

## BASIC ETHICS FOR ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING: THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*With the current COVID19 pandemic, online education is not only becoming necessary but also increasingly popular. This means there is a need to also have some kind of a guideline for online education. According to Moore (1989), in relation to distance or online education, as a minimum, educators need to agree on the distinctions between three types of interaction: learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction and learner-learner interaction. This article poses an analysis of the said components of interaction related to online teaching and learning. The paper also examines ethics and its importance in relation to Islam. It further states the Islamic perspectives of online teaching ethics, which will function as a theoretical model of Islamic online teaching. The model is explained by describing and illustrating relevant Islamic teachings and principles derived from the Quran and Hadith. Some discussion has been made regarding why Muslim educators should implement the code of ethics specifically in online education.*

*Keywords: Learner – content interaction, learner – instructor interaction, learner –learner interaction, teaching and learning, online Islamic ethics.*

### INTRODUCTION

When COVID19 outbreak was officially announced by WHO in the early 2020, the life of human beings has started to transform in an unimaginable way. Looking at the current situation of COVID19 pandemic, after nearly two years, with the prolonged movement restrictions and lockdowns, many countries worldwide are converting to the use of technology in many aspects of life such as online shopping, healthcare services, communication, working from home, banking and many more. One of the most affected area is education. Since schools and learning institutions are forced to close in order to contain the spread of coronavirus, online teaching and learning is the only option. With this too, comes other concerns, namely about ethics. This is because people behave in many ways, those of which are often perceived as common versus strange behaviours, or acceptable versus intolerable ones. The division or dichotomy of behaviour is therefore closely related to ethics.

At present, with the uncertain outbreak and also the explosion of internet, people's ethical behaviour is not only limited to the real world but is extended to the online, virtual space too. Owing to its wide usage, it is hence necessary to explain the term 'ethics'. A denotative meaning of ethics is the "moral rules or principles of behaviour for deciding what is right and wrong" (Longman Exams Dictionary, 2006). Zaroug (1999) states that ethics originates from a Greek word 'ethos', which signifies habit or custom, and also a Latin word 'moralis' which means customs. Abdurezak A. Hashi (2011) says that ethics brings in "virtues, duties and attitudes of the individual and the society", which implies that ethics involves criteria and values that steer what a person should and should not do (p. 122).

Another description is given by Ciulla (1995, p.6) that "the study of ethics generally consists of the examination of right, wrong, good, evil, virtue, duty, obligation, rights, justice, fairness, etc. in human relationships with each other and other living things". In addition, Haimes (2002) brings to light that many sociologists have taken clear interest in ethics in many areas. Examples can be seen through Giddens (the self and society), Hobhouse and Ginsberg (system of government), Weber (economic ethics), Foucault (individualism, liberalism and modernity), and Lash (cultural theory). In view of those meanings and descriptions, it is evident that ethics encompasses a whole gamut of principles - related to customs, traditions, beliefs and worldviews, in numerous areas such as business, politics, journalism, education and many more.

With particular attention to education, predictably there is the progression of distance education, involving partial or whole integration of online learning, ensued from the advent of computers, technology and the internet, alongside the increased means and methods of teaching and learning. This has also been enhanced and boosted with the COVID19 pandemic. Thus, people must advocate to certain principles when involved in distance or online learning. According to Campbell (2001) (cited in Farmahini Farahani, 2012, p. 891-892), there are several reasons why ethical standards are important for distance or online learning. First of all, ethical standards are intended to articulate attitude and behaviours to distance education personnel. Moreover, ethical standards are expressed as expectations of conduct in distance education. Additionally, they provide a common understanding and the foundation of professional development among those involved in distance learning. Lastly, it represents the hopes and expectations of e-learning, which in turn will allow distance education authorities to be responsible to self, religion and society.

