concealment of truth: "Indeed, those who conceal what We have sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Book, they are cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse" (Al-Baqarah: 159). This indicates that hiding the truth or facts by those entrusted with communication constitutes a betrayal of both the word and the collective intellect.

Slander and false accusation: "And those who harm believing men and believing women undeservedly, they have certainly borne a clear sin" [Al-Aḥzāb: 58]. This warns against using words or writing to spread falsehood and harm, damaging reputations and undermining trust.

Falsification and mixing truth with falsehood: "Do not mix truth with falsehood or conceal the truth knowingly" (Al-Baqarah: 42). This directive prohibits deliberate distortion, alteration, or concealment of facts.

Spreading discord or falsehood: "And those who harm believing men and believing women undeservedly, they have certainly borne a clear sin" (Al-Aḥzāb: 58), demonstrating the prohibition against publishing content that harms others, forming a basis to prevent rumors and fabricated reports that erode societal trust.

The Sunnah further reinforces this principle and considers betrayal of the word a blameworthy trait. The Prophet (SallallahuAlayhi Wasallam) stated: "The signs of a hypocrite

are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays”(Al-Bukhari, 1311H/1893–1894, Vol. 1, p. 16), and also said: “Indeed, a servant may speak a word without giving it much importance, and it will cause him to fall into the Fire for seventy autumns”(Al-Tirmidhi, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 146).

From these texts, it is clear that responsibility extends beyond mere speech to include writing and publication by any means. Every written or published statement is accountable before Allah for its impact on public opinion and dissemination of truth or falsehood.

Based on these Qur’ānic and Prophetic references, the betrayal of journalistic and written expression can manifest in multiple forms:

1. **Distortion of news:** Altering facts to mislead public opinion, transforming media into instruments of deception rather than vehicles for truth.
2. **Spreading rumors or false information:** Undermining trust, sowing confusion, and weakening the foundations of accurate knowledge.
3. **Mixing opinion with news:** Violating principles of objectivity and fairness, impairing the audience’s ability to distinguish between fact and interpretation.
4. **Using expression to propagate falsehood or harmful influence:** Turning a medium of reform into a tool for misguidance and deception.
5. **Distorting presentation or selective reporting:** Changing context or omitting parts of the news, thus misrepresenting information.
6. **Exploiting expression to incite sectarian or social discord:** Publishing content that harms groups or individuals, contrary to warnings against spreading discord.
7. **Excessive defamation or personal attacks:** Targeting individuals’ reputations via words or imagery, violating ethical principles and societal trust.
8. **Concealing important information or obfuscating facts:** Misleading public opinion, violating honesty, and compromising transparency.

This betrayal has a **dual dimension**:

○ **Betrayal of Allah Almighty**, who commanded truthfulness and justice, making the word a responsibility before Him.

○ **Betrayal of society**, which entrusted the writer or media professional with credibility and integrity of expression.

Accordingly, journalistic and written expression under Sharī‘ah is not absolute or unrestricted; it is a duty constrained by religious law, measured against the standards of trustworthiness and truthfulness. Deviation from this standard constitutes a betrayal of the noble media mission. Expression that strays from truth becomes an instrument of misguidance rather than guidance, a means of chaos rather than benefit, losing its impact in building a society founded on knowledge and mutual trust—transforming from light to darkness, and from a trust into a burden.

Section2. Forms of Betrayal in Contemporary Journalistic Expression

2.1. Distortion of Facts and Media Misinformation

Distortion of facts and manipulation of news content constitute one of the gravest forms of betrayal in journalistic expression, as they transform the media from a conveyor of truth into a creator of opinions based on falsehood or deliberate reduction. Such practices manifest in extracting statements out of context, exaggerating tones without justification, or arranging events in a manner that guides public opinion toward conclusions not grounded in reality.

In November 2014, Rolling Stone magazine published an article entitled “A Rape on Campus” concerning a gang rape at the University of Virginia. The article relied on the account of a single student without full verification of the facts. Subsequently, significant gaps in the narrative were revealed, leading to a re-investigation, the withdrawal of the article, and an official apology. This case exemplifies how a single account can distort facts and damage the reputation of those involved (Glant, 2015).

