RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE BETRAYAL OF JOURNALISTIC EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY REALITY: A STUDY IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURAL TEXTS AND MAQASID AL-SHARI'AH, COMPARED WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

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Abstract

The media today exerts profound influence, shaping individual and collective consciousness and guiding public opinion, making words a noble trust and a serious responsibility. This power has fostered practices that betray journalistic integrity, including fact distortion, rumor spreading, deliberate falsehoods, and invasion of privacy, undermining public trust and ethical values.This study, "The Betrayal of Journalistic Expression in Contemporary Reality : A Study in Light of Scriptural Texts and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Compared with International Standards", explores media betrayal in Islamic law, examining contemporary manifestations such as manipulation, blackmail, and defamation, alongside global examples like fabricated news scandals and data breaches. It compares Sharia guided principles with international journalistic standards, highlighting convergences and divergences, and proposes a Sharia compliant media charter balancing press freedom with ethical and religious duties. The study emphasizes that words are a trust; their distortion is a betrayal of God and humanity.Ethical media is essential to build trust, safeguard rights, promote justice, and transform words from tools of deception into instruments of guidance and reform.

Introduction: -

In the contemporary era, the media has emerged as a powerful and influential force, playing a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, directing the course of societies, and reconstructing both individual and collective consciousness. Journalism, through its tools of communication and dissemination, has evolved far beyond mere information transmission to become the "fourth estate," deeply engaged in shaping values, perceptions, and attitudes.

Alongside this vital role, various forms of ethical deviation and unregulated practices have appeared: distorting facts, falsifying realities, spreading rumors, fabricating lies, and betraying the inherent trust in expression and communication. These practices constitute what may be termed "the betrayal of journalistic expression," a destructive phenomenon that undermines the credibility of the press and diminishes public confidence in the word itself.

Hence arises the urgent need to examine this phenomenon from a Sharīʿah-based analytical perspective, rooted in the revealed texts of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, guided by the higher objectives (maqāṣid) of the

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Sharīʿah, and balanced between freedom of expression and ethical as well as legal responsibility. This approach also considers comparisons with international standards of journalism and media, aiming to highlight points of convergence and divergence between Shariah-based guidelines and global practices, thereby promoting media integrity and safeguarding public trust.

Research Problem: -
Against this backdrop, the central problem of this study may be framed in the following question:
What are the Sharīʿah-based regulations governing journalistic expression? Under what circumstances does journalistic practice constitute a betrayal according to Islamic law? And to what extent are contemporary international media standards aligned 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. How is betrayal in journalistic expression defined according to Sharīʿah, and what Qur'ānic and Prophetic texts support this concept?
2. What are the key practical manifestations of betrayal in contemporary journalism, and how do they impact media credibility? How do international media standards align or diverge from Sharīʿah regulations in this regard?
3. What Sharīʿah-based principles govern speech, transmission, and critique, ensuring a balance between freedom of expression and ethical responsibility? How can a modern Sharīʿah-oriented media charter be developed to harmonize press freedom with adherence to religious and moral values?

Research Objectives: -
In light of its central problem and research questions, this study aims to:
1. To elucidate the concept of betrayal in journalistic expression according to Sharīʿah, defining its scope and grounding it in Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic teachings, and scholarly interpretations.
2. To identify and critically analyze the principal manifestations of betrayal in contemporary journalism, assess their impact on media credibility, and examine points of convergence and divergence with international media standards.
3. To specify Sharīʿah-based principles regulating speech, reporting, and critique, ensuring a balance between freedom of expression and ethical responsibility, and to propose a contemporary Sharīʿah-oriented media charter that harmonizes journalistic freedom with religious and moral values.

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. **Sharīʿah 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 Sharīʿah sources and contemporary media standards, addressing a knowledge gap rarely explored in academic research with such depth.
4. **Maqāṣidī and Practical Significance:** Serving the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah 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 Sharīʿah 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 (AmānahIʿlāmiyyah):** Commitment to truthfulness and accuracy in transmitting information without distortion or exaggeration, embodying a major Sharīʿahvalue(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, one has directly examined journalistic betrayal as a Sharīʿah-based and professional issue.

1. Abd al-ʿAzīz al-ʿUbaydī (2023), The Principle of Freedom of Expression between Islamic Sharīʿah and Positive Law: A Comparative Study –analyzedSharīʿah texts and secular laws, but did not engage with media ethics or journalistic betrayal.
2. InjīAbū al-ʿIzz (2023), Digital Media Ethics between Theory and Practice –highlighted the gap between theory and practice in digital media, yet overlooked Sharīʿah foundations and the problem of betrayal in journalistic expression.
3. Sayf al-DīnḤasan al-ʿAwaḍ (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 Sharīʿah references and the betrayal dimension.
5. Ibrāhīm Raḥmānī (2017), Regulations of Freedom of Expression in Islamic Sharīʿah –offered a jurisprudential framework for freedom of expression, but did not address betrayal in journalistic practice or its institutional implementation.
6. ʿAbdAllāhAḥmadMūsā al-Samārah (2017), Regulations of Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Islamic Sharīʿah: A Comparative Study –compared Sharīʿah 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 Sharīʿah-based solutions. The present study fills this gap by grounding the concept of betrayal in Islamic principles, documenting its manifestations, and suggesting a contemporary Sharīʿah-based media charter.