One of the main aspects relating to online learning is the component of interaction (Moore, 1989). Moore (1989) states that the bare minimum for distance educators to concur on the divisions of interaction is the distinction between three

types of interaction which are: i) learner-content interaction, ii) learner-instructor interaction, and iii) learner-learner interaction. Many studies indicated that the classification has shown to be helpful and practical for thinking about online learning (e.g. Bouhnik and Marcus, 2006; Su et. al., 2005; Tuovinen, 2000). In spite of this, only a dearth of studies and academic articles are written with regard to general online ethics (e.g. Nor Shariza Abdul Karim, Nurul Hidayah Ahmad Zamzuri and Yakinah Muhamad Nor, 2009; Erturgut and Soyseker, 2010; Mohsen Farmahini Farahani, 2012). The ethics of online learning from Islamic viewpoint is even more scarce except for some general cyber laws (Tamrin Amboala, Mohd Zulkifli Muhammad and Siti Faeizah Mohd Ali, 2011), software engineering (Shihab A. Hameed, 2009) and ethical communication in IT project (Mohamed Niza, Alia Ahmaed Aldossary and Jamaludin Ibrahim, 2012).

Hence, this paper attempts to present some Islamic ethics for online teaching and learning, especially for distance or online educators. This is performed by examining relevant verses from the Quran and also hadith, positioned within the three types of interaction involved in distance education proposed by Moore (1989). The guidelines are hoped to contribute towards facilitating both educators and students to have an increased knowledge, awareness and conscience towards the online teaching and learning context. This will improve the online teaching and learning from the Islamic lens, particularly in an Islamic country like Malaysia. More universally, mainly in countries which provide distance education akin to Malaysia, the proposed theoretical model of online teaching and learning can act as a guiding standard, and also establish an avenue for further studies.

### **THREE TYPES OF INTERACTION**

Moore's theory of transactional distance (1980) propounds one way of exploring the teaching and learning setting by way of "considering it in terms of the separation between learners, and between teacher and learners" (Benson & Samarawickrema, 2009, p. 7). Irrespective of several critiques of the concept for "its inability to explain processes and predict events, and to correlate transactional distance with learning outcomes" (Benson & Samarawickrema, 2009, p. 8), some others still look at the idea as containing particular values. As highlighted in the earlier section, Moore (1989) proposes three types of interaction in distance education. They include:

#### **1. Learner – content interaction**

The first type of interaction transpires between students and the content presented to them. This type of interaction is a straightforward partition as "without it, there cannot be education" because it is "the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in the learner's understanding, the learner's perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind" (Moore, 1989, p.2). This aligns with Holmbarg's (in

Amundsen, 1993) view that the process is regarded as one way of communicating with a written text, where students are engaged with the text they are reading.

## **2. Learner – instructor interaction**

We know that having online classes means teaching and learning is conducted virtually that is without meeting physically face-to-face like in the traditional classrooms. Yet, instructors are still required to interact with students like other lecturers too. They need to stimulate and maintain students' interests in lessons delivered, motivate, enhance and sustain students' self-direction and self-motivation, make presentations, organise students' application of what is being learned, evaluate students' progress and also provide counsel and support (Moore, 1989; Swan, 2001).

The learner – instructor interaction will be more commendable if its individual nature is retained to avoid "highly generalised, not individual, leaving ultimate responsibility for maintaining motivation, for interacting with the presentation, for analysing the success of application, and for diagnosing the difficulty on the learners themselves, requiring a high degree of learner autonomy" (Moore, 1989, p. 3). The reason for this is because the prevailing psychological and communicational gap in online learning can hamper the anticipated level of understanding between students and teacher by reason of the absence in physical appearance.

In his Transactional Distance theory, Moore (1980) suggests that increasing student-teacher talk in online teaching and learning is vital to link the gaps between the two. So, online instructors should ensure that interactions and communications transpire within the teaching and learning processes (Bouhnik and Marcus, 2006). At this point, it is apparent that instructors are essential in reacting to students' application of new knowledge (Moore, 1989).

Instructors bear huge responsibilities toward students. According to Coppola, Hiltz and Rotten (2001), there are three types of roles that instructors play which comprise cognitive (linked to mental processes of learning, information storage, thinking), affective (associated to influencing the relationships between students and the instructor and the classroom context) and managerial (connected to class and course management).