In Bangladesh in 2012, reports by Rumor Scanner revealed that some Facebook accounts circulated fabricated photos and videos aimed at inciting sectarian violence, while ignoring other facts that would have provided a balanced picture. This distortion propagated a misleading narrative that encouraged societal division (Dhaka Tribune, 2012).

Islamic law emphasizes that distortion of facts and fabrication of events leads to tarnishing individuals’ reputations and spreading discord, which Allah Almighty has warned against in His words:

"O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicion is sin. And do not spy or backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of Repentance, Merciful" (Al-Ḥujurāt: 1–4). This warning encompasses espionage and disclosing matters concerning people without their consent.

The Prophet (SallallahuAlayhi Wasallam) also confirmed the prohibition of betrayal and exploitation of trust, stating: “Whoever cheats us is not of us” (Muslim, 1334H/1916, Vol. 1, p. 69), indicating that any conduct based on deceiving others or revealing their secrets is religiously impermissible and reflects a breach of ethical principles warned against by Sharī‘ah. Jurists unanimously agree that trust encompasses safeguarding rights, covenants, and secrets. Preserving confidentiality protects individual rights, strengthens social bonds, and enhances mutual trust among people.

From this standpoint, any secret entrusted to a person must be preserved with precision and integrity, following the guidance of Allah and rejecting the pursuit of personal whims that may mislead from the path of truth, as stated:

“And do not follow your desire, lest it mislead you from the way of Allah”(Ṣād: 26), emphasizing the value of honesty and trustworthiness in all human relations.

Consequently, exploiting individuals’ data or personal information for political or financial gain, or for purposes of blackmail, constitutes a blatant betrayal of public trust and a violation of the principles of Sharī‘ah in safeguarding rights and protecting trust. It represents a breach of ethical and social values that ensure societal stability and the integrity of relationships among its members.

2.2. Journalistic Lies and the Spread of Rumors

Journalistic falsehoods or the circulation of rumors constitute a betrayal of media expression that goes beyond mere haste to deliberate conduct intended to harm others or achieve an illegitimate purpose. This occurs whether through an individual correspondent or organized dissemination networks.

In 2006, Duke University witnessed the spread of narratives regarding the alleged sexual assault by football team members. These accusations were widely covered in the media

before judicial verification, leading to the defamation of the alleged victims and sparking extensive debate regarding the responsibility of the media in reporting news prior to verifying its accuracy (Smith, 2008, pp. 123–140).

In December 2016, the Pizzagaterumors in Washington led to false accusations against a local restaurant for involvement in child sexual crimes, culminating in an armed attack on the establishment. This incident highlighted the severe dangers of rumor propagation online and its direct impact on individual safety (Silverman, 2016).

In February 2025, a report by Rumor Scanner revealed the spread of 268 false news cases on social media in Bangladesh, including fabricated images, videos, and false claims that influenced public opinion before their veracity could be verified (Dhaka Tribune, 2025).

These examples demonstrate that lies and rumors threaten societal and moral security. Addressing this requires restricting unmoderated instant dissemination, enhancing mechanisms for correction and public apology, and educating audiences to critically evaluate and verify sources.

The Prophet ﷺ warned against transmitting false news, stating: “Whoever narrates from me a report which he considers false, then he is one of the liars” (Muslim, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 7). From this, the general prohibition of lying and spreading rumors or misleading information is understood, given the harm it inflicts on individuals and society.

3.2. Media Extortion and Breach of Privacy

Exploiting personal information for purposes of extortion or political and financial gain represents one of the gravest forms of betrayal in media expression. This includes the leaking, selling, or misuse of personal data to manipulate public opinion or exert financial pressure (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

In March–April 2018, the Cambridge Analytica scandal revealed the unauthorized use of data from millions of Facebook users to influence electoral campaigns in the United Kingdom and the United States. This incident highlighted the severity of exploiting private information to sway public opinion and misuse personal privacy (The Business Standard, 2024).

In Bangladesh in 2024, sensitive data from the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center (NTMC) concerning citizens and officials were leaked. The data were sold and used for financial extortion, leading to formal complaints and calls for the enforcement of data protection laws (Al-Muqaddam, n.d., Vol. 135, p. 18).

