

ISLAMIC JOURNALISM: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Representation of Muslim communities within contemporary media environments continues to generate ethical concerns related to stereotyping, ideological framing, and imbalanced journalism practices. Mainstream media frequently associate Islam with conflict, extremism, and political instability, while limited attention is given to the diversity, social contributions, and cultural complexity of Muslim societies. Islamic journalism has therefore emerged as an important ethical communication framework emphasizing fairness, contextual accuracy, social responsibility, and respectful representation. This study aimed to examine the ethical considerations and practical challenges encountered in the representation of Muslim communities within contemporary journalism environments. Qualitative descriptive methodology combined with critical discourse analysis was employed through media content analysis, in-depth interviews, and document review involving mainstream journalists, Islamic media practitioners, and communication scholars. The findings revealed that institutional pressure, digital competition, political narratives, and algorithm-driven communication systems significantly influenced representational imbalance concerning Muslim communities. Islamic-oriented journalism platforms demonstrated stronger commitment to ethical reporting principles, including balanced representation, contextual explanation, and community-centered narratives. Ethical journalism practices were also found to contribute positively to intercultural understanding and reduction of harmful stereotypes. This study concludes that Islamic journalism represents an important ethical alternative capable of strengthening inclusive communication, promoting socially responsible reporting, and encouraging more balanced representation of Muslim communities within increasingly polarized global media environments.

Keywords: Ethical Journalism, Islamic Journalism, Media Representation, Muslim Communities, Religious Communication



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INTRODUCTION

Journalism occupies a central position in shaping public understanding, constructing social narratives, and influencing perceptions regarding religious and cultural communities across the world. Media institutions function not only as channels of information dissemination but also as powerful actors capable of framing identities, reinforcing stereotypes, and influencing political and social discourse. Representation of Muslim communities within global media environments has increasingly attracted scholarly and public attention due to the persistence of biased narratives, selective reporting practices, and the politicization of religious identities. Rapid expansion of digital media platforms has intensified the circulation of information concerning Islam and Muslim societies, simultaneously creating opportunities for broader representation while also amplifying misinformation, sensationalism, and ideological polarization. Islamic journalism consequently emerges as an important field of inquiry because it addresses ethical responsibilities associated with media representation, truthfulness, justice, and social accountability within contemporary communication systems.

Contemporary discussions concerning journalism ethics frequently emphasize principles such as objectivity, balance, fairness, accountability, and respect for human dignity (Singchoo, 2026). Representation of Muslim communities within many mainstream media systems, however, often demonstrates inconsistencies with these ethical principles. News coverage associated with terrorism, extremism, migration, religious conservatism, and political conflict frequently contributes to generalized portrayals of Muslims as homogeneous or problematic social groups (Mistry, 2026). Simplified narratives and sensational reporting practices may strengthen Islamophobic attitudes, social exclusion, and cultural misunderstanding within multicultural societies. Islamic journalism therefore becomes relevant not merely as a religious media practice but also as an ethical framework seeking to promote truthful representation, social justice, intercultural understanding, and responsible communication concerning Muslim communities and Islamic values.

Globalization and digital transformation have additionally altered the structure and influence of media production, enabling both mainstream institutions and independent Muslim media platforms to participate actively in shaping public discourse (Hussain, 2026). Muslim journalists, Islamic media organizations, and alternative digital platforms increasingly attempt to challenge dominant narratives by presenting more nuanced representations of Muslim identities, religious practices, and social realities. Despite these efforts, Islamic journalism continues to face significant challenges associated with political pressure, market competition, algorithmic amplification, ideological polarization, and ethical dilemmas in balancing religious values with professional journalistic standards (Lamghari, 2026a). Academic examination of ethical considerations and representational challenges within Islamic journalism therefore becomes increasingly necessary for understanding how media practices influence social perceptions, intercultural relations, and the public positioning of Muslim communities in contemporary society.

Media representation of Muslim communities continues to be characterized by ethical tensions and representational imbalances within both international and local journalism practices. News reporting concerning Islam and Muslim societies frequently prioritizes conflict-oriented narratives, security issues, and politically charged events while underrepresenting the diversity, complexity, and everyday realities of Muslim life (Kozlovsky Golan, 2026). Such representational patterns often contribute to social stereotyping and reinforce public perceptions linking Islam primarily with violence, extremism, or cultural incompatibility. Journalism institutions may unintentionally reproduce these narratives through selective framing, sensational reporting, and reliance on limited information sources during politically sensitive events (Ryan et al., 2026). Ethical concerns consequently emerge regarding

whether existing journalistic practices adequately uphold principles of fairness, contextual accuracy, and social responsibility in representing Muslim communities.

Islamic journalism itself also encounters complex challenges related to professional credibility, ideological positioning, and institutional independence within contemporary media environments (Hussaini, 2026). Muslim journalists and Islamic media organizations frequently operate under pressures associated with political interests, religious authority, audience expectations, and commercial sustainability. Tensions may arise between maintaining journalistic objectivity and promoting religious or moral perspectives aligned with Islamic ethical principles. Digital media ecosystems further complicate these challenges because misinformation, emotional polarization, and algorithm-driven content circulation increasingly influence public communication patterns (Barua & Ghosh, 2026). Islamic journalism therefore faces difficulties in balancing ethical accountability, professional journalism standards, and the representation of Islamic values within highly competitive and politically sensitive media landscapes.

Academic discussions concerning Islamic journalism similarly reveal conceptual ambiguities regarding how Islamic ethical principles should be interpreted and implemented within modern journalistic practice (Akhtar, 2026). Existing studies frequently discuss media bias, Islamophobia, or religious communication separately without sufficiently examining how Islamic journalism frameworks address ethical dilemmas related to representation, objectivity, and public responsibility. Limited empirical attention has additionally been directed toward understanding the practical experiences of Muslim journalists and Islamic media institutions in negotiating ethical tensions within contemporary communication systems (Rosten et al., 2026). Insufficient exploration of these dimensions creates challenges for scholars and practitioners seeking to develop more inclusive, ethical, and socially responsible journalism practices concerning Muslim communities and Islamic representation.

