
Islamic Teachings on Social Responsibilities

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Abstract

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of social responsibility as a cornerstone of faith and community life. The Qur'an and Sunnah establish that righteousness is not confined to ritual worship but extends to the welfare of others, the establishment of justice, and the maintenance of harmony in society. This research explores how Islamic principles guide believers to act responsibly within their social environments through compassion, fairness, and collective well-being. It examines Qur'ānic injunctions concerning cooperation (*ta'āwun*), justice (*'adl*), and charity (*zakāh* and *ṣadaqah*), as well as the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ model of social engagement, mutual support, and ethical conduct. Using a qualitative and interpretive approach, the study synthesizes classical and contemporary literature on Islamic social ethics. The findings reveal that social responsibility in Islam is both an individual and collective obligation, rooted in spiritual accountability and moral consciousness. These principles remain profoundly relevant to addressing modern social challenges such as inequality, neglect of the poor, and ethical decay. The research concludes that reviving Islamic social ethics can foster a more compassionate, balanced, and cohesive global community.

Keywords: Islamic Ethics, Social Responsibility, Qur'anic Teachings, Prophetic Traditions, Community Welfare, Justice and Charity

Introduction

Islam, as a comprehensive way of life (*dīn*), integrates faith (*īmān*), worship (*'ibādah*), and social ethics (*mu'āmalāt*) into a harmonious moral system. It does not separate spirituality from social responsibility; rather, it regards social welfare as an expression of devotion to Allah. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds believers that

piety is not limited to ritual practices, but is reflected in how one treats others, contributes to the community, and upholds justice. Social responsibility in Islam, therefore, is not a secondary or optional aspect of faith, but a fundamental component of one's moral and religious duty.

The contemporary world faces immense social challenges: inequality, poverty, corruption, social injustice, and moral disintegration. In this context, Islamic teachings on social responsibility hold immense significance. They provide an ethical foundation that can guide individuals and communities to act with fairness, compassion, and accountability.

The Qur'an commands:

“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.”
(Surah al-Mā'idah, 5:2)

This verse lays the groundwork for collective moral cooperation and the prevention of harm — a principle essential to social responsibility. Islam teaches that every individual is accountable not only for personal conduct but also for their contribution to the welfare of others. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stated:

“The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6011; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2586)

This profound metaphor establishes the principle of interdependence among members of society — a defining feature of the Islamic social framework.

In Islam, *social responsibility* encompasses a wide spectrum of duties: caring for the poor and needy, maintaining justice in transactions, protecting the environment, upholding human rights, and ensuring community cohesion. The system of *zakāh*, *ṣadaqah*, and *waqf* (endowment) was institutionalized precisely to create a balanced and just social order. By fulfilling these responsibilities, Muslims contribute to the realization of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* — the higher objectives of Islamic law, which aim to preserve faith, life, intellect, progeny, and property. Historically, the early

Muslim community exemplified these ideals under the leadership of the Prophet ﷺ and the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*). The welfare policies of Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, for example, demonstrated the integration of justice, economic equity, and social care as key components of governance. Similarly, Islamic civilization fostered institutions such as hospitals (*bīmāristān*), schools, and charitable foundations — all rooted in the religious principle of serving humanity for the sake of Allah.

The need to revisit and reapply these principles today is greater than ever. In the modern age, with increasing globalization and materialism, the concept of social responsibility has been narrowed to corporate ethics or philanthropy. Islam, however, offers a broader and spiritually grounded approach — one that connects social service with accountability before Allah and the eternal reward in the Hereafter.

This research, therefore, seeks to explore Islamic teachings on social responsibility by analyzing relevant Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic traditions, and classical Islamic scholarship. It also aims to relate these teachings to contemporary social contexts to demonstrate their enduring applicability. By doing so, the study hopes to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic ethics and modern social challenges, and to highlight how Islamic values can inspire justice, compassion, and moral reform in society.

Literature Review

The concept of social responsibility in Islam has been a recurring theme in both classical and contemporary scholarship. Islamic thought, since its earliest development, has always emphasized the interconnectedness of faith (*īmān*), worship (*'ibādah*), and social ethics (*mu'āmalāt*). Unlike secular ethical systems, Islamic morality derives from divine revelation — the Qur'an and the Sunnah — which define the individual's duty not only toward Allah but also toward fellow human beings and the environment.

