Surveying Information Ethics in Quran: a Quantitative Content Analysis

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: The purpose of this paper was to survey the quantity of information ethics. It sought to answer the question whether or not this information exists in Quranic verses.

Methods: In this paper, the entire Quran was identified and analyzed with regard to information ethics from the perspective of Quranic scholars, experts and librarians. After various phases of coding and categorization, the Quranic themes were categorized on the basis of their Persian translation and then were analyzed by SPSS software. For this study, 6236 verses of the Holy Quran were studied out of which 171 verses including information ethics context were coded and classified. After that, each of them was analyzed in relation to the main research question.

Results: As the holy Quran has been revealed by God, it could be called a complete declaration of information ethics.

Conclusion: Man is by nature a social creature requiring interaction. Based on this kind of life, an ethical framework is needed in order to continue his life in peace. The issue of ethics is one of the basic issues with which man is grappling throughout his daily life, which is, in itself, increasingly moving towards the production of information and knowledge. Hence, if these information are void of ethical aura, the result would be the loss of human and social relations as well as the disappearance of the human race.

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Introduction

Human caravan moves towards the scientific excellence, to the heights of knowledge. Several factors have contributed to the conquest of these mountains; the most important factor in this regard is "information exchange" which has a decisive role in all spheres of human knowledge.

On the other hand, it has been covering the world of communications and messaging with development of technology, so that no individual or country can consider himself/itself immune from the effects of unwanted messages, and self-sufficient from participation in the international flow of information. The moral act is an act which human conscience regards as a duty.

In Islam, faith is central to and the foundation of moral values, and in a real or a virtual world Islam, faith is the origin of goodness and evil. In Islam, it is not only enough to do well for the moral value; but in addition, the person's motivation must be righteous and divine; only then does the moral act bring happiness for the doer of it .

Two main questions of this study are, is there any concept of information ethics in the verses of the Holy Quran? Can such issues be derived from the Quran verses?

The research methodology used in this study is the method of "content analysis" Content analysis is a method that reviews the message content in a scientific and systematic manner.

Based on the above definition, thematic content analysis was used in this study to analyze the content of the message of the Holy Quran. In this approach, the content of verses were first categorized and after insertion of a record and the following fields for each of the main content of the field of information ethics, each group was individually sorted.

After various coding and categorization phases, the Quran themes were categorized according to Persian translation, and then were analyzed using "SPSS" software. For this study, 6236 verses of the Holy Quran (1) were studied, of which 171 verses included information ethics, which were first coded and classified, and then each of them was analyzed in relation to the main research question.

In his book titled "Ethics and Information Technology" (2), Jamal Khani Jozei discusses that the international society is searching for decision making and decision support based on uniform data and information, so that it will be possible for the world to equally process and distribute and finally make decision in accordance with coordinated data. To achieve this goal, the world is searching for a consensus on ethical principles for information network management to require all people to pay attention to its defined ethical principles. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to deal with ethics as a valuable subject in virtual environment and at the three levels of philosophy of ethics, micro and macro ethics. Therefore, he has focused on technology and

believes that it may affect all systems in society. In addition to this, he says that if technology is transferred to a place, its culture will be also transferred to that place. He then shows that technology has extra effects on human life as well as other different aspects related with him, but that it is invisible.

The Ethics of Information Technology (3) by Hamid Shahriari firstly defines human ethics as well as spiritual and psychic features, which cover important ethical topics. Then, the author elucidates that the ethics of information technology is an inseparable part of applied ethics because it discusses normality and abnormality cases related to a specific field of human activity and/or a particular case. He follows by giving a history and general knowledge on ethics of information technology. In the following chapters, advantages and disadvantages of information technology are dealt with, then history and general knowledge on privacy as well as rational and narrative reasons of privacy rights, security, intellectual proprietary rights and content filtration policies and censure ethics are considered.

In his book "Ethical challenges in the era of information or inquest of information ethics" (4), Seghatol Islami explains that in its most extensive meaning, information ethics is a branch of applied ethics that studies and analyses the ethical and social subjects and cases resulting from information and communication technology as well as other pertinent fields.

The first chapter of his book, from applied ethics to information ethics, reviews information ethics from three viewpoints. Information ethics from the viewpoint of professional ethics is a field that tries to identify subjects.