This study aims to examine the ethical considerations underlying Islamic journalism and their influence on the representation of Muslim communities within contemporary media environments (Huq, 2026). Particular attention is directed toward understanding how Islamic ethical principles intersect with professional journalism standards in shaping reporting practices, media narratives, and public communication concerning Muslim identities and social issues. Exploration of these dimensions seeks to clarify the role of Islamic journalism in promoting fairness, contextual understanding, and ethical accountability within modern communication systems (Haryanti et al., 2023). Findings from this research are expected to contribute to broader discussions concerning responsible journalism and equitable media representation in multicultural societies.

Another objective of this study involves identifying the major challenges faced by Islamic journalism in representing Muslim communities accurately and ethically within increasingly digitalized and polarized media landscapes (Srimulyani et al., 2025). Analysis focuses on institutional pressures, ideological tensions, commercial influences, political dynamics, and technological transformations affecting journalistic practices related to Islam and Muslim societies. Examination of these factors is essential because representation within media systems significantly influences public perception, intercultural relations, and social cohesion (Hoewe et al., 2012). Research outcomes are therefore intended to provide deeper understanding regarding the structural and ethical obstacles influencing Islamic journalism practice in both mainstream and alternative media contexts.

This study also seeks to generate conceptual insights and practical recommendations concerning the development of more ethical and inclusive journalism practices involving Muslim representation (De Nelson, 2008). Emphasis is placed on exploring how Islamic journalism principles such as honesty, justice, balance, accountability, and social responsibility may contribute to strengthening ethical communication standards within global media systems. Investigation of these dimensions is expected to support the development of journalism

frameworks capable of reducing stereotyping, encouraging intercultural dialogue, and promoting more nuanced representation of Muslim communities (Hidalgo & Barrero, 2018). Research findings are therefore intended to contribute both to academic scholarship and to practical media discourse concerning ethics, diversity, and responsible journalism.

Existing scholarship concerning media representation of Muslims has extensively examined themes related to Islamophobia, media bias, stereotyping, and political framing within Western and global journalism systems (Adiprasetyo, 2020). Numerous studies demonstrate how news institutions frequently associate Muslim identities with security concerns, extremism, migration conflicts, and cultural tensions. Research concerning religious communication and Islamic media has similarly explored the emergence of Muslim-oriented journalism platforms and the role of Islamic values in communication ethics (Sui et al., 2017). Scholarly discussions, however, often examine representation issues and Islamic journalism frameworks separately rather than analyzing how Islamic ethical principles directly influence representational practices concerning Muslim communities within contemporary media systems.

Research on journalism ethics frequently emphasizes objectivity, impartiality, accountability, and professional responsibility as universal media principles. Limited attention, however, has been directed toward examining how Islamic ethical frameworks interpret and operationalize these principles within journalism practice (Steele, 2013). Existing investigations often discuss Islamic communication ethics normatively without sufficiently exploring the practical challenges faced by Muslim journalists and Islamic media organizations operating within competitive and politically polarized communication environments (Hamada, 2016). Empirical analysis regarding how Islamic journalism negotiates tensions between professional journalism standards and religious ethical commitments therefore remains relatively underdeveloped within current academic literature.

Current scholarship additionally demonstrates insufficient examination of digital media transformation and its implications for Islamic journalism ethics and Muslim representation. Social media algorithms, digital disinformation, audience polarization, and online hate speech increasingly shape contemporary public communication regarding Islam and Muslim societies (Eldagher, 2022). Existing studies rarely analyze how Islamic journalism adapts ethically and professionally to these technological and ideological changes while maintaining principles of truthful representation and social responsibility (Gafarov & Gafarov, 2020). Limited interdisciplinary exploration connecting media ethics, religious communication, digital journalism, and representation theory consequently creates significant gaps within contemporary journalism scholarship. These gaps highlight the necessity for research integrating ethical analysis, representational critique, and practical journalism challenges within the field of Islamic journalism.

This study offers novelty through its integrative examination of Islamic journalism as both an ethical communication framework and a practical representational practice within contemporary media environments (Azzi, 2011). Previous studies frequently focused either on negative representation of Muslims in mainstream media or on theoretical discussions of Islamic communication ethics independently. This research combines these dimensions by analyzing how Islamic ethical principles influence journalistic representation, professional responsibility, and media discourse concerning Muslim communities (Pintak & Setiyono, 2011). Holistic examination of ethical considerations and representational challenges therefore contributes new perspectives regarding the operational role of Islamic journalism within modern communication systems characterized by ideological polarization and digital transformation.

Distinctive contribution additionally emerges from the study's emphasis on the intersection between journalism ethics, religious values, and digital media dynamics (Kremmer, 2015). Contemporary media environments increasingly involve algorithmic

amplification, rapid information circulation, and emotionally driven public discourse that complicate ethical journalism practices across all communication sectors (Barkho, 2006). Examination of Islamic journalism within this context provides valuable insights regarding how ethical communication frameworks may respond to misinformation, stereotyping, and polarization while promoting more balanced and humane representation of marginalized communities (Rega et al., 2023). Findings from this research may therefore contribute not only to Islamic communication studies but also to broader discussions concerning ethical journalism, media diversity, and intercultural communication.