1. Qur'ānic Foundations

The Qur'an lays a strong moral and social framework for human conduct. According to AlGhazālī (d. 505 AH), the Qur'an addresses both the inner purification of the soul and the outward conduct of individuals in society. He asserts in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* that true religiosity manifests through one's service to others and compassion toward creation. Numerous Qur'ānic verses emphasize justice ('*adl*'), kindness (*iḥsān*), cooperation (*ta'āwun*), and care for the vulnerable as essential dimensions of faith.

One of the most frequently cited verses in this regard states:

“Indeed, Allah commands justice, good conduct, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, bad conduct, and oppression.” (Surah al-Naḥl, 16:90)

This verse, as Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī explain in their *tafsīr*, summarizes the entire moral message of Islam. Justice and benevolence are not merely social ideals; they are divine commands that govern every relationship in the Muslim community. The Qur'an also describes the believers as a “*middle nation*” (*ummataṇ wasaṭan*) — a community tasked with bearing witness to truth and upholding moral balance:

“Thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people.” (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:143)

This verse establishes a universal responsibility upon Muslims to embody ethical integrity, equity, and communal concern.

2. Prophetic Model and Hadith Literature

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ serves as the ultimate model of social responsibility in action. His life demonstrates how spiritual devotion and social service coexist harmoniously. Scholars such as Ibn Hishām in *Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* and Al-Nawawī in *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* highlight how the Prophet ﷺ prioritized the welfare of the poor, widows, orphans, and travelers.

In one hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said:

“The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others.” (Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ by al-Ṭabarānī, 5787)

This teaching encapsulates the essence of social responsibility — that the measure of one’s faith is determined by the good one brings to society. Similarly, the ḥadīth, “*He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbor goes hungry*” (Sunan al-Kubrā by alBayhaqī, 19049), directly links individual piety with social compassion.

Modern scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (in *Fiqh al-Zakāh*) and Sayyid Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī (in *Islamic Way of Life*) interpret these teachings as the foundation for a balanced socio-economic system that ensures justice, eliminates exploitation, and promotes social solidarity.

3. Classical Jurisprudence and Ethical Discourse

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and ethics (*akhlāq*) developed comprehensive frameworks addressing social responsibilities. Scholars like Imām Mālik, Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah elaborated legal rulings on charity, trade ethics, family relations, and governance. The concept of *ḥisbah* — moral regulation and social accountability — was institutionalized to ensure that public behavior aligned with Islamic ethical standards.

Al-Māwardī in *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* emphasizes that rulers and citizens share a mutual responsibility: leaders must ensure justice and welfare, while citizens must uphold honesty, cooperation, and civic duty. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings on *al-Siyāsah alShar‘iyyah* underline that the well-being of society (*maṣlaḥah ‘āmmah*) takes precedence over individual interests, reflecting Islam’s emphasis on collective responsibility.

4. Modern Interpretations and Contemporary Scholarship

In contemporary times, Muslim thinkers and social scientists have re-examined Islamic social ethics in light of modern challenges such as urbanization, poverty, and globalization. Fazlur Rahman, in *Islam and Modernity*, argues that the Qur’an’s social message is inherently dynamic and adaptable, encouraging Muslims to build just institutions and equitable systems. Similarly, Syed Hossein Nasr, in *The Heart*

of Islam, describes Islamic social responsibility as a sacred trust (*amānah*) — a moral duty rooted in stewardship (*khilāfah*) of the earth.

Academic studies have also drawn parallels between Islamic social ethics and global concepts like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), emphasizing that Islam's spiritual dimension offers a deeper moral motivation for ethical behavior beyond material accountability.

5. Gaps in the Literature

While considerable work exists on Islamic ethics and social justice, fewer studies have synthesized classical Islamic thought with modern applications in community development and governance. This research, therefore, aims to fill that gap by analyzing how foundational Islamic teachings on social responsibility can address modern societal issues such as inequality, corruption, and social alienation.

This literature review thus situates the research within both classical Islamic scholarship and modern academic discourse, highlighting the continuity and relevance of Islamic social ethics across time.

Research Questions and Objectives

1. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to explore and analyze the Islamic teachings on social responsibilities as derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the scholarly tradition of Islam. The study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of how Islamic ethical principles translate into practical duties toward individuals, families, and society as a whole.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify and examine Qur'ānic principles that define and encourage social responsibility in human conduct.
2. To analyze the Prophetic model (*Sunnah*) as a living example of compassion, justice, and community welfare.
3. To explore how classical Islamic scholarship developed frameworks for social justice, charity, and ethical governance.