Information ethics from the viewpoint of philosophic ethics is considered a field for philosophical researches and analyses. From descriptive ethical perspective, information ethics makes clear the normative criteria in problems and subjects of applied ethics. These criteria are compared with normative studies via descriptive studies. In an article written by Waltz Manner, (5) "Unique ethical problems in

information technology (1996)", he describes the unique characteristics of computer technology referring to it as storage, complexity, changeability and comprehensiveness, processing speed, relative cheapness, recreation unlimited capability and being based on numerous mysteries. Thanks to unique computer applications, potential attempts for finding other satisfactory alternatives that are free from ethical problems have been hindered. It was really inherent complexity in computers that paved the way for malicious individuals to misuse this technology.

Methods:

This study enjoys a descriptive content analysis method used in the humanities. The researcher's objective in this study is to analyze and describe content; in the content analysis the desired material are collected, classified, and then analyzed. These elements may be words, sentences, paragraphs or the written or oral full text of books. The research methodology used in this study, namely "content analysis" is a technique that attempts to assess the content of the message in a scientific and systematic approach.

Based on the above-mentioned definition in this research, thematic content analysis was used to analyze the content of the concept of the Holy Quran. Thematic content analysis identifies themes and their frequencies in the text (6).

After various phases of coding and categorization, of the Quran, themes in Quran were categorized based on Persian translation and then "SPSS" software was utilized for data analysis. For this study, 6236 verses of the Holy Quran were studied, 171 verses of which had some concept on information ethics that were coded and classified. Then each of them was analyzed in relation to the main research question .

Content analysis of the gathered data was made in four steps as follows:

Step 1: All words and phrases describing information ethics were extracted from the Holy Quran by using content analysis method and then a research index was made based on the words and phrases.

Step 2: the research index made in step 1 was used to ask religious and librarian experts (10 experts) to give their ideas regarding the importance of some of the extracted words, phrases and verses.

Step 3: the verses related to each subject were extracted and then reviewed by the experts.

Step 4: the subjects and concepts used in the Holy Quran as well as the related verses were all analyzed and described.

Results

What is information ethics?

Right seeking and right telling

Expression of the right is the most prominent attribute. The Holy Quran refers to this important case in some verses.

In accordance with some intellectuals, "right" has some signs and signals that can be objectively found. Intent plays the real and pivotal role in reaching the right. The state of seeking right (righteousness) is also desired while getting and giving news. The best news is the right-based one. Rightism is of specific importance in the process of preparing news. Many times news is taken from unreliable verbal reports that disagree with what has really happened (7).

Veracity

Veracity is one of human's good deeds and has a special ranking in wisdom and religion. A sane and sound person having a pure nature requires him to have a coordinated tongue and heart in one direction, to avoid hypocrisy and to vent his beliefs.

Imam Sadeq (PBUH) said: "rightness is good and right teller is better than it. Work is good and the one who does it, is better" (8).

Politeness avoidance of cursing

Cursing means to use unjust words against someone so that he/she is offended. Human is instinctively oriented towards graceful words and gets pleasure from praising others. A sane society requires information agents to ethically avoid taboo verbalism. What makes information to be truly transferred is to utter useful words in a polite and respectable manner .

Eloquence

In literal language, eloquence means plainness, maturity and maximization. In idiomatic

language, it means speech plainness and equality with current time provided that the plainness of the words and accuracy of composition in speech are addressed .

The clearest verse available in the context of the holy Quran is brought here below

The holy prophet Muhammad says:" eloquence is the beauty of speech"(9)

Fluency

Literally speaking, "clearness" means to become manifest and evident. Idiomatically it is meant to express the intent by using such understandable and fluent words that are familiar with the audience. A clear speech is one that is fluent and audible and its components are set together in a way that lacks complexity and/or difficulty. Moreover, its components should not be offensive and exclude cacophony or poorness in compilation and abstruseness or obscurity of meanings .

Affability

There are many relationships and friendships that have been devastated due to scowling, pouting and grimacing. Conversely, most of acquaintances have been formed just by a smile .

Good-temperedness

Having gentle words, polite and attractive language, a high level of patience and a delightful facial expression are manifestations of good-temperedness. In other words, when an information agent gives his affection to others, remains patient and tolerant in events, keeps his anger under control, shows good reaction against bad actions, avoids violence, irritation, abusive words, humiliation, insolence and pride, he is told to be a good-tempered person.

Optimism

Optimism is among the most important features that play outstanding roles in human growth as well as his unity, material and immaterial evolution. Hope and vivacity in life and society are acquired by them and this is an indication for its importance. The leaders of Islam have underlined this feature in their narrations. The elites and lawyers have also dedicated a separate section for this subject. The under mentioned verse shows that it is necessary to respect faithful people and be optimistic towards them .