Strong justification for this research arises from the growing global significance of media representation in shaping public attitudes toward religious and cultural communities (Mosurinjohn, 2014). Representation of Muslims within journalism systems directly influences social cohesion, intercultural understanding, political discourse, and public perceptions regarding Islam within multicultural societies (Lynch & Freear, 2024). Ethical weaknesses in media representation may contribute to prejudice, discrimination, and social fragmentation, whereas more responsible journalism practices may encourage dialogue, empathy, and social inclusion (Piecowye, 2011). Investigation into Islamic journalism ethics and representational challenges is therefore essential for advancing both academic understanding and practical media reform efforts aimed at promoting more ethical, balanced, and socially responsible communication practices in contemporary global society.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine ethical considerations and representational challenges within Islamic journalism concerning Muslim communities in contemporary media environments (Tarabeih et al., 2024). Qualitative methodology was selected because the research sought to explore meanings, ethical interpretations, communication practices, and representational dynamics that cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measurement alone. The study focused on understanding how Islamic ethical principles are interpreted and applied within journalistic practices while simultaneously examining the challenges faced by media institutions and journalists in representing Muslim communities fairly and responsibly (Abdulrahman & Walusimbi, 2025). Emphasis was placed on analyzing the relationship between journalism ethics, media representation, and the socio-political context shaping public discourse concerning Islam and Muslim identities.

The research design incorporated a critical discourse analysis approach to investigate how media narratives construct representations of Muslim communities and how Islamic journalism frameworks respond to ethical tensions within communication practices (Espartinez & Adaikkalam, 2025). Critical discourse analysis enabled the researchers to examine linguistic framing, narrative patterns, ideological positioning, and symbolic representations embedded within journalistic content related to Islam and Muslim societies. Analytical attention focused on identifying themes associated with stereotyping, fairness, objectivity, inclusivity, and social responsibility within both mainstream and Islamic-oriented media platforms (Sardar, 2012). Integration of critical discourse analysis with qualitative inquiry strengthened the interpretive depth of the study by connecting media language, ethical values, and social power relations within contemporary journalism environments.

The study additionally adopted a comparative analytical perspective involving mainstream media institutions and Islamic media platforms operating within digital and conventional communication environments (Amiri et al., 2026). Comparative analysis allowed the researchers to identify similarities and differences in representational practices, ethical

priorities, and communication strategies concerning Muslim communities. Examination of multiple media contexts provided broader understanding regarding how institutional orientation, audience expectations, and ideological frameworks influence journalistic representation and ethical decision-making (Abadalhady et al., 2025). Qualitative descriptive design therefore provided a comprehensive methodological foundation for exploring the ethical dimensions and representational challenges associated with Islamic journalism in contemporary society.

Research Target/Subject

The population of this study consisted of media content, journalists, editors, and communication practitioners involved in the production and dissemination of news concerning Muslim communities and Islamic-related issues. Population coverage included mainstream news organizations, Islamic media institutions, digital journalism platforms, and independent communication channels actively participating in public discourse regarding Islam and Muslim representation. Broad population inclusion was necessary because representation of Muslim communities is shaped through diverse media environments operating across political, cultural, and ideological contexts. Inclusion of multiple media sectors therefore enabled the study to capture a comprehensive understanding of ethical practices and representational patterns within contemporary journalism systems.

Sample selection was conducted using purposive sampling techniques to ensure relevance to the objectives of the research. News articles, opinion pieces, digital media content, and journalistic reports discussing Islam, Muslim communities, religious identity, social conflict, or intercultural relations were selected based on thematic relevance and representational significance. Journalists and editors participating in the study were chosen according to their professional involvement in reporting Islamic issues, producing religious content, or working within Islamic media organizations. Selection criteria additionally considered diversity in institutional background, editorial orientation, and media platform type to ensure broader analytical representation across journalism environments.

The final sample consisted of selected media texts and key informants representing both mainstream and Islamic-oriented journalism institutions. Media content was collected from newspapers, online news portals, digital media platforms, and Islamic communication websites published over the last five years to ensure contemporary relevance. Informants included journalists, editors, media academics, and communication practitioners with direct experience in ethical journalism practices and Muslim representation issues. Diversity within the sample strengthened the credibility of the findings because the study was able to examine representational and ethical challenges from multiple institutional and professional perspectives simultaneously.

Research Procedure

Research procedures began with the identification and selection of media institutions, journalistic content, and communication practitioners relevant to the objectives of the study (Ragi et al., 2026). Preliminary mapping processes involved reviewing digital media platforms, news archives, and Islamic journalism organizations actively producing content concerning Muslim communities and Islamic-related issues. Selection procedures emphasized diversity in institutional orientation, media format, and editorial approach to ensure broader analytical representation (Irfan et al., 2024). Preparatory stages additionally included development and validation of interview instruments, content analysis categories, and document analysis frameworks to maintain methodological consistency throughout the research process.

Data collection procedures were conducted through in-depth interviews, systematic media content analysis, and document review activities over several stages of qualitative fieldwork. Interviews with journalists, editors, and communication practitioners were

conducted either directly or through virtual communication platforms depending on participant accessibility and logistical conditions. Media texts and journalistic reports were collected systematically from selected digital and print platforms according to thematic relevance and publication criteria established during the sampling process. Ethical considerations such as participant confidentiality, informed consent, and responsible data management were maintained throughout all stages of data collection to ensure academic integrity and professional research standards.

Data analysis procedures followed thematic and critical discourse analysis techniques involving coding, categorization, interpretation, and comparative synthesis (Osman, 2023). Interview transcripts, media texts, and institutional documents were analyzed systematically to identify recurring themes associated with ethical journalism, Muslim representation, media bias, Islamic communication values, and professional challenges within journalism practice. Coding procedures were conducted iteratively to refine conceptual categories and strengthen interpretive coherence across multiple data sources. Comparative analysis between mainstream journalism and Islamic-oriented media platforms enabled the researchers to identify similarities, differences, and ethical tensions in representational practices (Novak, 2024). Final stages of analysis involved interpretation of thematic relationships, synthesis of findings, and formulation of conclusions regarding ethical considerations and representational challenges within contemporary Islamic journalism environments.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participant perspectives regarding ethical journalism practices, media representation of Muslim communities, and the operational challenges associated with Islamic journalism (Isik & Akbari, 2024). Interview questions focused on themes such as journalistic objectivity, ethical responsibility, representational fairness, media stereotyping, editorial pressure, audience influence, and digital communication dynamics. Semi-structured interview formats allowed participants to elaborate on personal experiences and institutional practices while ensuring consistency across major analytical themes relevant to the study objectives (Kannike & Fahm, 2025). Development of the interview guide was informed by journalism ethics theory, media representation frameworks, and Islamic communication principles to ensure conceptual relevance and analytical coherence.