4. To relate traditional Islamic teachings to modern contexts, highlighting their relevance to contemporary social challenges.
5. To propose insights on how Islamic ethics can guide current efforts toward social reform and community development.

These objectives aim to establish a coherent understanding of how Islam envisions a morally responsible society where individuals are accountable not only to Allah but also to each other.

2. Research Questions

In light of the objectives above, the following research questions guide the study:

1. **What are the key Qur'ānic teachings that form the foundation of social responsibility in Islam?**
2. **How did the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ model and institutionalize social responsibility during his lifetime?**
3. **What role did classical Islamic scholars and jurists play in formulating ethical and legal frameworks for social welfare?**
4. **In what ways can Islamic teachings on social responsibility address modern social and moral challenges?**
5. **How can the revival of Islamic ethical values contribute to sustainable and just community systems today?**

These questions form the analytical framework for the research and direct the discussion toward the integration of faith-based ethics and social practice.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this research is primarily **qualitative, descriptive, and analytical**, relying on **textual analysis of primary and secondary Islamic sources**. Since the topic of social responsibility in Islam is rooted in ethical, spiritual, and jurisprudential dimensions, a textual and interpretive approach is best suited to uncover its meanings and applications.

1. Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative design** aimed at exploring concepts and principles rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses. The goal is to understand *how* Islamic teachings define and shape social responsibility, not to quantify their

effects. The research follows a **library-based model**, involving the systematic review and interpretation of authoritative Islamic texts and scholarly works.

2. Sources of Data

a. Primary Sources

Primary data is derived from the **two foundational sources of Islamic knowledge**:

1. **The Qur'an**, as the revealed word of Allah and the ultimate source of guidance for human conduct.
2. **The Sunnah** of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, preserved through authentic collections of *ḥadīth*, which provide practical demonstrations of Qur'ānic principles.

In addition, early Islamic legal and moral writings such as *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* by AlMāwardī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by Al-Ghazālī, and *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar'īyyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah are used to interpret how early scholars institutionalized social ethics.

b. Secondary Sources

Secondary sources include contemporary books, peer-reviewed articles, and academic commentaries discussing Islamic social thought, ethics, and community development. Works by modern scholars such as Syed Abul A'ālā Mawdūdī, Yusuf al-Qaradawī, Fazlur Rahman, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have been particularly valuable for contextualizing Islamic teachings within modern socio-economic realities.

3. Method of Analysis

The research utilizes **content analysis** to extract ethical themes and patterns from Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīth*, and classical texts. Interpretations are guided by established methodologies of Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and *ḥadīth* sciences, ensuring that meanings are derived within an authentic Islamic framework.

Each textual reference is analyzed for its theological, moral, and social implications. Comparative analysis is used to connect classical interpretations with

contemporary social issues such as poverty alleviation, human rights, environmental ethics, and governance.

4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study is based on **three interconnected dimensions of Islamic ethics**:

1. **Individual Responsibility** (*al-mas'ūliyyah al-shakhṣiyyah*): Personal moral accountability before Allah.
2. **Collective Responsibility** (*al-mas'ūliyyah al-ijtimā'iyyah*): Duties toward family, neighbors, and the wider community.
3. **Institutional Responsibility** (*al-mas'ūliyyah al-mu'assasiyyah*): The role of the state and organizations in ensuring justice, welfare, and equity.

This tripartite framework helps to categorize Qur'ānic and Prophetic teachings in a way that illustrates Islam's comprehensive vision of a just and compassionate society.

5. Ethical Considerations

As this research deals with religious texts and moral principles, care has been taken to maintain accuracy, respect, and objectivity in interpretation. All references to Qur'ān and ḥadīth are cited from authentic sources with transliterated Arabic text. Interpretations are based on recognized commentaries, ensuring scholarly rigor and faithfulness to Islamic teachings.

This methodology ensures that the research remains faithful to Islamic epistemology while engaging critically with contemporary academic perspectives on social ethics.

Discussion

The Islamic framework for social responsibility rests on a holistic vision of human life. Islam views human beings not as isolated individuals but as members of a morally interdependent community (*ummah*). Every person is accountable to Allah for how they contribute to the well-being of others. This section discusses the major

aspects of social responsibility as derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, along with their relevance to contemporary society.