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

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

General Structure of the Study: -
1. Introduction
2. Research Problem
3. Research Questions
4. Research Objectives
5. Significance of the Study
6. Definition of Terms
7. Review of Previous Studies
8. Research Methodology
9. Scope of the Study
10. Research Tools

Section 1: The Conceptual and Sharīʿah Framework of the Betrayal of Journalistic Expression:
1.1. The Concept of Journalistic Expression
2.1. Betrayal of Expression in the Light of the Qurʾān and Sunnah

Section 2: Contemporary Journalistic Betrayal: Comparing Sharīʿah Principles with Modern Media Standards:
1.2. Forms of Betrayal in Contemporary Journalistic Expression:
2.2. Shariah Guidelines and Contemporary Media Standards:

Section3. Towards a Contemporary Sharia-Based Media Charter:
1.3. Practical Guidelines for the Muslim Professional Journalist
2.3. Proposed Model for a Contemporary Islamic Media Charter

Conclusion:-
o Key Findings.
o Key Recommendations.

References:-
Section 1: The Conceptual and Sharīʿah Framework of the Betrayal of Journalistic Expression:

1.1. The Concept of Journalistic Expression:
o 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).

o 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 Sharīʿah-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 Qurʾān and Sunnah:
The word is a profound trust and a serious responsibility in the framework of Sharīʿah, 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 Sharīʿah norms, a transgression against honesty and justice, and a breach of societal trust granted by the public to the writer or media professional. The Qurʾān 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" (ĀlʿImrān: 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 (SallallahuAlayhiWasallam)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 Qurʾānic 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:
o**Betrayal of Allah Almighty**, who commanded truthfulness and justice, making the word a responsibility before Him.
o**Betrayal of society**, which entrusted the writer or media professional with credibility and integrity of expression.
Accordingly, journalistic and written expression under Sharīʿah 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.

Section 2: Contemporary Journalistic Betrayal: Comparing Sharīʿah Principles with Modern Media Standards:
1.2. Forms of Betrayal in Contemporary Journalistic Expression:
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 (SallallahuAlayhiWasallam) 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 Sharīʿah. 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 Sharīʿah 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. 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 (ṣallállāhuʿalayhiwa-sallam) 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. 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 monitoring of media channels, and the promotion of integrity and mutual respect among users of such platforms.

2.2. Shariah Guidelines and Contemporary Media Standards:
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.

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:

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.

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's mission, undermines credibility, and distorts public opinion.

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.

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.

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.

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 (ṣallállāhuʿalayhiwa- sallam) 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.

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 Section 2:

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 the 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.

Section3. Towards a Contemporary Sharia-Based Media Charter:
1.**3. Practical Guidelines for the Muslim Professional Journalist**
In the Islamic conceptualization, journalism is not merely a profession for livelihood or a means to achieve media precedence; rather, it is a moral mission and an act of devotion, for which the journalist is accountable before Allah prior to being answerable to people. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Muslim journalist to adhere to a set of principles and guidelines that integrate professional craftsmanship with Sharīʿah-based integrity to fulfill this mission optimally. Key among these guidelines are:

1. Accuracy and Objectivity
A Muslim journalist must handle all information with meticulous care, going beyond speed or mere conjecture, by verifying sources and presenting news in a balanced and fair manner that reflects truth without distortion. Such professional diligence protects society from media deviation and transforms journalism into a reformative tool conveying truth with credibility and integrity.

2. Protection of Sources and the Public
The journalist bears the responsibility to safeguard the confidentiality of sources and the rights of individuals and communities, refraining from disclosing information that may harm others or society. Ethical commitment and confidentiality form a solid foundation for media integrity, prevent misuse of information, and ensure respect for public rights and well-being.

3. Balancing Freedom and Responsibility
Freedom of expression is granted within the limits of Sharīʿah and public interest; thus, the journalist must avoid transmitting rumors, incitement, or advocacy of violence. Freedom must be accompanied by moral and social responsibility, ensuring the media serves as a means of benefit and reform rather than distortion or corruption, maintaining societal cohesion and discourse integrity.

4. Constructive Criticism and Civil Dialogue
Critique should be aimed at reformative and corrective purposes, adhering to the etiquette of discourse and avoiding abuse, humiliation, or personal attacks. Information and reporting should guide intellect toward accurate understanding and informed decision-making, making criticism an educational and ethical instrument that enhances journalism's societal role.

5. Professional Innovation and Creativity
The Muslim journalist should embrace the digital era, leveraging modern technologies to enhance awareness and knowledge while preserving authenticity and Islamic principles. Innovation entails utilizing tools of the age to maximize media impact, transforming contemporary instruments into channels of reform and education, thereby upholding professional and religious obligations simultaneously.

