MODERN CHALLENGES IN ISLAMIC PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF MORALITY AND ETHICS

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Abstract
This study examines the need and processes for reform in Islamic thought amid contemporary challenges. Despite the eternal nature of Sharia, acknowledged by Allah, the conditions of modernity necessitate continuous ijtihad—dynamic interpretation—to preserve the relevance of Islamic teachings. This research employs a textual historical approach, focusing on the discourse of prominent scholars to understand the evolving nature of morality and ethics within Islamic traditions. The study underscores the critical role of ijtihad in addressing the ethical dilemmas posed by modern social changes, technological advancements, and the influence of authoritative religious interpretations. Therefore, an adaptive ethical framework that integrates both individual and collective moral values is essential to ensure that Islamic thought remains relevant and responsive to the complexities of a global society. This study advocates for a balanced approach to religious practices that align with contemporary moral and ethical standards, thereby supporting the sustainability and purity of Islamic teachings in a modern context.

Keywords: *Islamic Thought, Ijtihad, Modernity, Ethics in Islam*

Abstrak
Studi ini mengkaji kebutuhan dan proses reformasi dalam pemikiran Islam di tengah tantangan kontemporer. Meskipun sifat Syariah yang kekal, yang diakui oleh Allah, kondisi modernitas menuntut ijtihad yang berkelanjutan—interpretasi dinamis—untuk menjaga relevansi ajaran Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan historis tekstual, berfokus pada wacana para sarjana terkemuka untuk memahami sifat moralitas dan etika yang berkembang dalam tradisi Islam. Kajian ini menunjukkan pentingya peran kritis ijtihad dalam mengatasi dilema etis yang ditimbulkan oleh perubahan sosial modern, kemajuan teknologi, dan pengaruh interpretasi agama yang otoritatif. Oleh karena itu kerangka kerja etis yang adaptif yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moral individu dan kolektif sangat diperlukan untuk memastikan bahwa pemikiran Islam tetap relevan dan responsif terhadap kompleksitas masyarakat global. Kajian ini mendukung pendekatan seimbang terhadap praktik keagamaan yang selaras dengan standar moral dan etika kontemporer, sehingga mendukung keberlanjutan dan kemurnian ajaran Islam dalam konteks modern.

Kata Kunci: *Pemikiran Islam, Ijtihad, Modernitas, Etika dalam Islam*

A. Introduction

The discourse on reform in Islamic thought is a crucial aspect of examining the texts and contexts of religion. The teachings of Islam, brought by the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of the prophets, represent a perfect and eternal Sharia. Its eternity is acknowledged by Allah because this Sharia does not undergo abrogation or replacement (al-naskh wa al-tabdil). However, the essence of the perpetuity of Islamic Sharia does not imply that Islamic thought does not require reform. Reforms are necessary as situations and conditions continuously change over time. Imam Shatibi stated that conditions inherently have no specific limits; thus, there will not be a single proof that applies to only one reality. Therefore, the door to ijtihad must always remain open, providing relevant solutions in line with the times. Ijtihad serves as an essential tool to address new challenges and dynamics faced by Muslims around the world (Bakry, 2019, p. 57).

The need for the renewal of Islamic thought is also crucial because modern developments have increasingly distanced humans from the source of revelation. In the modern context, many individuals and groups attempt to corrupt or change Islamic teachings and spread heretical and deviant doctrines. This situation reinforces the need for a renewal of thought to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant and can respond to various social, cultural, and technological changes. Thus, the renewal of Islamic thought is not only vital to maintain the relevance of Sharia in a contemporary context but also to protect the purity of Islamic teachings from deviations and innovations that do not align with the fundamental principles of the religion. This renewal must be conducted while firmly adhering to the fundamental values of Islam, through a critical and reflective ijtihad process (Bakry, 2019, p. 58).

In the Islamic tradition, which refers to the practice of following religious authorities or scholars without questioning, there is a significant impact on the moral and ethical dynamics within religious practices (Bakry, 2019). Across various religions, a similar concept emerges where followers are asked to adhere to the teachings or interpretations of authoritative figures within their communities. While often seen as a way to maintain consistency and orthodoxy in religious practices, it also poses several ethical challenges that require serious attention (Adnan Muhammad Amamah, n.d.).