They ascertain that in an online setting, the cognitive role "shifts to one of deeper cognitive complexity", the affective role, though the relationship with students is more intimate, requires them "to find new tools to express emotion", while the managerial role needs "greater attention to detail, more structure and additional student monitoring" (Coppola, Hiltz and Rotten, 2001, p. 1). Bouhnik and Marcus (2006) believe that instructors' ability to interact with students, along with how the

interaction is implemented, is a crucial element leading to the third type of interaction that is learner – learner interaction.

### **3. Learner – learner interaction**

The third type of interaction refers to the interaction between one student and other students. This can either be individual or in groups, irrespective of the absence or presence of an instructor. Many studies show that communication among students is one of the fundamentals in learning (eg. Airil Haimi Mohd Adnan and Hazlina Abdullah, 2011; Hiep, 2007). Furthermore, gaps in knowledge can be reduced via interactions (e.g. Picciano, 2002) and by means of interactions as well, social and moral supports can be gained (e.g. Haythornthwaite, 2001). Discussion groups are also dominant in creating interactions and communications amongst students (Bouhnik and Marcus, 2006). Interactions can be achieved through email, online conference and chat sessions. Besides, interactions among students can lessen the sense of loneliness and remoteness, while strengthening group bonding (Trentin, 1998). Learner-learner interaction is a mandatory and precious source for learning Moore (1989).

Conceding to Moore's (1989) three types of interaction illustrated above, many studies have been conducted to confirm the success of each type of interaction (Bouhnik and Marcus, 2006; Su, Bonk, Magjuka, Liu and Lee, 2005; Wood and Baker, 2004). Even so, it is not that simple to find online teaching and learning ethics of each interaction from the Islamic point of view. The authors believe that a theoretical model to manage the interaction, especially for distance or online education is crucially essential to control any social dilemma and predicament accompanying the many advantages of online teaching and learning.

### **ETHICS IN ISLAM**

Ethics means distinguishing between immoral and moral behaviour (Zaroug, 1999). Abdurezak A. Hashi (2011) asserts that ethics is identical with the Arabic words 'khuluq' and 'akhlaq' (if singular), which are mentioned twice in the Qur'an (al Qalam: 4 and al Shu'ra: 137). Another term, namely, 'adab' means "manner, attitude, behaviour and the etiquette of putting things in their proper place", and this term is also used interchangeably with the term 'akhlaq', although there are slight differences in terms of source and application (Abdurezak A. Hashi, 2011, p. 123).

The term 'adab' describes the various connotations associated with ethics, intellectual discourse and morals (Nanji, 1991). The term 'akhlaq' describes a moral philosophy that focuses more on the theoretical background related to human behaviour, while 'adab' represents the behaviour, manners and practices of moral philosophy. One describes the 'why' aspect while the other describes the 'what'

aspect, and the two complements each other and are sometimes applied interchangeably.

Abdurezak A. Hashi (2011), similarly emphasises several qualities underlying the meaning of ethics from the Islamic perspective. Firstly, being ethical is associated with good manners and behaviours ('amal salih') which corresponds to human nature ('fitrah') where according to Islam, every human being is born with a good character, unless it is corrupted. This is explained by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. that "righteousness ('al-birr') is a kind of human disposition ('husnul khuluq') and vice ('ithm') is what rankles in your heart and you disapprove that people should come to know of it" (cited in Abdurezak A. Hashi, 2011, p. 123).

Secondly, as the Prophet s.a.w. stated that "the best among you are those who have the best manners and character" which shows that Islam links ethics with religion as stated in the Quran (Quran, An- Naba', verse 4) and also associated human nature ('fitrah') with religion ('din') (Quran, Ar-Rum, verse 30). Thirdly, as mentioned in the Quran there are two sides of human character – pious deeds that are pleasing to Allah, and bad practices driven by human desires. Lastly, in Islam, ethics ('akhlak') includes self-purification ('takiyah al-nafs') and good relationships among human beings and also towards other beings. This signifies that ethics includes social, interpersonal, and personal matters altogether.