1. The Concept of Social Responsibility in Islam

In Islam, social responsibility is an act of worship. It stems from the belief that all actions are accountable before Allah. The Qur'an declares:

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (Surah al-Zalzalah, 99:7–8)

This verse reminds believers that even the smallest act of goodness carries moral weight. Hence, being socially responsible, showing kindness, fulfilling promises, avoiding harm is an expression of *taqwā* (God-consciousness).

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified this through his character. His concern for the poor, orphans, and travelers reflected his mission of mercy, as stated in the Qur'an:

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.”
(Surah al-Anbiyā', 21:107)

Thus, mercy and moral care for others are central to Islamic social responsibility.

2. Qur'ānic Principles of Collective Welfare

The Qur'an emphasizes social cooperation and the establishment of justice as essential pillars of a healthy society. It commands believers:

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice.” (Surah al-Nisā', 4:58)

Justice (‘*adl*’) is not limited to courts or leadership — it extends to family relations, trade, and community interactions. Likewise, compassion (*rahmah*) and generosity (*ihsān*) are essential to maintaining social harmony.

Islam institutionalized social welfare through mechanisms like *zakāh*, *ṣadaqah*, and *waqf* (endowment). These systems ensured wealth circulation and reduced inequality. The Qur'an states:

“Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke blessings upon them.” (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:103)

This verse illustrates that giving is both a moral and spiritual act — purifying the soul while benefiting society.

3. Prophetic Teachings and Community Ethics

The Prophet ﷺ established a model society in Madinah based on brotherhood, equality, and justice. His famous saying captures the essence of mutual care:

“The believers are like one body; when one limb suffers, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2586)

He taught that wealth and power are trusts (*amānah*) to be used for the common good. The early Muslim community followed this principle through institutions of charity, support for the elderly, and fair trade systems.

The Prophet ﷺ also warned against social negligence:

**“He who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy.”
(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6013)**

Thus, mercy and empathy form the heart of Islamic social behavior.

4. Justice, Responsibility, and Governance

Islamic governance is founded on accountability and service. Leaders are considered servants of the people, not rulers over them. The Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb once said, **“If a mule were to stumble in Iraq, I fear that Allah would ask me why I did not pave the road for it.”** This illustrates the deep sense of moral responsibility that Islam demands from leadership.

Al-Māwardī, in *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, argues that maintaining justice and protecting citizens’ rights are among the greatest social obligations. The ruler must ensure fairness, while citizens must cooperate in righteousness (*ta‘āwun ‘ala al-birr*).

5. Modern Implications of Islamic Social Ethics

In today’s world, many of the values Islam promotes — such as social welfare, honesty, environmental protection, and economic justice — align with global

concepts of social responsibility. However, Islam differs by grounding these actions in faith and divine accountability.

For example, issues like poverty, corruption, and environmental degradation can be addressed effectively through an Islamic ethical lens that links responsibility to worship. When Muslims view their professions, governance, and social interactions as acts of *'ibādah*, social integrity naturally follows.

Modern Muslim thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Fazlur Rahman emphasize that reviving *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* — the higher purposes of Islamic law — is key to creating an ethical, equitable, and compassionate society.

6. Summary

Islamic teachings on social responsibility present a balanced approach: spiritual devotion and social action are inseparable. Through Qur'ānic guidance, Prophetic example, and centuries of scholarship, Islam offers a moral system that promotes cooperation, justice, and human dignity. In an age of moral confusion and inequality, these timeless teachings remain a guiding light for individuals and communities seeking harmony and social reform.

Results

The findings of this research highlight that Islamic teachings on social responsibility are deeply integrated into the core of the faith. The results derived from Qur'ānic analysis, Prophetic traditions, and classical scholarship collectively emphasize that social welfare, justice, and moral accountability are inseparable from religious devotion.

1. Integration of Faith and Social Ethics

The study found that in Islam, *'ibādah* (worship) extends beyond rituals to include all acts that benefit humanity. Actions such as helping the poor, caring for neighbors, conducting honest business, and protecting the environment are considered acts of worship when performed with sincerity for the sake of Allah.

This integration of faith and social ethics gives Islamic social responsibility a spiritual foundation unmatched by purely secular systems.