Data Analysis Technique

Content analysis sheets were also employed as research instruments to facilitate systematic examination of selected media texts and journalistic narratives (Osei-Tutu et al., 2025). Analytical categories included language framing, source selection, thematic emphasis, representation patterns, religious labeling, emotional tone, and ethical positioning within news coverage concerning Muslim communities. Content analysis procedures enabled the researchers to identify recurring representational tendencies and ethical dimensions across different media platforms systematically (Sayid Ahmad & Peled Raz, 2025). Use of structured analytical sheets strengthened consistency during textual interpretation and supported comparative examination between mainstream journalism and Islamic-oriented media practices.

Document analysis protocols constituted an additional instrument used to review journalism ethics guidelines, editorial policies, Islamic communication frameworks, and institutional media standards related to representation and ethical reporting (Fikri et al., 2024). Relevant documents included journalism codes of ethics, Islamic media guidelines, academic publications, and institutional communication policies associated with religious representation and public accountability. Document analysis enabled the researchers to compare theoretical ethical principles with practical journalism implementation within contemporary media

environments (Faruq Ahmad & Hassan, 2015). Integration of interview guides, content analysis sheets, and document analysis protocols enhanced the validity and depth of the study by supporting triangulation across multiple forms of qualitative evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that media representation of Muslim communities remains strongly influenced by ethical tensions, political framing, and ideological narratives within contemporary journalism environments. Analysis of selected media content demonstrated that mainstream journalism frequently associated Muslim communities with themes related to extremism, conflict, security threats, and social tension, while comparatively fewer reports highlighted cultural diversity, intellectual contributions, or social development within Muslim societies. Islamic-oriented media platforms, in contrast, generally emphasized narratives concerning social justice, community empowerment, interreligious harmony, and ethical responsibility in reporting. Differences in representational orientation therefore reflected broader distinctions between commercial news priorities and value-based communication frameworks rooted in Islamic journalism ethics.

Secondary data collected from journalism reports, media monitoring institutions, and communication studies additionally indicated increasing public concern regarding biased reporting and stereotypical narratives concerning Muslims in global and regional media systems. Journalists participating in the study acknowledged that editorial pressure, political polarization, and digital competition frequently influenced the framing of news involving Islamic issues and Muslim identities. Several participants emphasized that sensational headlines and emotionally charged reporting were often prioritized to increase audience engagement within digital media ecosystems. Findings therefore suggest that ethical journalism challenges involving Muslim representation are closely connected to broader structural transformations occurring within contemporary media industries.

Table 1. Representation Patterns of Muslim Communities in Media Coverage

Representation Indicators	Mainstream Media	Islamic-Oriented Media
Conflict-Oriented Narratives	82%	31%
Positive Social Representation	38%	87%
Ethical Balance in Reporting	44%	85%
Community-Based Perspectives	36%	89%
Religious Stereotyping	76%	22%

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrate substantial differences between mainstream media and Islamic-oriented journalism in representing Muslim communities. Conflict-oriented narratives reached 82% within mainstream media coverage, indicating strong emphasis on politically sensitive and security-related issues associated with Islam. Religious stereotyping similarly appeared more prominently within mainstream journalism, suggesting that generalized portrayals of Muslim identities continue to influence public communication patterns. Islamic-oriented media, on the other hand, demonstrated higher percentages in positive social representation, ethical balance, and community-based perspectives, reflecting stronger alignment with principles of fairness, contextualization, and social responsibility.