In Islam, the main source of knowledge stems from the Quran and the Prophet's s.a.w way of life ('sunnah'). This is stated in the Quran, "You (Prophet Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character" (Quran, Al- Qalam, verse 4), other than as stated by the Prophet's wife, Aishah r.a. that the behaviour and personality of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w is a reflection of the teachings of the Quran. The Prophet s.a.w. also stated that "I was sent to complete morals" and "Those who have perfect faith are those who have better moral character". This directly shows that the sources of Islamic ethics are the Quran and sunnah, as the ethical notions delineated in the Quran are demonstrated in the Prophet Muhammad's s.a.w. way of life (Abdurezak A. Hashi, 2011; Nanji, 1991).

## **ONLINE TEACHING AND INTERACTION**

As specified in the Quran on the word of Allah s.w.t., the basics of good morals comprise the belief in Allah s.w.t., better communications, prolongation of good deeds and modesty. Within these aspects, a theoretical model of online teaching and learning, or a list of guidelines will be provided in line with the three types of interaction described by Moore (1989). These guidelines will be very useful for the use of lecturers and teachers involved with distance learning.

## 1. Learner – content interaction

(1a) Ensuring that the content provided to students is correct and truthful

The Quran emphasises the importance of being truthful as it will “illuminate the heart and improves the conditions of the mind, which eventually enhances the person’s outlook and worldview” (Abdurezak A. Hashi, 2011, p. 125).

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُولُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٧٠﴾  
يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهُ  
فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧١﴾

“O ye who believe, fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right, that He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins: He that obeys Allah and His Messenger, has already attained the highest achievement” (Quran, Al-Ahzab, verses 70-71).

Therefore, teachers must always ensure that the information and contents given to students are accurate and correct.

(1b) Making sure that the sources provided are accurate, valid and authentic

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَاٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا اَنْ تُصِيْبُوْا قَوْمًا  
بِجَهْلَةٍ فَنُصِحُوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نٰدِيْمِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾

“O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done” (Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 6).

It is essential to recognise that the “intellectual attitude of classification and scrutiny of given information is part of the moral duty of every man and woman” (Abdurezak A. Hashi, 2011, p. 125). Truth must always be upheld, and this aspect is very significant especially to a teacher as they deal with students who seek knowledge.

Quran also educates us not to make choices or make decisions based on suspicious matters ('shakk') and assumptions ('zann'), as unconfirmed information should not be used as a basis for determining the truth.

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ  
بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

"But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do" (Quran, Yunus, verse 36).

*(1c) Relating Allah s.w.t., the Creator, to the content*

According to Al-Attas (1980), education is "the recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence" (p. 27). This suggests that the real purpose of seeking knowledge is to know and be able to serve Allah better. Moreover, the Prophet s.a.w once mentioned, "Anyone who learns the knowledge that can please Allah, while in truth he is learning it for his material gains, he will not get the chance to smell heaven in the afterlife" (JAKIM Portal, <http://m.islam.gov.my/en/e-hadith>). Therefore, a teacher should convey knowledge that brings students closer to Allah.

## 2. Learner – instructor interaction

*(2a) Teaching students based on their level*

Ibn Jama'ah (in Muhammad Said Husin, 1995) emphasises that a teacher should always "speak according to their students' ability" in their teaching process. This is very important to increase better understanding among students. With this practice, a teacher will also be able to impart knowledge while ensuring that students' concentration is always at the desired level. By providing knowledge at the proper level of the students and at the right time, students' ability to comprehend more complex problems are attained, and gradually, the teacher can modify or adjust his or her subject matter and teaching practice to a higher level.

According to Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Al-Matalib Al-Aliyah*; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. mentioned:

"Teach! Make things easy! And do not make things complicated! He repeated this three times and then he added: And if you get angry, keep quiet!"

(<http://dailyhadith.adaptivesolutionsinc.com/hadith/How-to-Teach.htm/>).

*(2b) Treating students with consistency, fairness and integrity*

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ  
النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا  
بَصِيرًا ﴾

"Surely, Allah commands you to deliver trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between people, judge with justice. Surely, excellent is the exhortation Allah gives you. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (Quran, An-Nisa, verse 58).

﴿ ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِلْ لَهُمْ  
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ  
أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴾

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided" (Quran, An-Nahl, verse 125).

