

Relational Responsibility in Islamic Bioethics

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One of the main aims of Islamic bioethics is assessing the moral position of medical interventions from an Islamic point of view. This can include identifying the permissibility of new drugs and procedures or bioethical issues such as withholding or withdrawing treatments. This analysis requires detailed analysis of the intervention as well as the context. Importantly, many analyses focus solely on the intervention and/or the responsibilities of the patient but fail to incorporate the responsibilities of the healthcare team and close relationships of the patient within that context. For example, it may be impermissible for a patient to refuse artificial nutrition and hydration in some cases, entailing a moral responsibility on the patient's family to encourage the patient to accept care.

This paper uses concepts from within the Islamic tradition, as well as recent theories of relational autonomy and care ethics, to advance a framework that incorporates the relational responsibility inherent within social relationships in Islam. We begin by highlighting the five moral categories of Islamic law (impermissible, permissible, recommended, obligatory, disliked) as agent and context-focused rather than intervention-focused.

Using relational autonomy as a model, we then show how Islam expands this idea to include relational responsibility. Finally, we propose a model that encourages Islamic bioethical research to focus on the moral position of the intervention alongside the moral responsibilities of the patient, the healthcare team, and the patient's relations.

References :

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