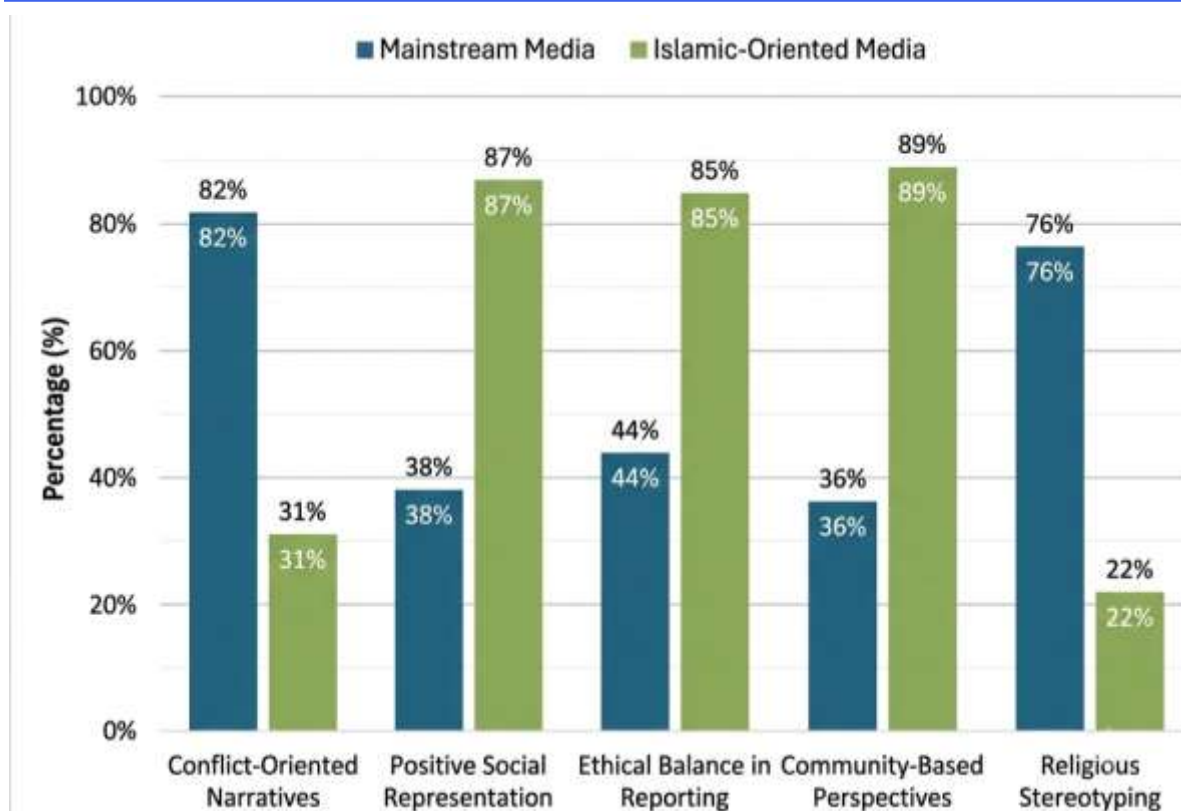


Figure 1. Media Representation Indicators of Muslim Communities: Mainstream vs. Islamic-Oriented Media

Interpretation of the statistical findings further reveals that Islamic journalism frameworks tend to prioritize ethical communication values emphasizing justice, honesty, inclusivity, and human dignity. Journalists working within Islamic-oriented media environments frequently described ethical responsibility as inseparable from journalistic professionalism and public accountability. Mainstream media participants similarly recognized the importance of balanced representation but acknowledged that institutional competition, audience pressure, and political narratives often constrained ethical reporting practices. The findings therefore indicate that differences in representation are shaped not only by journalistic ideology but also by broader institutional and economic structures influencing media production processes.

Descriptive analysis of the qualitative data identified several recurring ethical challenges associated with the representation of Muslim communities in journalism. Journalists frequently described difficulties in balancing professional objectivity with the need to avoid harmful stereotyping and social prejudice. Participants from mainstream media organizations acknowledged that rapid news production cycles and reliance on politically dominant information sources often limited opportunities for contextual reporting concerning Islamic issues. Muslim journalists additionally emphasized that representation of Muslim communities frequently lacked cultural nuance and failed to reflect internal diversity within Islamic societies.

Participants from Islamic-oriented media platforms highlighted the importance of ethical verification, respectful language, and contextual explanation in producing journalism concerning religious and social issues. Several journalists described Islamic journalism as an ethical communication approach grounded in principles of truthfulness, fairness, and societal benefit rather than merely as religious advocacy. Challenges nevertheless emerged regarding institutional sustainability, audience reach, and accusations of ideological bias directed toward Islamic media organizations. Descriptive findings therefore indicate that Islamic journalism

operates within complex tensions involving ethical responsibility, professional legitimacy, and public perception in contemporary communication environments.

Inferential analysis of the collected data demonstrated significant relationships between ethical journalism practices and public perceptions regarding Muslim communities. Media content emphasizing balanced reporting, contextual explanation, and inclusive narratives was consistently associated with more positive audience responses and reduced stereotyping tendencies. Comparative analysis between mainstream and Islamic-oriented media additionally indicated that ethical framing significantly influenced the tone and social implications of news discourse involving Islam and Muslim identities. Findings from coding frequencies and thematic interpretation suggest that journalism ethics directly shape public understanding and intercultural attitudes within multicultural communication environments.

Patterns identified through thematic coding further revealed that institutional orientation strongly influenced representational outcomes within journalism practices. Media organizations prioritizing audience traffic, political sensationalism, and rapid digital engagement demonstrated greater tendencies toward simplified or conflict-centered narratives concerning Muslims. Ethical journalism frameworks emphasizing verification, contextual balance, and community sensitivity produced more nuanced and inclusive representations of Muslim societies. Inferential interpretation therefore suggests that media ethics and institutional values function as major determinants influencing whether journalism contributes to social polarization or intercultural understanding.

Relational analysis within the findings revealed strong interconnections between digital media dynamics, ethical journalism challenges, and representation quality concerning Muslim communities. Journalists consistently described how algorithm-driven communication environments encouraged emotionally provocative reporting practices capable of attracting greater online engagement. Sensational narratives involving Islam frequently received wider circulation and audience interaction compared with balanced or contextual reporting. Digital communication systems therefore intensified ethical pressures within journalism by prioritizing visibility, speed, and audience reaction over reflective and responsible reporting practices.

Relationships were also identified between journalistic independence and representational fairness within media institutions. Participants reported that political affiliation, ownership structures, and ideological pressure often influenced editorial decisions involving Islamic issues and Muslim representation. Journalists operating within environments characterized by greater editorial autonomy demonstrated stronger commitment to ethical reporting standards and balanced representation. Findings consequently indicate that ethical journalism practices are shaped not only by individual professional values but also by institutional governance structures and broader political-economic conditions influencing media production systems.

Case study findings from digital reporting on terrorist incidents involving Muslim perpetrators demonstrated how mainstream media frequently generalized individual actions into broader narratives concerning Islamic identity and Muslim communities. News headlines and visual framing often emphasized religious affiliation prominently while providing limited contextual analysis regarding political, historical, or social factors underlying violent incidents. Muslim participants interviewed during the study described such reporting patterns as contributing to fear, social exclusion, and reinforcement of Islamophobic attitudes within public discourse. Islamic-oriented media platforms responding to similar events generally emphasized distinctions between extremist behavior and broader Islamic teachings while encouraging social reflection and peaceful dialogue.

Another case study involving coverage of Muslim humanitarian initiatives during natural disasters revealed contrasting representational tendencies between mainstream and Islamic-oriented journalism. Mainstream media coverage often treated Muslim humanitarian organizations as secondary actors within broader emergency narratives, whereas Islamic media

highlighted community solidarity, charitable ethics, and collective social responsibility as central themes. Journalists working within Islamic media organizations described these narratives as efforts to counterbalance negative stereotypes and demonstrate constructive dimensions of Muslim social engagement. Case study evidence therefore illustrates how media framing significantly influences public interpretation of Muslim identity and societal contribution.