6. Social Responsibility and Long-Term Impact
Every published report carries enduring effects on society; hence, journalists must assess future consequences and risks prior to dissemination. Awareness of such impact positions media as a means to promote virtue and justice, safeguarding society from corruption, with journalists acting as custodians of communal welfare.

7. Continuous Professional Advancement
A journalist should combine precise Sharīʿah knowledge with contemporary media skills to achieve professional excellence and fulfill the Islamic journalistic mission effectively. Continuous learning and practical development enable the journalist to navigate modern challenges while sustaining a balance between authenticity and modernity, turning the press into a constructive societal force.

Ultimately, the Muslim journalist is not merely a conveyor of information but a bearer of a reformative mission and custodian of trust and truth. Commitment to verification, objectivity, source protection, and balance between freedom and responsibility ensures the press fulfills its civilizational role and ethical accountability before Allah and

humanity, transforming the journalistic word into a constructive tool that builds knowledge, conscience, and societal integrity.

2.3. Proposed Model for a Contemporary Islamic Media Charter

Amid rapid media developments, particularly with the rise of digital platforms and social media, there emerges a pressing need for a contemporary Islamic media charter. Such a charter should harmonize core Sharīʿah values with professional standards of modern journalism, safeguard society against misinformation and discord, and promote the media's role in societal construction and reform. This charter should not be a rigid code but a flexible framework capable of adapting to diverse media environments, cultural pluralism, and technological advancements, establishing media as a vehicle for positive impact and ethical accountability.

The charter can be built upon seven integrated pillars, each giving rise to practical rules and implementation tools:

1. **Ethical and Sharīʿah Values**
Journalists must uphold truthfulness, justice, mercy, human dignity, and respect for rights and privacy, avoiding insult or name-calling, and maintaining good intentions in all media acts. Values serve as the compass guiding journalistic steps, ensuring words bear witness to truth and shield against corruption or discord.

2. **Professionalism and Practical Conduct**
This pillar encompasses verification of news and sources, safeguarding source confidentiality, controlling sensitive information, maintaining objectivity and impartiality, correcting errors transparently, and avoiding sensationalism or vulgarity in headlines and content. Ethical principles are thus transformed into tangible practice, making media a tool for construction and reform rather than provocation or misinformation.

3. **Social Responsibility**
Journalists must recognize the weight and societal impact of their words, aim for public interest, protect public order, combat rumors, and assess consequences before publication. Social responsibility positions media as a voice of balance, stability, and value preservation, facilitating constructive dialogue and informed education.

4. **Purpose and Objective**
5. Media should serve constructive, reformative ends, promoting Sharīʿah objectives: protection of religion, life, intellect, honor, and wealth. The charter's ultimate aim is for journalists to be servants of truth and justice, contributing to a balanced, conscious society where Sharīʿah and universal human interests converge.

6. **Digital Interaction and Innovation**
Encourages utilizing modern digital platforms for awareness and truth dissemination innovatively, respecting ethical and religious values, and employing technologies to detect misinformation. Digital journalism requires creative means to deliver accurate, clear information, ensuring content is educational and constructive rather than trivial or provocative.

7. **Transparency and Accountability**
Emphasizes source disclosure, when possible, commitment to correction and apology upon error, and respect for the public's right to accurate knowledge. Transparency fosters trust between media and society, ensuring journalism serves truth rather than narrow interests and balances freedom with ethical responsibility.

8. **Sustainable Development and Media Literacy**
Focuses on using media to enhance societal awareness, knowledge, and spiritual development, strengthening community skills in discerning truth from falsehood. Media is not merely a vehicle for news transmission but a means to build informed, cooperative, tolerant, and balanced future generations.

Through these seven pillars, the contemporary Islamic media charter forms a comprehensive and flexible framework covering ethical, professional, social, digital, educational, and innovative dimensions, establishing media as a tool for construction, reform, truth testimony, and accountability before Allah and society.

Conclusion of Section 3

In light of the foregoing, media within the Sharīʿah framework transcends mere information dissemination to become a sacred mission and moral trust. The Muslim journalist, guided by ethical principles and professional diligence, functions as a custodian of truth, fostering societal awareness and integrity. The contemporary Islamic media charter, anchored in its seven pillars, provides a comprehensive roadmap for balancing freedom, responsibility, and innovation in journalism. Ultimately, each journalistic act becomes a conduit for justice, knowledge, and constructive societal reform, safeguarding both divine and human interests.

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: -

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 journalistic expression is not a trivial professional error; it is an offense against truth, a violation of conscience, and harm to society as a whole.

Accordingly, these findings and recommendations serve as a sincere call for responsible and trustworthy media, committed to both Shariah and professional standards, acting as a voice of truth, a guardian of values, and a bearer of reformative mission, far from the paths of distortion and betrayal. True media is the voice of truth, the mirror of justice, and a pillar of stability in the life of nations.

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