The Quranic verses above exhibit that Islam emphasises fairness and applies the importance of good instructions in attracting students' attention. Therefore, teachers need to give consistent emphasis to the aspect of justice among students.

### (2c) Giving some autonomy to students

Being a teacher does not mean that one has full authority over the students. The teaching and learning process is not unidirectional, and it involves interaction between teachers, students and the surrounding. Therefore, a teacher needs to give some independence and autonomy to students, so that they can become self-regulated learners at the end of the learning process.

Nevertheless, Islam underlines that there are some limitations that should not be exceeded by students, as mentioned in the Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 2.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا  
لَهُ ۗ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَنْ تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا  
تَشْعُرُونَ ﴾

"O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and be not loud when speaking to him, as you are loud when speaking to one another, lest your good deeds should become void while you are not aware" (Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 2).

(2d) *Maintaining a healthy and secure online environment, with no discrimination, intimidation or threats*

The Prophet s.a.w. is considered the best teacher, as stated by Hamidullah (1939, p. 58) that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. was "a benevolent teacher, very tolerant and sympathetic". Also as mentioned by Imam Malik, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals".

The significance of creating a secured online environment for the teaching and learning process is also mentioned in another hadith reported by Imam al-Bukhari, where Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands".

(2e) *Assessing students and assign grades to students based on their achievement*

Evaluation is an integral part of the curriculum, and a teacher must evaluate according to the suggested criteria based on the objectives and aims of a programme. Each student should be assessed based on their actual achievement, as Islam advises its Ummah to always uphold the truth in all aspects of life, so that it brings one closer to taqwa.

وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ  
الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾

"The word of the Lord does find its fulfillment in truth and in justice. None can alter His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (Quran, Al-An'am, verse 115).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ  
وَآتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

"O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do" (Quran Al-Hasyr, verse 18).

(2f) *Carrying out professional educational activities according to the objectives and aims*

Like any other career, the teaching profession is also subject to the principles of professionalism, and one of those principles is to convey knowledge based on the stipulated objectives and aims. This is in line with the teachings of Islam, both in the Quran and hadith, as shown below.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا  
عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ  
رَّحِيمٌ

“Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger (Muhammad SAW) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He (Muhammad SAW) is anxious over you (to be rightly guided, to repent to Allah, and beg Him to pardon and forgive your sins, in order that you may enter Paradise and be saved from the punishment of the Hell-fire), for the believers (he SAW is) full of pity, kind, and merciful” (Quran, At-Taubah, verse 128).

When queried ‘who are the ones Allah s.w.t. loves the most?’, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w answered, “the ones who possess good morals” (Reported by al-Tabrani), and he added that “the best amongst you are those who are the owners of the best morality” (Reported by Imam al-Tarmizi).

Other than that, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. constantly provided detailed and clear directions for Muslims; “to understand how to attain the goal – what to do, when and how to do it, and why” (Latefah Alkanderi, 2001, p. 37). In addition, teachers must always be sincere in teaching and willing to share all the knowledge they have to students. (Al-Nawawi cited in Latefah Alkanderi, 2001, p. 125), which is further explained by Al-Ghazali (1997) that sincerity will lead one to paradise.

#### (2g) Promoting maximum learning and interactions

When the learning process is implemented online, some students may be distracted and browse sites that are not relevant to their academic needs. Therefore, a teacher is accountable for implementing meaningful learning and interactions with students, to ensure that the distance learning process can be successful. As revealed in the Quran, interaction is very much encouraged in Islam,

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ  
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْفُسُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O humankind! We have created you out of male and female and constituted you into different groups and societies, so that you may come to know each other – the noblest of you, in the sight of God, are the ones possessing taqwa” (Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 13).



should solely address teaching and learning related issues. The issue of privacy is also clearly featured in the Quran which says,

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوْتِكُمْ حَتّٰى  
تَسْتَأْذِنُوْا وَّتَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰى اَهْلِهَا ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

"O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order ye may heed (what is seemly)" (Quran, An-Nur, verse 27).