From the perspective of Islamic law, violating individuals’ privacy and exploiting their personal information constitutes a breach of trust and an infringement on public rights, a behavior that is strictly prohibited. The Qur’an provides explicit injunctions to respect others and avoid spying on them: “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge” (Al-Isra: 36) and “Do not spy” (Al-Hujurat: 12), which jurists interpret to include trespassing upon others’ secrets or monitoring them for personal gain (Al-Muqaddam, n.d., vol. 135, p. 18).

The Prophet (SallallahuAlayhi Wasallam) emphasized the respect for others’ properties and privacy in several sayings: “If anyone of you seeks permission three times and is not granted, let him return”(Al-Bukhari, n.d., vol. 5, p. 2305; Muslim, n.d., vol. 6, p. 166). and “No one should milk another person’s livestock without permission” (Ibn Mājah, 2014, p. 294). He also stated: “Muslims are bound by their conditions” (Al-Tirmidhi, 1996, vol. 3, p. 27), indicating that the obligation to uphold rights, covenants, and trust encompasses all forms of human interaction.

Based on these principles, the exploitation of personal or private information for political or financial advantage, or for extortion, constitutes a betrayal of trust and a violation of Sharia provisions, whether the data are material or digital. This underscores the necessity for preventive measures, including the implementation of data protection laws, technological

391 monitoring of media channels, and the promotion of integrity and mutual respect among users
392 of such platforms.
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UNDER PEER REVIEW IN IJAR

Section3. Shariah Guidelines and Contemporary Media Standards

1.3. Ethical Standards in Media According to International Charters

International organizations, having witnessed bitter experiences of the misuse of speech to incite wars, ignite strife, and undermine civil peace, recognized that freedom of expression cannot be left unchecked. Rather, it must be encompassed within a framework of ethical guidelines that safeguard human dignity and preserve societal stability (United Nations, 1948). Consequently, these organizations focused on establishing charters and standards that regulate media practice, linking freedom with responsibility.

In the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948**, Article 19 provides that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”(United Nations, 1966). However, this provision, despite its lofty principles, does not confer absolute freedom. Within the general context of the Declaration, freedom of expression is constrained by considerations of respecting the rights of others, maintaining public order, and safeguarding security and peace. This approach is reinforced in the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966**, in Article 19(3), which stipulates that the exercise of freedom of expression may be subject to restrictions imposed by law, if such restrictions are “necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health, or morals” (United Nations, 1966). International charters, while appearing to protect freedom of speech, explicitly acknowledge that this freedom is conditional upon ethical and legal boundaries that balance the individual’s right to expression with society’s right to protection.

From these principles emerged specialized professional charters, most notably the **Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists** issued by the International Federation of Journalists, which clearly states: “Respect for the truth and the public’s right to know is the journalist’s first duty” (International Federation of Journalists, 2019). It further emphasizes adherence to accuracy, integrity, avoidance of defamation, incitement, and hate, as sacred professional responsibilities. These charters also require journalists to respect individuals’ private lives and to reject all forms of discrimination based on race, religion, color, gender, or belief.

Thus, it becomes evident that international guidelines—despite differing foundations from Shariah sources—recognize that the word is not merely a tool for personal expression, but a social responsibility and moral trust. Freedom of the media is not an absolute value; it is bounded by limits that protect the rights and dignity of others. While these standards emerged from successive human experiences, Islam preceded them by codifying these principles, making every word subject to accountability in this world and the Hereafter.

2.3. General Shariah Guidelines for Expression and Critique

Islam has elevated the status of the word, making it either a building block for upholding truth or a tool for undermining values and societies. Allah Almighty says: “No word does he utter but there is a watcher by him ready” (Qaaf:18). This verse establishes the principle of self-monitoring that governs the tongue even before it is overseen by secular laws. Islamic Shariah regulates the process of expression through comprehensive principles, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Truthfulness and Trustworthiness

Truthfulness constitutes the foundation upon which Islamic media is established, measuring the legitimacy of any conveyed word. It ensures that information reaches the audience unaltered and free from exaggeration, thereby preventing the journalist from committing a betrayal of expression. Allah Almighty says: “O you who believe! If a disobedient person brings you news, verify it” (Al-Hujuraat, 1–7). This necessitates meticulous verification of

news sources and information before publication, ensuring integrity in media discourse, maintaining audience trust, and minimizing deviation from the truth (Ibn ‘Ashur, 1984, Vol. 26, p. 231). Any unverified report exposes the journalist to both legal and moral liability under Shariah.