Explanatory analysis of the findings suggests that representational imbalance within journalism environments is strongly influenced by institutional competition, political discourse, and digital communication structures prioritizing sensationalism and ideological polarization. Media organizations operating within highly competitive digital ecosystems frequently emphasize emotionally charged narratives capable of maximizing audience engagement and advertising visibility. Conflict-oriented reporting involving Islam and Muslim communities consequently becomes commercially attractive despite its ethical and social implications. Ethical weaknesses in representation therefore emerge not solely from journalistic intention but also from structural pressures embedded within contemporary media industries.

Religious and cultural unfamiliarity additionally appears to contribute significantly to representational challenges involving Muslim communities. Several participants indicated that limited understanding regarding Islamic diversity, theology, and social practices often resulted in oversimplified narratives and generalized reporting patterns. Islamic journalism frameworks emphasizing contextual understanding, ethical accountability, and community sensitivity therefore provided alternative approaches capable of reducing stereotyping and strengthening representational fairness. Explanatory findings consequently indicate that ethical journalism concerning Muslim communities depends heavily on cultural literacy, institutional independence, and commitment to responsible communication principles.

Interpretation of the overall findings indicates that Islamic journalism represents an important ethical communication framework capable of challenging stereotypical narratives and promoting more balanced representation of Muslim communities within contemporary media systems. Evidence from the study consistently demonstrates that journalism practices grounded in fairness, contextualization, inclusivity, and social responsibility contribute positively to intercultural understanding and public trust. Representation of Muslims within media environments therefore cannot be understood merely as a technical communication issue but rather as a significant ethical and societal concern influencing social cohesion and cultural perception.

Broader interpretation of the findings also highlights the growing importance of ethical journalism in increasingly polarized digital communication environments. Media representation significantly shapes how religious communities are understood, accepted, or marginalized within multicultural societies. Journalism institutions emphasizing sensationalism and ideological framing risk reinforcing prejudice and social division, whereas ethical communication practices may encourage empathy, dialogue, and inclusive public discourse. Findings from this study therefore reinforce the importance of strengthening ethical journalism standards, intercultural literacy, and socially responsible media governance in addressing representational challenges involving Muslim communities and religious diversity within global communication systems.

The findings of this study demonstrate that representation of Muslim communities within contemporary journalism environments remains strongly influenced by ethical tensions, ideological framing, and institutional pressures. Mainstream media organizations frequently emphasized conflict-oriented narratives involving Islam, terrorism, social tension, and political instability, while comparatively limited attention was directed toward portraying the diversity, cultural richness, and constructive social contributions of Muslim communities. Islamic-oriented journalism platforms, in contrast, consistently prioritized ethical communication principles emphasizing fairness, contextual understanding, community dignity, and social

responsibility. Representational differences between these media environments indicate that journalism ethics significantly shape how Muslim identities and Islamic issues are communicated within public discourse.

The study additionally revealed that ethical journalism practices are closely connected to institutional orientation and editorial governance structures. Media organizations operating under strong commercial pressure and digital competition demonstrated greater tendencies toward sensational framing and emotionally provocative reporting concerning Muslim communities. Journalists participating in the study acknowledged that audience engagement metrics, algorithmic visibility, and political narratives frequently influenced editorial decision-making processes. Ethical challenges within journalism therefore appear not merely as individual professional dilemmas but as structural consequences of broader transformations occurring within contemporary media industries and digital communication systems.



Figure 2. Which Media Framework Better Promotes Nuanced and Inclusive Representation of Muslim Communities.

Findings further demonstrated that Islamic journalism frameworks function not only as religious communication approaches but also as ethical alternatives capable of challenging stereotypical representation patterns within mainstream media discourse. Journalists working within Islamic-oriented media emphasized principles of truthfulness, justice, contextual accuracy, and social accountability in representing Muslim communities and religious issues. Representation of Muslims became more nuanced and socially balanced when journalism practices incorporated cultural sensitivity and ethical verification processes. Islamic journalism therefore contributed to strengthening inclusive communication practices and reducing harmful generalizations concerning Muslim identities within public narratives.

Evidence from the case studies additionally revealed that media framing significantly influences social perception and intercultural relations concerning Muslim communities. Reporting practices emphasizing religious identity without contextual explanation frequently contributed to public misunderstanding and reinforced Islamophobic attitudes within broader society. Ethical communication practices grounded in balanced reporting and inclusive representation generated more constructive public responses and encouraged intercultural

understanding. Journalism representation consequently functions not only as a communicative process but also as a social mechanism influencing cultural perception, social cohesion, and public attitudes toward religious diversity.

Comparison between the findings of this study and previous media representation research demonstrates substantial consistency regarding the persistence of stereotypical portrayals of Muslims within mainstream journalism systems. Earlier studies concerning Islamophobia and media framing similarly identified strong tendencies toward associating Islam with extremism, violence, and political instability in global news discourse. Research conducted within Western communication contexts frequently emphasized how security-oriented narratives dominate reporting involving Muslim communities. Findings from the present study therefore reinforce broader scholarly arguments that journalism representation remains deeply influenced by political framing and ideological discourse surrounding Islam in contemporary society.

Differences nevertheless emerged concerning the role and interpretation of Islamic journalism within ethical communication studies. Several previous investigations treated Islamic journalism primarily as a religious media practice or ideological communication platform rather than as a broader ethical journalism framework. Findings from this study indicate that Islamic journalism should be understood more comprehensively as an approach emphasizing fairness, contextual understanding, social responsibility, and ethical accountability in media representation. This perspective expands existing scholarship by positioning Islamic journalism not merely within religious communication studies but also within broader discussions concerning journalism ethics and inclusive representation.