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اجْتَنِبُوْا كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ اِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ اِثْمٌ وَّلَا  
تَجَسَّسُوْا وَّلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا اِيْحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ يَّأْكُلَ  
لَحْمَ اَخِيْهِ مِيْتًا فَكْرِهْتُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ ءَالُوْا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

"O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much, for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But fear Allah: For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 12).

(2j) *Gaining trust from learners and entrusting them*

A person should be trustworthy, as mentioned in the Quran and hadith below.

﴿٥٨﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يٰۤاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تُوْدُوْا الْاٰمَنَاتِ اِلَىٰ اَهْلِهَا وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ  
النّٰسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعَمًا يُعْظِمُكُمْ بِهِۦٓ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًا  
بَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

"Verily Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things" (Quran, An-Nisa', verse 58).

Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said, "The signs of a hypocrite are three: Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. Whenever he makes a promise, he always breaks it. If you

trust him, he proves to be dishonest. If you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it" (by Al-Bukhari).

"You must speak the truth for the truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to Paradise" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

(2k) *Giving valuable advice and counsel on academic affairs*

As noted by Al Ghazali, educators presume that they have many responsibilities in their learners' life (i.e. outside their classroom), inclusive of providing advice and counselling supports. (Latefah Alkanderi, 2001, p. 128) and this is also commanded in the Quran,

فِيمَا رَحِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا  
مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ  
فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

"... And counselling them in it ..." (Quran, Al-Imran, verse 159).

(2l) *Stimulating learners' curiosity, knowledge acquisition, and comprehension*

A distance education instructor should also be able to motivate the learners to be curious and inquisitive, doing so by correctly questioning everything around them in order to have a deeper knowledge of things and become closer to the Creator. This is also mentioned in the Quran,

يَمْعَشَرِ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنْ أَسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ فَاَنْفُذُوا لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

"O company of jinn and mankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass. You will not pass except by authority [from Allah]" (Quran, Ar-Rahman, verse 33).

A teacher must also be able to inspire, encourage and motivate the learners to keep on developing a sense of longing and desiring more knowledge. Granted that the learners have that drive, they will continue to seek life-long learning. A hadith also speaks that "good question is half of knowledge, which signifies the importance of inquiry in learning. Ibn Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Moderation in spending is half of livelihood; loving care toward the people is half of reasoning; and the good question is half of knowledge".

### 3. Learner – learner interaction

(3a) *Monitoring learners to always continue positively supporting each other*

Islam instructs all Muslims to avoid inappropriate behaviour while encouraging them to perform good ('ihsan'). As a teacher, one should monitor how the learners interact with one another. This monitoring should be in place with the purpose that a strong rapport can be secured to establish a pleasant learning environment.

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ  
رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

"Do not mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good. (Quran, Al A'raf, verse 56).

(3b) *Observing learners' interaction to conform to the excellent moral behaviours advocated by Islam*

In Islam, aiding or abetting in wrongdoing is tantamount to performing it. Therefore, we must stop and abstain from immoral behaviour. It is a teacher's job to advise and protect the learners from deviating from the straight road. The value of this is emphasised numerous times in the Quran.

وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَمَا تَمْسِكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ  
اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

"And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you; and ye have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall ye be helped" (Quran, Hud, verse 113).

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ  
وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

"Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; - for Allah loves those who do good" (Quran, Ali-Imran, verse 134).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا  
 تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ  
 لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful” (Quran, Al-Hujurat, verse 12).