4482. **Justice and Fairness**

Justice in media entails presenting facts impartially and avoiding favoritism toward any political or social party, (Al-Awda, 2013, Vol. 3, p. 118; Al-Muntada Al-Islami, 238, Vol. 212, p. 14). Allah says: “And when you speak, be just” (Al-An‘am, 152). Muslim journalists are therefore required to maintain balance in their words and present all viewpoints fairly. Any deviation from justice, or exaggeration of facts in favor of a specific party, constitutes a betrayal of the media mission, undermines credibility, and distorts public opinion.

4553. **Wisdom and Shariah Purpose**

The journalist’s discourse should aim at societal reform and development, considering circumstances, time, and place. Allah commands: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good exhortation”(An-Nahl, 125). Wise expression in journalism protects the audience from incitement, avoids sensationalism, and fulfills the Shariah objective of media—to guide and reform society, rather than merely report news or provoke controversy without accountability.

4624. **Protection of Rights and Dignity**

Media is responsible for safeguarding individual dignity and avoiding violations of privacy, (Rifai, 2011, p. 119; Islamic University of Madinah, Vol. 19, p. 198). Allah says: “Do not spy, nor backbite one another” (Al-Hujurat: 12). Muslim journalists must refrain from defaming individuals or publishing their secrets without consent and should convey information in a manner that preserves rights. Violation of personal dignity constitutes a betrayal of the word and a deviation from the objectives of ethical media.

4695. **Consideration of Consequences and Impacts**

Media discourse must extend beyond factual accuracy to anticipate potential consequences and outcomes of the conveyed word, thereby preventing discord or public harm, in accordance with the principle of blocking the means (sadd al-dhara’i), (Al-Muntada Al-Islami, Vol. 184, p. 26). If publishing a true report is likely to incite strife or promote violence, it must be withheld. This represents a practical application of ethical responsibility in journalism, transforming the word from a mere medium of communication into a tool for responsible social reform.

4776. **Sincere Intention**

Sincere intention determines the value of words in Shariah. Journalists who report news or exercise critique must aim at societal reform and upholding truth, rather than seeking fame or revenge. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Religion is sincerity” (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 21). Pure intention protects the journalist from betrayal and ensures that media serves as a tool for education and guidance, rather than inciting chaos or distorting facts.

From this Shariah and ethical framework, it becomes clear that media, in the Islamic perspective, is not merely a matter of freedom of expression but a reformative mission that builds minds, preserves values, and achieves the objectives of Shariah in safeguarding religion, life, honor, and society. It emphasizes the Muslim journalist’s accountability before Allah for every word uttered, transforming truthful expression into an act of worship that brings one closer to God and contributes to societal well-being.

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490 **3.3. Balancing Freedom of Expression with Ethical Guidelines in Islam**

Freedom, from an Islamic perspective, is neither unrestrained nor absolute. It is a responsible freedom connected to the objective of preserving benefits and preventing harm. While Islam affirms freedom of opinion, it mandates that this freedom be regulated by the values of truth

and justice. Allah Almighty commands: “And speak to people good [words]” (Al-Baqarah: 83), establishing that wholesome speech serves as a general criterion for legitimate expression.

Scholars assert that the balance between freedom and guidelines is based on three main principles (Al-Hazmi, 2004, p. 480):

Public Interest: Expression must not become a tool that threatens security, unity, or moral integrity.

Protection of Individual Rights: Freedom of expression must not violate the privacy or reputation of others.

Accountability: Freedom is inseparable from responsibility. Islam does not accept the argument, “This is merely an opinion”; every opinion is accountable for its consequences and effects.

This understanding closely aligns—with a different foundational approach—with international charters that impose ethical and legal limitations on media freedom. However, Islam adds a spiritual dimension, making regulation an act of worship toward Allah rather than a mere legal or social obligation. Oversight is therefore twofold: a heart-centered self-monitoring and a socially enforced legal supervision.

Accordingly, balanced media is that which combines freedom of expression, disciplined by values, with adherence to truthfulness and justice, transforming media into a force for reform rather than a means of corruption.