One of the main challenges arising from religious practices is the potential reduction of individual responsibility in moral decision-making. When an individual relies entirely on religious authority to determine what is right or wrong, there is a risk that the critical and reflective aspects of personal ethics may be overlooked. This can lead to situations where actions that may not be ethical by universal standards are justified solely because they are supported by religious authority.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization and increasing intercultural interactions, religious followers now face various viewpoints and values that may differ or even contradict the traditional interpretations they follow. This raises dilemmas for

many individuals who must balance their loyalty to their religious teachings with the need to adapt to broader and sometimes more secular ethical norms (Wahyu Ningsih, 2023). Additionally, advancements in science and technology also present new challenges in religious practices. Contemporary issues such as bioethics, human rights, and social justice require ethical responses that may not have been fully addressed in traditional religious texts. Therefore, religious authorities are called upon to perform ijtihad, or reinterpretation of teachings, to provide relevant guidance. However, this process is often hindered by resistance from more conservative circles who view change as a threat to the integrity of religious teachings. In this context, it is important to explore how morals and ethics can be exercised while maintaining a dynamic and responsive ethical awareness to the challenges of the times

B. Method

The research methodology employed is library research and falls under the category of textual historical research related to morality and ethics. The objects of this study are examined through the thoughts of figures associated with morality and ethics. The methods used are descriptive and synthesis analysis. The descriptive method is utilized to catalog and inventory the thoughts of these figures, while synthesis analysis aims to critically examine and interpret various explanations from cross-sectarian figures in their writings, thus gaining a deep understanding of the phenomena under study (Saifuddin Anwar, 2001). This step is crucial for providing a comprehensive overview of the various approaches and thoughts that exist. Furthermore, synthesis analysis is used to delve deeper into the meanings and implications of these various views (Bakker, 1984). In this analysis, the research will examine various texts and writings. The goal is to identify similarities and differences, and to compile a synthesis that can offer new insights into morality and ethics. This synthesis analysis also aims to assess the relevance of these views in a contemporary context.

This study uses primary, secondary, and tertiary data sources. Primary data includes the original texts from the figures involved, while secondary and tertiary data include literature, documentation, and expert opinions that support and expand the understanding of this topic. This approach ensures that the research is based on strong and diverse evidence, allowing for a thorough and comprehensive analysis (Sutrisno Hadi, 2002). By using library research methods and a textual historical approach, this study seeks to bridge various perspectives in the study of morality and ethics, and to make a significant contribution to academic understanding and religious practices concerning moral and ethical issues..

C. Discussion

1. Morality and Ethics

Moralitas Morality and ethics are two concepts often used interchangeably but have fundamental differences and similarities. Both are closely related to the values that

govern human behavior, yet they operate in slightly different environments and have unique implications. Morality generally refers to the principles or rules held by an individual or group regarding what is considered right or wrong, good or bad. Morality is normative and tends to derive from traditions, culture, or religious beliefs. For example, morality in a particular society may require honesty, respect for elders, or generosity.

On the other hand, ethics is a branch of philosophy that studies what is considered right or wrong in a more analytical and rational way. Ethics seeks to understand, analyze, and explain morality (Miswardi Miswardi, Nasfi Nasfi, 2021). Ethics includes theories and principles that help determine what should be done in specific situations. For instance, deontological ethical theory, proposed by Immanuel Kant, emphasizes duty and moral rules without considering the consequences, while utilitarianism, popularized by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, assesses morality based on the greatest outcome or benefit for the most people (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

A primary difference between morality and ethics is their source and application. Morality is more personal and contextual, often rooted in local traditions and customs. Morality includes beliefs and values ingrained in an individual from an early age and shaped by social and cultural environments. For example, in some cultures, respecting elders is considered a vital moral obligation, whereas in others, it may not be emphasized in the same way. Conversely, ethics is more universal and analytical. Ethics seeks principles that can be universally applied, transcending cultural and religious boundaries. Ethics requires us to think critically about our beliefs and to test them against broader principles. For instance, human rights principles result from ethical thinking that strives to protect the dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds.

Another difference is their approach to decision-making. Morality often provides direct guidance on what to do in specific situations based on existing norms. Ethics, on the other hand, demands critical analysis and sometimes even questions existing moral norms (Suyatno, 2012). Ethics involves deep reflection and logical reasoning to determine the appropriate action. Despite these differences, morality and ethics share many similarities. Both aim to determine and promote correct and good behavior. Both morality and ethics serve as guides for human actions and strive to prevent behavior considered wrong or harmful. They also often interact and influence each other. Ethical principles are frequently used to assess and improve existing moral norms. For instance, moral practices accepted in the past, such as slavery or gender discrimination, have been challenged and changed through more profound ethical analysis and the application of principles of justice and equality.