Thinking

Thinking power makes the man to be different from other creatures. Allah has pointed to human in his Holy Quran as an entity for whom all things have been created so that he/she starts to think about things and opts for the way by means of his/her own decision. If we think about any type of information, speech and behavior and then put them into effect, no misconception will arise for us. One of the ideal characteristics of information recipients is to ponder over the concepts of the news and information upon receiving them and then try to analyze and evaluate the affairs.

Affecting others

To affect others, different dimensions of man's capabilities will work. High spiritual, (Maa'nawy) and scientific features play the most important factors in impression. The more you attempt to strengthen your will power and knowledge to acquire more good features and admirable ethics, the more you will be able to gradually impress others.

Trust

Trust is one of the features and characteristics of a faithful man. The information and words we possess have been truthfully transferred to us and need to be protected. There will be close relationships among society members if the tradition of trust is more established than ever .

Secrecy

Each individual has private information in his personal and social life. He/she should do his/her best to keep it in secret. Part of private information belongs to his/her family and/or society. Nowadays, there are modern and advanced tools in the world that can easily detect private information. This situation requires us to be inevitably faithful to our private information.

Avoiding hypocrisy

In origin, dissimulation and hypocrisy mean opposition of exterior with interior. Literally speaking, hypocrisy is signified as making tunnels and cleaves. It stands for hiding something (an idea and other) while pretending to be faithful to that thing. According to the Holy Quran and Nahjolbalagheh, (a set of excellent lectures, advices and orders authored by Imam Ali (PBUH), hypocrisy is considered

a sort of atheistic bypassing and coverage of infidelity .

Constructive criticism

use it to their benefits. When an information agent is going to provide his/her addressees with information, he/she should not only be polite in doing the job but also have a proper system to mention the deficiencies of the opposite side, so that the information can be accepted and utilized by the addressees from one hand in order to help improve mutual relationships. In other words, it is about what to say and how to say?

Security

Safety is the opposite of fear and anxiety. Security of humans, locations is considered a feature obtained by creating and maintaining protective measures in order to get protection against hostile actions and dangerous agents. Information security aims to protect privacy, integrity and accessibility of information. It is considered one of the main elements of information profession because if information is not protected in a suitable way, this may lead to national and international information abuse. Knowing these, information agents absolutely secure the information and provide it to their real addressees in a suitable place .

Information privacy

Anything that is accessible by human and is monitored by him is referred to as privacy.

This phrase means to transfer information to others so that the persons under criticism can

Protecting the privacy means to protect something against undesired access by others. Nowadays, modern media are using private information of people while they are themselves unaware of the case. Electronic technology has gained more ground and thus privacy is more targeted by violators.

Source validity

The validity of a source is considered a prerequisite for having a perfect communication between message sender and receiver. Source validity is known to be a confluence among communicative concepts. Sureness of the source validity and accuracy is one of the cases that media addressees try to get it. Writing resources will be effective in making the addressees sure of validity. Moreover, this will give more validity to the message and media as resources, which are linked, with validity .