Conclusion of the Section

This section demonstrates that the word is a trust and a responsibility, not to be left to the whims of desire, but constrained by truth, justice, and protection of rights and society. Freedom of expression, whether under Shariah or international standards, is not absolute; it is inseparable from responsibility and wisdom. Media, when guided by ethical and Shariah-based principles, becomes a tool for reform and constructive engagement, preserving values, preventing discord, and elevating truth above falsehood. Consequently, the Muslim journalist emerges as a guardian of dignity, a conveyor of truth, and a custodian of Shariah objectives, with words that illuminate rather than mislead, and a balance that sustains both freedom and duty, thereby fostering dialogue over conflict and maintaining societal stability and protection.

Section4. Towards a Contemporary Sharia-Based Media Charter

1.4. Governing Sharia Principles for Media

The following outlines the most important Shariah principles governing media, which illuminate the path of the Muslim journalist, transforming them into bearers of truth, custodians of trust, and guides for collective awareness. Their words become bridges for constructive work, tools for reform, and beacons of enlightened thought, maintaining a balance between truth and public interest, committed to justice and accuracy in every report, and sincere advice in every commentary:

1. Principle of Honesty and Truthfulness

Honesty and truthfulness are fundamental pillars of media, as information is a trust that must be conveyed with accuracy and transparency. Allah Almighty commands: “Indeed, Allah orders you to render trusts to whom they are due”(An-Nisa: 58), and “O you who believe, if a wicked person brings you news, verify it” (Al-Hujurat: 6). The Prophet (SallallahuAlayhi Wasallam) also stated: “A man may speak a word without considering its harm, and it may cause him to fall seventy autumns into Hell” (Al-Tirmidhi, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 146). A Muslim journalist must verify the authenticity and source of news, avoiding exaggeration or selective framing that distorts meaning, keeping media a tool for truth and good.

2. Principle of Justice and Objectivity

Justice in speech forms the basis of media impartiality; it must not favor one party over another. Allah says: “And when you speak, be just” (Al-An‘am: 152). The journalist should present facts objectively and transparently, free from personal bias or partisanship. Media critique thus becomes a constructive and educational tool rather than a means of defamation or revenge, preserving public trust and maintaining balance between media and audience.

3. Principle of Social Responsibility

Media freedom in Islam is constrained by responsibility toward society and individuals. Allah commands: “Hold them accountable; indeed, they are responsible” (As-Saffat: 24), and the Prophet (SallallahuAlayhi Wasallam) said: “Every one of you is a shepherd, and every shepherd is responsible for his flock” (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 6). A Muslim journalist recognizes the influence of words on minds and behaviors, balancing the right to expression with public interest, turning media into an instrument for social reform and construction, away from discord or harm.

4. Principle of Dignity Preservation and Rights Protection

Human beings are honored by Sharia, and their dignity and privacy must not be violated. Allah says: “And We have certainly honored the children of Adam” (Al-Isra, 17:70), and “Do not spy on one another or backbite” (Al-Hujurat: 12). Journalists must respect individual rights, avoid defamation or slander, and present news fairly, safeguarding human dignity while considering social sensitivities and ethical values.

5. Principle of Confidentiality and Professional Secrecy

Secrets are trusts that must not be disclosed except with the consent of their owners or for a legitimate public interest. Allah commands: “And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned” (Al-Isra: 34). Journalists are responsible for protecting their sources and sensitive information, practicing self-censorship before publication, to prevent news from becoming a tool of harm or betrayal, thus maintaining media credibility and trust.

6. Principle of Wisdom and Sincere Intention

Wisdom in media entails consideration of time, place, and method, so that words serve reform rather than discord. Allah commands: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction” (An-Nahl: 125), and the Prophet ﷺ stated: “Actions are but by intentions” (Al-Tirmidhi, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 146). Muslim journalists must ensure that the intention behind their media work is righteous, making words a platform for construction and guidance, not a tool for discord or personal fame.

7. Principle of Considering Outcomes and Balance

Media goes beyond mere reporting; it involves evaluating the impact of information on society and values. Allah says: “And do not throw yourselves into destruction and do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good” (Al-Baqarah: 195), and “And We have made you a balanced nation” (Al-Baqarah: 143). Journalists must balance the right to knowledge with public safety, presenting news objectively while reflecting all perspectives, maintaining social stability.