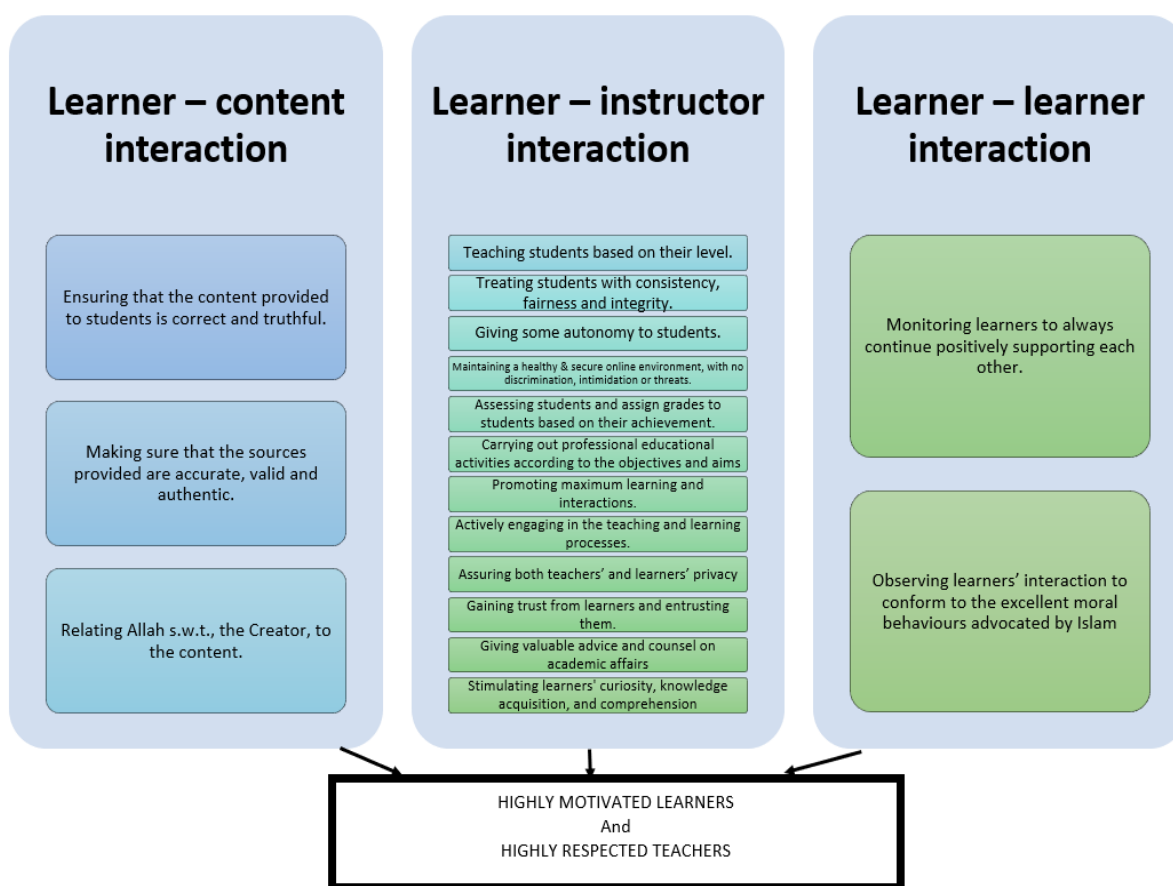


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Islamic Online Teaching and Learning

With all the descriptions and explanations of ethical behaviours provided above, the authors have developed a theoretical model of Online Teaching from an Islamic perspective, which is summarised below (refer to Figure 1). Teachers will be able to hold on to relatively concrete guiding principles based on the Islamic worldview by adhering to the Online Teaching model offered. The model's fulfilment

is hoped to generate highly driven learners as well as highly respected distance education teachers.

## CONCLUSION

"How should we live?" – this common question relates ethics to many aspects of life, including science and technology, and, needless to say, education. This study proposes an online teaching framework for distance or online education based on Moore's (1989) three forms of interaction in relation to Islamic teachings of the Quran and Hadith. Technology absolutely has provided a broad range of options and alternatives for distance or online education. However, when utilised without rules and supervision, the negative and detrimental effects may exceed the good benefits.

As a result, it is critical for instructors to adhere to specific Islamic-compliant teaching norms, as education in Islam strives to attract and bring all humankind closer to the Creator. According to Ibn Jama'ah (in Muhammad Said Husin, 1995), everybody participating in the teaching and learning process should be motivated only by God. Also, the guidelines or theoretical model of online teaching provided in the study will improve online teaching practice while also paving the way for more Islamic-based engagement in the context of distance education.

The capacity of the instructor to 'see' and lead the learners is a critical requirement for efficient online learning. Yet, it would be much better if the guiding was conducted from the Islamic lens, which is wholly represented by the above-mentioned ethical framework.

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