When the purpose of releasing news or information is to give knowledge to recipients, the releaser should ethically become assured of the source validity and then send it to addresses. If not, unreal news will pervert the recipients' minds so that it will be impossible to compensate for the bad effects it will have (10).
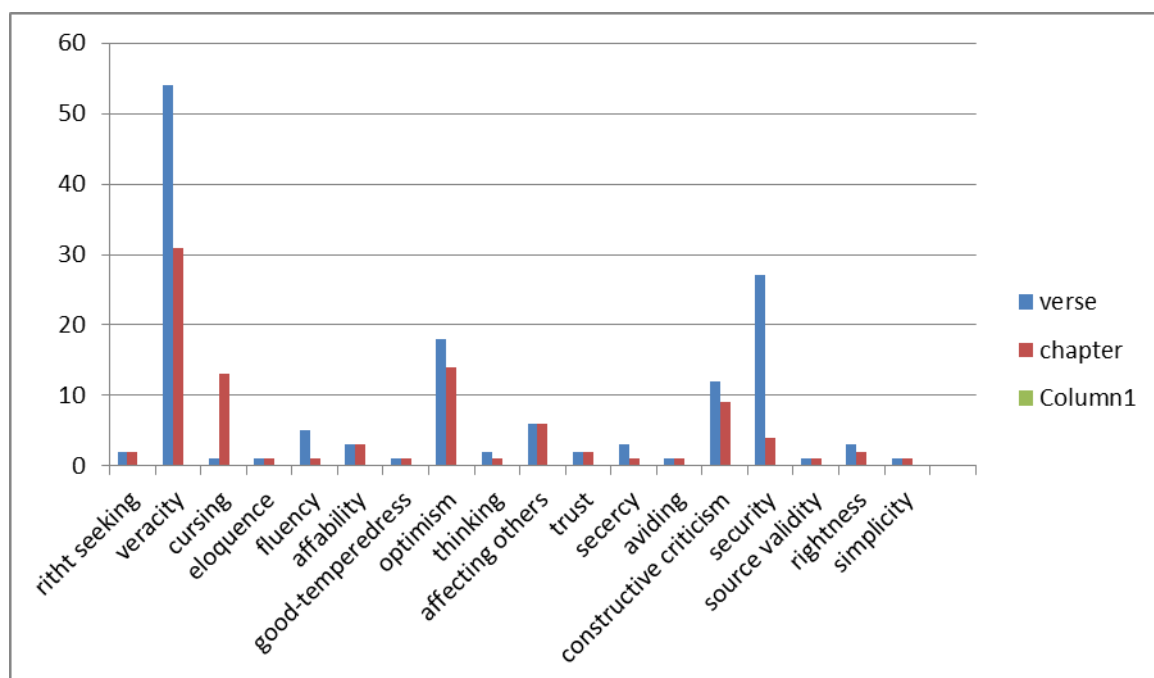
Chart 1: Information value ethics

Rightness

Rightness means secure and strength. The word "rightness" is one of the issues in information task. The more our information is accepted by wisdom, logic and reasoning, the more definite it will be. Moreover, the more strong and reasonable it is, the more stability and immortality it will have. Because the holy Quran is either wisely or intrinsically well-coordinated, it has a unique immortality and strength (11).

Simplicity

In a literal sense, simplicity means the state of being simple. Complexity is the opposite of simplicity. Complexity is a sort of trouble, duty is also meant by this. As human can face with numerous limitations and complications in life; consequently he/she can be driven to extremities by this status. Thus, while speaking, he/she can be confronted with types of complications.

The holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "The Prophets and Saints hate trouble and complexity"(12)

Ethics of counter-value information

Falsehood

Literally speaking, falsehood means nonconformity. As speech and word may be characterized with falsehood, believing and/or practicing will also be characterized with it. Unreal imagination and belief equal falsehood.

The same can be said of an action that is not taken after promise .

Backbiting

Religious definitions and the ethical principles refer to backbiting as any word or action that shows insufficiencies and deficiencies of someone before others so that he/she is offend by this measure .

Accusation

If someone supposedly attributes deficiencies and insufficiencies to somebody else, it is called accusation. Islam disapproves of an information process in which people are accused of and or found fault with .

Lie

If someone lacks a deficiency or insufficiency but this bad feature is attributed to him/her, this is called a lie, no matter he/she is either present or absent. Thus, proper information is required to be free from any lie.
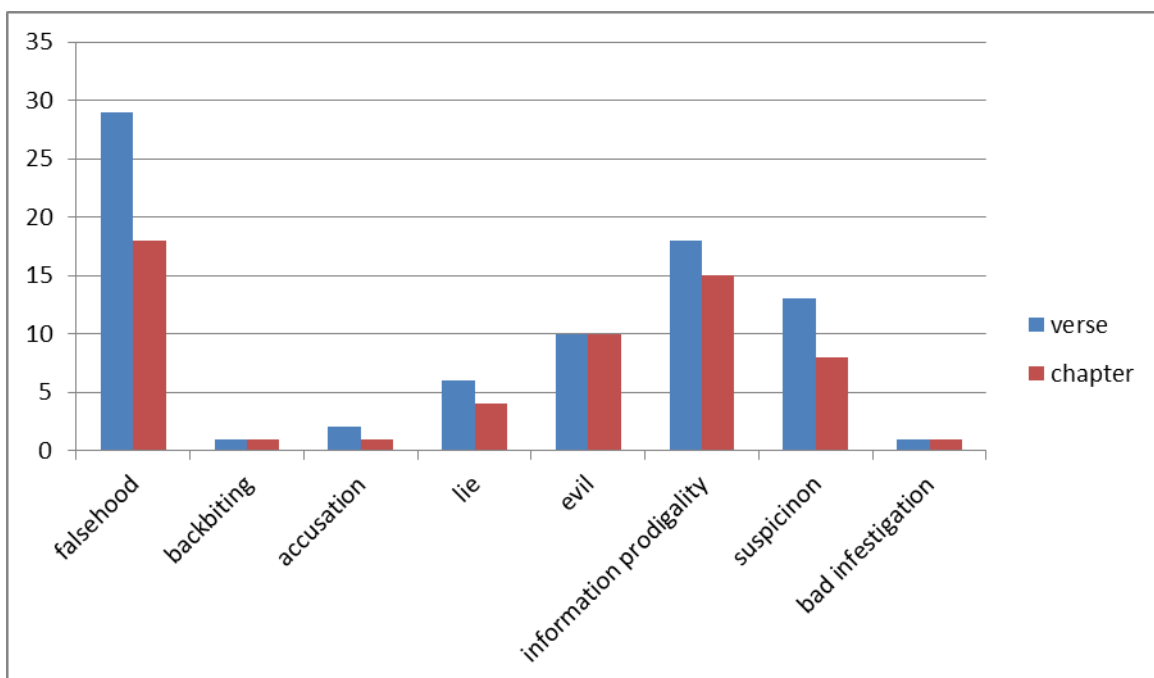
Evil and idle talk