8. Principle of Reform and Construction

Media is a tool for reform, not destruction or defamation. Allah commands: “And speak to people good [words]” (Quran, 2:83). Journalists should direct media toward correcting behaviors and addressing societal deficiencies, avoiding negative sensationalism or misinformation, thereby transforming media platforms into instruments for public awareness and constructive engagement based on truth and justice.

9. Principle of Consultation and Deliberation

Media thrives on participation and exchange of opinions, not monopolization. Allah says: “And their affair is [by] consultation among themselves” (Ash-Shūrā: 38). Journalists must provide opportunities for diverse viewpoints and encourage objective, scholarly discussion,

enriching public opinion, ensuring inclusivity of information, and breaking monopolies on knowledge in favor of truth and the public interest.

10. Principle of Protecting Religion, Sanctities, and Responsible Freedom

Freedom of media is conditional upon Shariah and ethical guidelines. Allah says: “And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge” (Al-An‘ām: 108), and “And whoever honors the symbols of Allah – indeed, it is from the piety of hearts” (Al-Hajj: 32). Journalists must respect religious and social constants, balancing freedom of expression with its impact on public order and values, ensuring that words remain instruments of reform and construction rather than sources of discord.

2.4. Practical Guidelines for the Professional Muslim Journalist

In the Islamic perspective, journalism is not merely a profession for livelihood or a means to achieve media precedence; rather, it is an ethical mission and an act of worship, for which the journalist is accountable before Allah prior to being accountable before people. Consequently, a Muslim journalist must adhere to a set of rules and principles that integrate professional expertise with Shariah-based integrity, allowing them to fulfill their mission to the highest standard. The most prominent of these guidelines are as follows:

1. Verification of News and Objectivity

A Muslim journalist must handle every piece of information with meticulous caution. Speed or assumptions alone are insufficient; rather, careful investigation, research, and verification of sources are required. News should be presented in a balanced and fair manner that reflects reality without distortion. This professional rigor protects society from media deviation and transforms journalism into a reformative tool that conveys truth with credibility and integrity (J. Islamic Univ. Madinah, n.d., 46, p. 164).

2. Protection of Sources and the Public

Journalists bear the responsibility of safeguarding the confidentiality of sources and the rights of individuals and communities, refraining from disclosing information that may harm others or society. Ethical commitment and secrecy form a solid foundation for media trustworthiness, preventing misuse of information and ensuring respect for the public’s rights while protecting their informational and social well-being.

3. Balancing Freedom and Responsibility

A journalist enjoys freedom of expression within the limits of Shariah and public interest; dissemination of rumors, incitement to discord, or promotion of violence is prohibited. The guiding principle here is that freedom must be accompanied by ethical and social responsibility (Al-Hawali, n.d., Vol. 28, p. 10), so that media becomes a tool for benefit and reform rather than a means of distortion or corruption, thereby preserving societal unity and the integrity of discourse.

4. Constructive Criticism and Proper Dialogue

Criticism must aim at reform and evaluation, adhering to the etiquette of dialogue while avoiding insults, denigration, or personal attacks. News and information should guide the intellect toward correct understanding and prudent decision-making, making criticism an educational and developmental instrument that strengthens the role of journalism in social and ethical construction, away from destruction or sensationalism (Al-Awda, 2013., Vol. 12, p. 182).

5. Professional Innovation and Creativity

A Muslim journalist must keep pace with the digital age, utilizing modern tools and technologies to enhance awareness and knowledge while preserving the originality and Islamic mission of journalism (Rifai, 2011, p. 267). Innovation here entails employing

technology to maximize media's impact, transforming contemporary tools into means for reform and education, thus upholding both professional and Shariah values simultaneously.

6. Social Responsibility and Long-Term Impact

Every news item published carries long-term effects on society; therefore, journalists must evaluate potential consequences and risks before broadcasting or publishing. Awareness of future implications ensures that media promotes virtue and truth, safeguarding society from corruption and deviation. The journalist thereby becomes a custodian of the community, responsible for disseminating goodness and righteousness rather than anxiety or chaos.