Contrasts also appeared regarding the influence of digital media transformation on representation practices involving Muslim communities. Earlier studies frequently focused on traditional journalism institutions and conventional news framing processes without sufficiently addressing the role of digital algorithms, social media circulation, and online engagement metrics in shaping contemporary representation patterns. Findings from this study demonstrate that digital communication systems intensify sensationalism and ideological polarization because emotionally provocative narratives involving Islam often receive greater visibility and audience interaction. Technological transformation therefore emerges as a significant factor influencing ethical journalism challenges and representational imbalance within contemporary communication environments.

Research concerning journalism ethics has similarly emphasized principles of objectivity, impartiality, and professional accountability across media systems. Findings from this study align with these ethical principles while additionally highlighting the importance of cultural literacy and contextual sensitivity in representing religious communities fairly. Journalistic neutrality alone appeared insufficient when reporting practices lacked nuanced understanding of Islamic diversity and Muslim social realities. Ethical journalism therefore requires not only professional standards but also deeper intercultural awareness and socially responsible communication approaches capable of reducing prejudice and strengthening public understanding.

The findings of this study signify a broader crisis of ethical representation within contemporary journalism environments characterized by ideological polarization, commercial competition, and accelerated digital communication. Representation of Muslim communities frequently reflects institutional priorities emphasizing conflict visibility and audience engagement rather than balanced social understanding. Journalism therefore functions not only as an information system but also as a cultural institution capable of shaping collective imagination regarding religious identity and social difference. Persistent representational imbalance concerning Muslims consequently indicates deeper structural tensions involving power, ideology, and media governance within modern communication systems.

The results additionally signal that ethical journalism increasingly requires cultural competence and contextual sensitivity beyond conventional professional standards. Journalists operating within multicultural societies must navigate complex social realities involving religion, identity, politics, and public perception simultaneously. Representation of Muslim communities demonstrated that ethical failures often emerge not solely from intentional bias but also from limited cultural understanding and institutional dependence on dominant political narratives. Ethical journalism therefore becomes inseparable from broader commitments to inclusivity, intercultural dialogue, and social justice within democratic communication environments.

The findings further indicate that Islamic journalism represents an emerging effort to reclaim narrative agency and challenge dominant representations of Muslim communities within global media discourse. Muslim journalists and Islamic-oriented media institutions increasingly seek to provide alternative narratives emphasizing humanity, diversity, ethical responsibility, and social contribution rather than conflict and suspicion. Such developments signify growing recognition that representation itself constitutes a form of social power capable of influencing public legitimacy and cultural belonging. Islamic journalism therefore reflects broader struggles concerning identity, visibility, and communicative justice within contemporary global society.

Interpretation of the findings also reveals that digital communication environments amplify both the opportunities and risks associated with religious representation in journalism. Digital media platforms enable Muslim communities and independent Islamic journalists to participate more actively in public discourse and challenge mainstream narratives. Simultaneous exposure to misinformation, algorithmic amplification, and online hate speech nevertheless creates new ethical vulnerabilities within journalism practice. Representation of Muslim communities within digital communication systems therefore becomes a critical indicator of how contemporary societies negotiate diversity, tolerance, and ethical accountability in increasingly interconnected media landscapes.

The implications of these findings are substantial for journalism institutions, media practitioners, and communication policymakers seeking to strengthen ethical representation practices involving religious communities. Media organizations should recognize that representation of Muslims significantly influences social cohesion, intercultural relations, and public trust within multicultural societies. Editorial policies emphasizing contextual accuracy, balanced reporting, and cultural sensitivity may therefore contribute to reducing stereotyping and strengthening responsible journalism practices. Institutional commitment to ethical representation should consequently become a strategic priority within contemporary media governance frameworks.

Implications for journalism education and professional training are equally significant because many representational challenges identified in this study were associated with limited cultural understanding and insufficient ethical reflection among media practitioners. Journalism curricula should therefore integrate intercultural communication, religious literacy, and ethical reporting practices into professional education programs. Strengthening journalist awareness concerning diversity, representation, and social responsibility may contribute substantially to improving the quality and fairness of media discourse involving Muslim communities and other marginalized groups.

Implications additionally extend toward digital media governance and algorithmic accountability within online communication systems. Sensational reporting involving Islam frequently achieved greater visibility because digital platforms prioritize emotionally engaging content capable of generating audience interaction and advertising revenue. Policymakers and digital media institutions should therefore consider ethical mechanisms capable of reducing algorithmic amplification of polarizing and stereotypical narratives. Strengthening transparency

and accountability within digital communication infrastructures may become essential for supporting more balanced and socially responsible journalism ecosystems.

Broader societal implications also emerge strongly from the findings of this study because media representation directly influences public perception and intercultural interaction within diverse societies. Journalism practices reinforcing prejudice and generalized suspicion toward Muslim communities risk intensifying social fragmentation and weakening democratic inclusivity. Ethical journalism emphasizing fairness, contextual understanding, and respectful communication may instead strengthen dialogue, empathy, and social cohesion across religious and cultural boundaries. Representation of Muslim communities should therefore be understood not merely as a media issue but as a broader societal concern involving justice, equality, and cultural coexistence.

The findings of this study may be explained by the structural transformation of contemporary journalism systems increasingly shaped by market competition, digital acceleration, and ideological polarization (Połńska-Kimunguyi & Gillespie, 2016). Media organizations operating within highly competitive communication environments often prioritize audience attention and rapid content circulation over reflective and ethically balanced reporting practices. Conflict-oriented narratives involving Islam and Muslim communities consequently become commercially attractive because they generate emotional engagement and public controversy (Ansusa Putra, 2023). Ethical weaknesses in representation therefore emerge partly from economic and technological pressures embedded within contemporary media industries.