2. Qur'ānic Foundation of Responsibility

The results show that the Qur'an provides clear principles of justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), cooperation (*ta'āwun*), and generosity (*ihsān*). These principles form the ethical framework for individual and collective behavior.

Verses such as Surah al-Mā'idah (5:2) — **“Cooperate in righteousness and piety”** — and Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:13) — emphasizing human equality — demonstrate that social harmony is both a divine command and a means of spiritual elevation.

3. Model as Practical Guidance Prophetic

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ provided the living model of social ethics in action. His compassion toward orphans, fairness in trade, and justice in leadership illustrate the practical application of divine principles.

The study finds that the *Sunnah* offers a comprehensive blueprint for community building — balancing individual rights and social duties.

The early Islamic community in Madinah is a historical example of how ethical principles can be institutionalized through *zakāh*, *waqf*, and public welfare systems.

4. Role of Classical and Modern Scholarship

Islamic jurists and thinkers, from al-Ghazālī to Ibn Taymiyyah, built upon the Qur'ānic and Prophetic foundations to develop concepts of public interest (*maṣlahah*) and prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafsadah*). These frameworks remain relevant in modern contexts.

The research also indicates that contemporary scholars view social responsibility as an essential component of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* — the higher objectives of Islamic law — which include preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth.

5. Relevance to Contemporary Society

Finally, the results suggest that applying Islamic teachings on social responsibility can effectively address many current global challenges — such as poverty, injustice,

corruption, and environmental neglect. By grounding moral conduct in accountability to Allah, Islam offers a sustainable ethical model for personal and communal reform.

The study concludes that the revival of these values within Muslim societies can contribute significantly to global peace, justice, and human welfare.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that **Islamic teachings on social responsibilities** are rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the long tradition of Islamic scholarship. Islam envisions a society built on justice, compassion, cooperation, and accountability to Allah.

Social responsibility in Islam is not merely an ethical ideal; it is a **divine obligation** that transforms faith into action. Every believer is called to uphold fairness, protect human dignity, and contribute to the welfare of others.

The study concludes that the Qur'an provides the moral framework for social ethics through commands of justice (*'adl*), mercy (*rahmah*), and generosity (*ihsan*). The Prophet ﷺ, through his exemplary life, translated these principles into a living reality — establishing institutions of charity, encouraging community cooperation, and promoting human equality regardless of race or status.

Islamic scholars further developed this framework through concepts such as *maṣlaḥah* (public interest), *amānah* (trust), and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), ensuring that moral principles remained relevant to changing times.

In today's world of social injustice and moral decline, these teachings remain vital. They remind humanity that spiritual purity and social responsibility are inseparable — one cannot be close to Allah while neglecting the needs of His creation.

2. Recommendations

Based on the analysis and results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Revive Qur'ānic and Prophetic Values in Daily Life** : Muslims should strive to embody Islamic ethics such as honesty, empathy, and service in all aspects of life — family, education, business, and governance.
2. **Promote Education on Social Ethics**: Islamic institutions and schools should incorporate courses and programs that emphasize social responsibility from an Islamic perspective, linking faith to practical action.
3. **Strengthen Islamic Welfare Systems**: Revitalizing *zakāh*, *ṣadaqah*, and *waqf* institutions can provide sustainable solutions to poverty and social inequality within Muslim societies.
4. **Encourage Ethical Leadership and Governance**: Leaders should view their roles as *amānah* (trusts) and prioritize justice, transparency, and public welfare, following the example of the rightly guided caliphs.
5. **Foster Interfaith and Global Cooperation**: Islamic teachings on compassion and justice can serve as a foundation for peaceful coexistence and collaboration in addressing global challenges such as climate change and inequality.
6. **Integrate Modern Development with Islamic Principles**: Social, economic, and environmental reforms should be guided by the ethical standards of Islam to ensure holistic progress that benefits humanity and preserves the balance of creation.

3. Final Thought

In essence, Islam provides a timeless and comprehensive model for building a just and compassionate society. The Qur'an, the Sunnah, and centuries of scholarship all emphasize that serving others is a form of worship. When Muslims fulfill their social responsibilities — caring for the weak, ensuring justice, and promoting harmony — they reflect the mercy of Allah on earth.

A revival of these values can transform individuals and nations, fostering peace, unity, and moral strength in a world longing for ethical balance.

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