7. Continuous Professional Advancement

Journalists must combine precise Shariah knowledge with modern media skills to excel professionally and effectively fulfill the mission of Islamic journalism. Continuous learning and practical development enable journalists to address contemporary challenges, maintain the balance between authenticity and modernity, and transform every journalistic word into a civilizational instrument that builds minds and hearts while preserving trust and integrity (Zahran, n.d., p. 431).

In conclusion, this practical framework illustrates that the Muslim journalist is not merely a transmitter of news but a bearer of a reformatory mission and a custodian of truth and trust. Every word becomes a constructive tool, and every report a means for societal welfare. Commitment to verification, objectivity, source protection, and balancing freedom with responsibility ensures the continuity of journalism in fulfilling its civilizational role and upholding ethical accountability before Allah and humanity. Consequently, the journalist becomes a witness to truth, distributing knowledge wisely, safeguarding values, and fulfilling the objectives of Shariah, making every truthful word an act of worship that builds an aware, just, and resilient society.

3.4. Proposed Model for an Islamic Media Charter

In light of rapid developments in the media landscape, particularly with the rise of digital media platforms and social networking services, the necessity of establishing a contemporary Islamic media charter becomes increasingly evident. Such a charter should balance authentic Shariah values with the requirements of modern professional practice, ensuring societal protection from misinformation and discord while enhancing the role of media in constructive and reformatory work. This charter should not be a mere rigid list of rules, but a flexible framework capable of adapting to diverse media environments, multiple cultures, and evolving digital technologies, thereby establishing media as a platform with positive impact, ethical responsibility, and testimony to truth.

This charter can be structured around **seven integrated pillars**, each branching into practical rules and implementation tools:

1. Pillar of Ethical and Shariah Values

This pillar emphasizes the journalist's commitment to truthfulness, justice, mercy, safeguarding human dignity, and respecting rights and privacy, while avoiding insults, abusive language, or disparagement. It also stresses maintaining a righteous intention in every media action. Values act as the compass guiding the journalist's steps, ensuring that their words testify to truth and serve as a shield for justice, rather than as tools for discord or corruption. This pillar gives media content an ethical dimension before it becomes merely professional.

2. Pillar of Professionalism and Practical Practice

This pillar encompasses verification of news and sources, protection of sources' confidentiality, careful handling of sensitive information, and adherence to objectivity and neutrality. It also includes transparency in addressing errors and making corrections, while avoiding sensationalism or triviality in headlines and content. This pillar translates ethical

values into tangible practice, making media an instrument of construction and reform rather than provocation or deception.

6953. Pillar of Social Responsibility

This pillar focuses on the journalist's awareness of the weight of their words and their impact on individuals and groups, promoting public interest and safeguarding public order, while countering rumors and misleading information. Considering the consequences of one's statements before publication ensures that media serves as a voice for balance and stability, a shield for societal values, and a tool for constructive dialogue and informed education rather than chaos and sensationalism.

7024. Pillar of Purpose and Objective

Media should be directed toward construction, not destruction; reform, not corruption. Efforts should aim to uphold the objectives of Shariah: protection of religion, life, intellect, honor, and wealth. The ultimate goal of the charter is to ensure that the journalist serves truth and justice, contributing to the development of a balanced and aware society, integrating Shariah interests with public human welfare, and transforming media into a means of promoting the common good.

7095. Pillar of Digital Engagement and Innovation

This pillar encourages utilizing modern digital platforms for awareness-raising and dissemination of truth in innovative ways, while respecting ethical and Shariah values, and employing contemporary technologies to verify news and rumors. Digital journalism requires creative methods to convey information accurately and clearly, ensuring that digital content is educational and constructive rather than a medium for trivial debates or empty sensationalism.

7166. Pillar of Transparency and Accountability

This pillar emphasizes disclosure of information sources, when possible, the journalist's commitment to correction and apology in case of error, and respect for the public's right to accurate knowledge. Transparency builds trust between media and society, making journalism a responsible practice that serves truth rather than narrow interests, and balances freedom of expression with ethical obligations.

7227. Pillar of Sustainable Development and Media Education

This pillar focuses on using media as a means to enhance societal education and awareness, achieving cognitive and spiritual development, and refining society's skills in handling news and information. Media does not merely report events; it contributes to cultivating an informed and discerning public, capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and instills values of cooperation, tolerance, and moderation in present and future generations.