Morality can also provide valuable insights for the development of ethical theories. Moral values held by societies can help ethics better understand the social and cultural contexts of human behavior. This enables ethics to become more relevant and applicable in real life. In everyday life, the differences and similarities between morality and ethics can be seen in various situations. For example, a medical professional might face a dilemma between maintaining patient confidentiality (morality) and the obligation to report conditions that could endanger others (ethics). In such cases, ethical analysis can help find a solution that respects moral principles without neglecting professional responsibilities (Daniati et al., 2024).

Additionally, in religious practice, morality is often guided by specific doctrines and religious teachings. However, ethics can offer a way to consider how these teachings are applied in broader and more contemporary contexts. For example, teachings about love in religion can be ethically analyzed to address social issues like poverty, injustice, and conflict. Thus, morality and ethics differ in terms of source, application, and approach, but both complement each other and play a vital role in shaping correct and good human behavior. Combining both provides a comprehensive framework for navigating moral complexities in personal and social life.

2. Morality as the Foundation of Religious Moderation

Moralitas Morality is a vital component in religious moderation, playing a major role in shaping the behavior of individuals and communities to coexist harmoniously amid diversity. Religious moderation itself is an approach that avoids extremism and fanaticism and emphasizes balance, tolerance, and harmony. In this context, moral values such as tolerance, justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity form a strong foundation for creating a peaceful and inclusive society (Mawardi, 2022). Several moral values in religious moderation are as follows: a. Tolerance Tolerance is one of the main moral values in religious moderation. It involves acceptance and appreciation of differences in beliefs and religious practices. Tolerance does not mean agreeing with all views, but recognizing others' right to have different opinions. In Islam, the concept of "ukhuwah insaniyah" or human brotherhood underscores the importance of tolerance and harmony among religious communities. b. Justice Justice is another moral value that underlies religious moderation. Justice means treating everyone fairly and impartially and is committed to upholding the rights of every individual. This principle is crucial in building an inclusive society where everyone feels valued and protected. Religious teachings often emphasize the importance of justice as a foundation for harmonious and peaceful coexistence (Fazal & Saleh, 2022). c. Compassion Compassion is a vital moral value in religious moderation. Many religions teach compassion as the core of human relationships. In Christianity, for example, Jesus' teaching about loving one another is a fundamental moral principle. In Buddhism, the concept of "karuna" or universal compassion is a moral foundation that guides actions toward others. Compassion encourages individuals to care for and help others, creating strong bonds within the community. d. Respect for human dignity A moral value that underlies the appreciation of human rights and religious freedom. Every individual has inherent dignity that must be respected and protected. This means rejecting all forms of discrimination and oppression and advocating for the basic rights of all people. Respect for human dignity ensures that everyone is treated with respect and decency, regardless of their religious background or beliefs. The application of moral values in religious moderation can be seen in various practices and policies that promote harmony and avoid conflict. Some examples of these practices are: a. Interfaith Dialogue: Holding interfaith dialogue is an effective way to promote understanding and cooperation among different religious communities. This dialogue allows for the exchange of views and experiences, building mutual understanding and trust. Through dialogue, moral values such as tolerance and respect for differences can be strengthened. b. Inclusive Religious Education: Education that emphasizes religious moderation and universal moral values can help shape a more tolerant and open-minded generation. Curricula that include lessons about various religions and cultures, as well

as the importance of harmony and justice, can reduce prejudice and discrimination. c. Government Policies Supporting Diversity: Governments play a crucial role in supporting religious moderation through policies that value diversity and protect the rights of all citizens. Policies that support religious freedom, protect minorities, and combat extremism can create an environment conducive to religious moderation (Rambe et al., 2023). d. Social Activism and Community: Civil society organizations and communities play a role in promoting religious moderation through various initiatives. Campaigns to raise awareness about tolerance, justice, and compassion can strengthen moral values in society. Social programs that involve various religious communities in joint activities can build solidarity and brotherhood (Santoso et al., 2022). Morality as the foundation of religious moderation is essential in creating a peaceful and harmonious society. Values such as tolerance, justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity help avoid extremism and promote harmony. Although facing various challenges, through education, dialogue, and policies that support diversity, morality in religious moderation can be implemented for the common good. Thus, morality is not only relevant but also essential in an increasingly complex world..