"Evil/idle" is literally something to which no attention is paid and no result is gained by it. From the viewpoint of the Holy Quran, it is a vain effort or thought that causes man to forget his creator, namely, God .

Information prodigality

In a literal sense, the word "prodigality"

Chart 2: Counter-value information

means to overuse something. With human beliefs and actions, it means having an excessive amount of everything and going beyond it. This bad habit is known as "prodigality" and the person who does this afford is called "prodigal ."

Suspicion

In idiomatic language, suspicion means to have a negative assumption about something or someone before its right or wrong status is cleared. If we are either suspicious about a person that is not fully known to us or the accuracy of the work he/she does; in this case we really think ill of him or it .

Investigation

It means that the secrets should be seriously investigated. An information agent is required not to accept all data upon reception. Islam agrees with the mere suspicion provided that it either saves the life and respectability of a Moslem or ward off a danger from Moslem's territory.

Discussion and Conclusion

Given the information ethics value and anti-value as seen from an Islamic perspective, the results lead to the conclusion that what is to the benefit of human society and communication today are the transmission and communication and information needs of the people which are based on ethical principles. It is said that this type of data transfer should be based on honesty, confidentiality and integrity and that it should result from the fair sources. Finally, we should not forget that the Islam's emphasis on informing is to maintain the human dignity. Then, we concluded that Islam has paid attention to information ethics .

About 100 verses of the Holy Quran and about 177 sub-verses from the Koran have given information about the field of ethics.

In his book, Mac Kovail (13) has expressed the aim of information science as: seeking information about events and conditions in the immediate environment, Community and world, practical advice on topics or ideas and options for decision-making, learning and self-learning, acquiring a sense of security through knowledge, implicit supplying of ideological and propaganda purposes, manipulation of public opinion, social learning, socialization,

acquiring skills for effective and considerable impact on shaping the beliefs, changes in life habits and promoting behavior more or less in accordance with the desire of the media and their content .

According to Islam, information is a collection of true and false words and deeds. Islam accepts that sort of information, which is true and lies within the boundaries of benevolence and preaching.

However, the information cannot be put solely on the shoulders of an individual; it consists of information from the speaker and the audience. The speaker is truthful in his words and trustees, and avoids harmful nonsense. In addition, the audience is an expression of the speaker's understanding of the literature.

If this information is not distributed in an accurate manner, it may result in incorrect behavior from the other party and can even cause irreparable damages.

The "Ethical information" book has a glimpse at information ethics to reach the final conclusion, and considerable topics are expressed in such a way that intelligence staff and those who are involved in intelligence affairs of the country, should learn and know all the ethical requirements for using and enhancing them with the final objective of empowering the country to defend itself. (14)

This research and similar ones can make it easier to use the rich sources of knowledge and training to understand and grasp the meaning and concept of Quran. Analysis of Quran is based on information ethics component as one of the newest and important fields of humanities. This type of project will lead to the discovery of new concepts and will be thought-provoking.

It should be noted that Quran has been revealed by God, we can use it as a declaration of information ethics acceptable for all.

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