With these seven pillars, a contemporary Islamic media charter becomes a **comprehensive and flexible framework** covering ethical, professional, societal, digital, educational, and innovative dimensions. Media is thus transformed into an instrument of construction, reform, and testimony to truth, accountable before Allah and society.

732 Conclusion of the Section

In the Shariah perspective, media is not merely a conduit for news but a noble mission and a testimony before Allah and people alike. A professional journalist imbued with ethical values and professional commitment becomes a builder of awareness and a bridge between truth and society, rather than an instrument of discord or sensationalism. The contemporary Islamic media charter, with its seven pillars encompassing truthfulness, justice, transparency, innovation, and sustainable education, guides media toward construction and reform, making every word a sacred trust and a rooted responsibility. Each news report, analysis, and journalistic account becomes a bridge to wisdom, a barrier against discord, and a beacon of truth, safeguarding the objectives of religion, life, intellect, honor, and society.

742 Conclusion:-

After a careful research journey combining Shariah-based foundational analysis and realistic examination of media practices, clear insights have emerged. The study has yielded a set of key findings and recommendations, which can be presented as follows:

First: Key Findings

- Journalistic expression is a fundamental right and a means of conveying information and influencing society, yet it is also a trust and a Shariah-based and ethical responsibility; any betrayal constitutes a deviation from Islamic principles.
- The most prominent forms of betrayal in journalistic expression include distortion of facts and media misinformation, which misrepresent reality, undermine media credibility, and harm public awareness.
- Spreading falsehoods and rumors poses an ethical threat to journalistic expression, destabilizes social security, and diminishes trust in media institutions, highlighting the need for strict regulations.
- Unethical exploitation of private information, such as blackmail or data leaks, violates Islamic values of safeguarding rights and human dignity, and constitutes a breach of journalistic trust.
- International standards of media ethics intersect with Islamic Shariah regulations, particularly regarding truthfulness, dissemination of facts, and the protection of individuals and public order.
- Absence of regulatory frameworks and ethical oversight leads to media deviation, weakens the media's capacity for reform and education, and threatens social stability.
- Enhancing journalistic responsibility requires integrating Shariah-based guidelines with contemporary standards through training programs, legal frameworks, and ethical mechanisms to balance freedom of expression with societal protection.
- Professional and ethical media is not limited to conveying information; it demands Shariah-conscious awareness that safeguards truth and trust, transforming expression into a tool for construction and reform rather than exploitation or betrayal.

Second: Key Recommendations

1. **Activation of Shariah-based Guidelines in Media:** Strengthen adherence to truthfulness, accuracy, and integrity in information dissemination, linking freedom of expression to Shariah-based and ethical responsibility.
2. **Development of a Contemporary Shariah Media Charter:** Formulate a reference document outlining the core principles for Muslim journalists, specifying practical rules for reporting, criticism, and information handling, balancing media freedom with societal protection against misinformation.
3. **Enhancement of Professional and Ethical Training for Journalists:** Develop practical training programs focusing on truthfulness, verification of news, respect for individual privacy, and alignment of journalistic practice with Shariah objectives.
4. **Technical and Legal Oversight:** Implement mechanisms and tools to prevent the spread of false news, misinformation, and blackmail through digital platforms, while enforcing laws protecting personal data and individual rights.
5. **Promotion of Public Awareness on Media Integrity:** Empower audiences with critical skills to verify news, and foster a culture of responsibility in consuming information, thereby supporting social stability and trust between media and society.
6. **Encouragement of Comparative Studies and Research:** Continue scientific research to harmonize international media standards with Shariah-based guidelines, developing practical solutions that enhance credibility and transparency in contemporary media.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that in the scale of Shariah, the word is not merely letters inscribed or sounds broadcast; it is a trust and a message, either a means of construction and reform, or an instrument of destruction and discord. The betrayal of

793 journalistic expression is not a trivial professional error; it is an offense against truth, a
794 violation of conscience, and harm to society as a whole. Accordingly, these findings and
795 recommendations serve as a sincere call for responsible and trustworthy media, committed to
796 both Shariah and professional standards, acting as a voice of truth, a guardian of values, and a
797 bearer of reformative mission, far from the paths of distortion and betrayal. True media is the
798 voice of truth, the mirror of justice, and a pillar of stability in the life of nations.
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