3. Evolution of Religious Interpretation and Practice

The evolution of religious interpretation and practice is a complex and fascinating phenomenon that has influenced the development of various religious traditions throughout human history. Religious interpretation refers to the understanding and interpretation of religious teachings, while religious practice includes rituals, ceremonies, and religious actions carried out by adherents. These two aspects are interrelated and continually change over time, influenced by factors such as historical, cultural, and social contexts. An important aspect of the evolution of religious interpretation and practice is adaptation to social and cultural changes (Robert N. Bellah, 2000). Over time, societies undergo significant transformations in politics, economics, and social fields, which also affect how they understand and practice religion. For example, in increasingly connected and pluralistic modern societies, religious adherents often face new challenges that require adaptation in their religious practices and understanding. Moreover, advancements in science and technology have also influenced the evolution of religious interpretation and practice. Progress in sciences such as biology, physics, and cosmology has triggered changes in views about the universe and humans' place within it. This can affect the understanding of religious concepts, such as creation, life after death, and humans' relationship with nature. Political changes can also influence the evolution of religious interpretation and practice. Shifts in political power or the introduction of new political systems often bring changes in religious dynamics. For example, in countries that experience political regime changes, there may be oppression of certain religious groups or suppression of religious views that align with the political interests of the rulers. In addition to external factors, the evolution of religious interpretation and practice is also influenced by internal factors, such as reinterpretation of sacred texts, developments in theology, and reinterpretation of religious teachings. In various religious traditions, there is a diversity of interpretations of sacred texts, often reflecting differences in cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. This process can lead to the development of new religious sects or reforms in existing traditions. Additionally, developments in theology also play a crucial role in the evolution of religious interpretation and practice (Frazer, 1996). Theology is the discipline concerned with understanding and interpreting religious

teachings and often strives to integrate religious teachings with evolving knowledge and worldviews. Developments in theology can trigger changes in how people understand religious concepts. Apart from interpretation and theology, other factors such as demographic changes, migration, and globalization can also influence the evolution of religious interpretation and practice. Demographic changes, such as an increase in immigrants or demographic shifts in a region, can introduce new religious traditions or create greater religious diversity. Globalization can also expand the influence of cultures and religions, bringing the exchange of religious ideas and practices across regions and nations (Seven, 1966). Facing these complex dynamics, religious leaders and adherents often face challenges in maintaining the unity and continuity of their religious traditions while remaining responsive to the changes around them. This requires a careful balance between tradition and innovation, between stability and adaptation. In conclusion, the evolution of religious interpretation and practice is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon. Influenced by external and internal factors, religious traditions continue to adapt to the social, political, cultural, and technological changes occurring around them. While maintaining continuity with their traditional heritage, religious leaders and adherents need to remain open to change and flexible in interpreting their religious teachings to remain relevant and beneficial to the societies they serve.

4. **Relevance of Morality in Contemporary Contexts**

Relevansi The relevance of morality in contemporary contexts is a critically important and complex subject in a rapidly changing world. Morality, in this context, refers to a set of principles or values that govern human behavior and guide ethical decision-making. Amidst ongoing social, technological, political, and cultural changes, questions about what is right and wrong, and how we should act, remain a primary focus. One important aspect of the relevance of morality in contemporary contexts is how traditional moral values adapt to the changes occurring in society. In many cases, traditionally held moral values may no longer be entirely relevant or applicable in new situations that arise. For example, advancements in information and biomedical technologies have raised new challenges related to privacy, justice, and human dignity, requiring new and more complex moral thinking (Jenny Teichman, 1998). Furthermore, globalization has also brought significant changes in the context of contemporary morality. The exchange of cultures, values, and beliefs from different parts of the world has created greater diversity in moral views and ethics. This challenge requires an inclusive and sensitive approach to the diversity of moral values present in today's global society. Changes in social structure and power dynamics also affect the relevance of morality in contemporary contexts. Issues such as economic, racial, and gender inequality raise questions about justice, human rights, and the fair distribution of resources. Increasingly, people are questioning whether the existing moral value systems are capable of handling these complex social challenges, or if they need to be revised or replaced with new ones. Technology also plays a significant role in shaping contemporary moral relevance. Advancements in fields like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and genetic engineering present new ethical dilemmas that have never been encountered before. For example, questions about the ethics of using personal data, creating autonomous weapons, or manipulating human genetics are becoming increasingly urgent to answer in the context of contemporary morality (Poespoprodjo, n.d.). In facing these dynamics, contemporary society often faces challenges in finding a