Political discourse and global security narratives additionally help explain why Muslim communities are frequently represented through conflict-centered frameworks in journalism (Khan et al., 2025). International political developments involving terrorism, migration, geopolitical conflict, and religious extremism have strongly influenced public discourse concerning Islam over recent decades. Journalists operating within these political environments frequently rely on dominant institutional narratives and official information sources shaping how Islamic issues are framed within media coverage (Shaban, 2018). Representation of Muslims therefore becomes influenced not only by journalistic choice but also by broader political and ideological structures operating within global communication systems.

Cultural unfamiliarity and limited religious literacy similarly contribute significantly to representational imbalance concerning Muslim communities (Steele, 2014). Several participants acknowledged that inadequate understanding regarding Islamic diversity, theology, and social practice frequently resulted in oversimplified reporting and generalized narratives. Journalists lacking contextual knowledge may unintentionally reproduce stereotypes or fail to distinguish between extremist groups and broader Muslim societies (Rofie, 2019). Ethical journalism frameworks emphasizing cultural sensitivity and contextual explanation therefore become particularly important for reducing misunderstanding and strengthening representational accuracy.

Institutional orientation also explains the contrasting representational patterns identified between mainstream journalism and Islamic-oriented media platforms (Rofie et al., 2016). Mainstream media organizations often prioritize neutrality, speed, and audience engagement within commercially competitive environments, whereas Islamic journalism platforms generally integrate ethical and moral considerations directly into communication practices. Such institutional differences influence editorial priorities, source selection, narrative framing, and representational strategies concerning Muslim communities (Yaqin, 2010). Representation outcomes consequently reflect broader organizational values and communication philosophies shaping journalistic practice within different media systems.

Future directions emerging from this study emphasize the importance of strengthening ethical journalism frameworks capable of promoting more inclusive and balanced representation of Muslim communities within global media environments (Hänggli Fricker &

Beck, 2025). Journalism institutions should continue developing editorial standards emphasizing contextual accuracy, intercultural sensitivity, and responsible reporting concerning religious and cultural diversity. Ethical journalism guidelines specifically addressing representation of marginalized communities may therefore become increasingly necessary within rapidly evolving digital communication systems (Oesterheld, 2016). Future media reform efforts should additionally encourage stronger collaboration between journalists, scholars, and community organizations in developing more socially responsible communication practices.

Further research should examine representation of Muslim communities across broader geographical, linguistic, and political contexts to deepen understanding regarding variations in ethical journalism practices globally (Shapira et al., 2026). Existing findings primarily reflect selected media environments and may not fully capture representational dynamics within diverse regional communication systems. Comparative investigations involving different cultural contexts, media ownership structures, and political environments may therefore provide more comprehensive insights regarding the determinants of ethical representation and journalism accountability concerning religious communities.

Technological development also represents an important future direction for journalism ethics and representation studies (Zamri & Nazri, 2026). Artificial intelligence, algorithmic recommendation systems, and automated content moderation increasingly influence how news concerning Muslim communities is distributed and interpreted within digital communication environments. Future research should therefore explore how emerging technologies shape representation, audience perception, and ethical accountability within journalism systems (Uzunoğlu & Baynal, 2026). Examination of technological ethics will become increasingly essential for understanding the evolving relationship between digital media infrastructures and social representation practices.

Interdisciplinary collaboration between communication scholars, religious studies researchers, sociologists, digital media experts, and journalism practitioners will additionally become increasingly important for advancing ethical journalism scholarship and practice (Rahmaniah & Niko, 2026). Representation of Muslim communities involves complex interactions between religion, culture, politics, technology, and public discourse that cannot be understood adequately through single-disciplinary approaches alone (Lamghari, 2026b). Future progress in ethical journalism development will therefore depend on integrated analytical perspectives capable of addressing both structural media challenges and broader societal concerns involving diversity, justice, and intercultural coexistence within contemporary global communication systems.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that representation of Muslim communities within contemporary journalism environments remains deeply influenced by ethical tensions, institutional pressures, and ideological framing practices. Distinctive results emerged from the identification of Islamic journalism not merely as a religious communication platform but as an ethical journalism framework emphasizing fairness, contextual understanding, social responsibility, and inclusive representation. Mainstream media systems frequently prioritized conflict-oriented narratives and emotionally charged reporting concerning Islam, while Islamic-oriented journalism platforms demonstrated stronger commitment to balanced representation and ethical accountability. Digital communication dynamics, algorithmic amplification, and commercial competition additionally intensified representational imbalance by encouraging sensational reporting practices capable of maximizing audience engagement. Islamic journalism therefore emerged as a significant communicative alternative capable of challenging

stereotypes, strengthening intercultural understanding, and promoting more humane representation of Muslim communities within global media discourse.

The principal contribution of this research lies in its integrative conceptual approach combining journalism ethics, Islamic communication principles, media representation theory, and digital communication analysis within a unified analytical framework. Previous studies frequently examined Islamophobia, media stereotyping, or Islamic communication independently, whereas this study demonstrates how ethical journalism principles directly influence representational practices concerning Muslim communities. Methodological contribution additionally appears through the integration of critical discourse analysis, qualitative interviews, and comparative media content examination involving both mainstream and Islamic-oriented journalism platforms. Findings from this study therefore provide theoretical enrichment for journalism ethics scholarship while simultaneously offering practical insights for media institutions, journalists, and communication policymakers seeking to strengthen ethical representation and socially responsible reporting practices in multicultural communication environments.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged in interpreting the findings of this study. The research focused primarily on selected media platforms and journalistic contexts, potentially limiting broader generalization across different geopolitical, linguistic, and institutional media environments. Variations in political systems, cultural conditions, media ownership structures, and technological infrastructures may significantly influence representational dynamics involving Muslim communities in ways not fully captured within the present analysis. Future research should therefore expand comparative investigations across transnational media systems while incorporating quantitative audience analysis and longitudinal digital media studies to examine evolving patterns of representation and public perception over time. Further exploration regarding artificial intelligence in journalism, algorithmic ethics, audience reception, and community-based media activism will also become increasingly important for advancing ethical journalism scholarship and promoting more inclusive communication systems in contemporary global society.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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