solid and relevant moral foundation to guide their actions. In some cases, traditional values still apply and are relevant, but they may need to be reinterpreted or applied differently to address new challenges. On the other hand, in some situations, society may find that new values need to be adopted or developed to address the complexities of existing situations. One possible approach to addressing these challenges is to develop an inclusive and reflective ethical framework. This involves opening dialogues among various groups and perspectives, including religious, cultural, and disciplinary ones. In this way, society can reach a consensus on the moral values underlying their actions while recognizing and respecting the existing diversity. Education also plays a crucial role in promoting the relevance of morality in contemporary contexts. Through moral and critical education, individuals can develop the ability to think critically about moral values, understand the consequences of their actions, and learn how to make ethical decisions in complex and ambiguous situations. Additionally, it is also important to develop a robust regulatory and legal framework to address the challenges of contemporary morality. Appropriate regulations can help protect individual rights, promote social justice, and regulate the use of technology ethically. However, these regulations also need to remain flexible and responsive to the changes occurring in society and technology. In conclusion, the relevance of morality in contemporary contexts is a complex and urgent issue that affects the daily lives of individuals and society at large. Amid rapid changes in an increasingly connected global society, the moral challenges faced by individuals and society become increasingly complex. However, with an inclusive, critical, and reflective approach, society can build a strong and relevant moral foundation to guide their actions and create a better world for all.

5. Perspectives of Individualism and Collectivism

Perspectives of individualism and collectivism are two views that underlie how individuals see themselves in relation to society and their surroundings. Individualism prioritizes individual freedom, autonomy, and personal achievement, while collectivism emphasizes the interests of the group, social solidarity, and community cohesion. The debate between individualism and collectivism has been a fascinating subject in the fields of philosophy, sociology, and psychology, reflecting the various values and preferences encountered in society. From the perspective of individualism, the individual is considered the basic unit of social analysis. Individual freedom and personal rights are viewed as paramount values to be upheld. Individuals are seen as the ultimate authority over their own lives, having the freedom to determine their goals, values, and paths in life. This perspective is often associated with Western societies, where values such as innovation, initiative, and competition are emphasized. On the other hand, the collectivist perspective places emphasis on the group or community as the primary focus. Social solidarity and harmony between the individual and the group are considered more important than absolute individual freedom. Individuals are seen as part of a larger social network, and the interests of the group are often prioritized over individual interests. This perspective is often found in more traditional societies or in cultures that emphasize values such as cooperation, loyalty, and social responsibility. These perspectives reflect different ways of thinking about the relationship between the individual and society. In individualism, the individual is viewed as an independent agent responsible for their own fate. They have the freedom to pursue their own happiness without too much interference from outsiders. On the other hand, in

collectivism, the individual is seen as part of a larger whole, where personal success and happiness often depend on the collective well-being and social harmony. The debate between individualism and collectivism also includes philosophical questions about individual identity and autonomy. In individualism, identity is often viewed as something unique and defined by individual desires and achievements. Individual autonomy is valued as the highest value, and individuals are considered to have the right to determine their own life paths according to their own desires. On the other hand, in collectivism, identity is often linked to a specific group or community, and individual autonomy may be limited by the norms and values embraced by that group. Apart from the philosophical dimensions, the debate between individualism and collectivism also affects various aspects of social, political, and economic life. In politics, the differences between these views are often reflected in debates between liberalism and communitarianism. In economics, the competition between free market systems that emphasize economic individualism and state-based economic models that emphasize economic collectivism continues. In contemporary society, which is increasingly connected and complex, the relationship between individualism and collectivism is becoming more diverse and complex. On one hand, individualism values such as innovation and independence continue to be promoted in technology-driven and globalized cultures. However, on the other hand, social challenges such as inequality, climate change, and economic vulnerability also strengthen the argument for social solidarity and collective cooperation. The importance of balancing individualism and collectivism in contemporary society is increasingly emphasized. Too much individualism can lead to selfishness and social fragmentation, while too much collectivism can restrict individual freedom and innovation. Therefore, it is important to seek alignment between these perspectives, recognizing the values of each and finding ways to integrate them into a balanced and sustainable way of life. In this way, society can benefit from both approaches while minimizing the risks associated with the excesses or deficiencies of each.

D. Conclusion

In the context of the ongoing renewal of Islamic thought, which continuously adapts to changing times, the importance of *ijtihad* becomes key to ensuring the sustainability and relevance of Islamic Sharia. Given the rapid global dynamics, including shifts in social, cultural, and technological realms, the renewal of thought is not only vital for maintaining the purity of the teachings but also for responding to emerging ethical challenges. These challenges include the influence of authoritative interpretations that may limit individual critical and reflective thinking, increased intercultural interactions that introduce conflicts of values, and ethical dilemmas brought about by scientific advancements. This study, utilizing a library research methodology, discusses how understanding and practices in Islam must adapt to address these changes. Therefore, the relevance and application of morality in a contemporary context demand an inclusive ethical framework that reflects both individualism and collectivism to guide ethical actions in a plural and connected society. The alignment between tradition and innovation, as well as between stability and adaptation, becomes

crucial in ensuring that religious interpretations and practices remain meaningful and have a positive impact on the social and spiritual lives of communities.

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