

Public Relations Education in an Arab/Islamic Context

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Abstract

Numerous scholars consider the discipline of public relations a western construct, infused with classic Greek rhetoric and Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, public relations education in many Arab and Islamic countries continues to be based on Anglo-Saxon concepts and knowledge generated by US-UK scholars. A number of critical scholars have referred to the need of addressing issues pertaining to public relations ethnocentricity, and recommended replacing it with global perspectives in terms of culture and identity. The present public relations education and multinational corporations are change agents aim at re-shaping public relations practices in host countries with a view of creating liberal political governments, securing cheap raw material/labor, and new markets. Public relations ethics in Arab and Islamic countries did not capture adequate scholarly interests. The focus of this paper is to highlight public relations ethics in an Arab/Islamic context. Ethics is of paramount importance at this historical moment because it helps redefine the role of public relations practices at a time when most of the countries in the region are facing insurmountable political, economic, and nation-building problems. The paper provides basic principles of Islamic ethics that pertain to public relations education. These principles include: unity Tawheed (unity), Iman (faith), *Khilafah* (trusteeship), 'Adl (justice), and *Ihsan* (benevolence), and *Hur-riyya* (free will). The paper recommends that public relations educators include these ethical principles in their curricula. Moreover, public relations students and practitioners in Islamic countries should learn these Islamic ethical principles guidelines by heart and use them in their daily activities.

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Introduction

Public relations education receive more attention in recent years. A number of scholars have provided informative histories and commentary on the state of public relations education in their home countries (Azarova, 2003; Ferrari, 2009; Ferreira and Verwey, 2004; Gorpe, 2009; L'Etang, 1999; Pirozek and Heskova, 2003; Sriramesh, 2002; Zlateva, 2003; Zhang, 2009). The practice of public relations can be traced to ancient times. The Greek, Romans, Assyrians, as well as Pharaohs practice one form or another of publicity or relationship management. Religions also played their role in public relations. According to Seitel (2014), "Even the catholic church had a hand in the creation of public relations. In the 1600s, under the leadership of Pope Gregory XV, the church established a college of propaganda to 'help propagate the faith'." (Seitel, 2014, p.29). Islam also played its role in utilizing the power of persuasion to propagate its message. Islamic ethics exist in communication, advertising as well as public relations (Abuznaid, 2009). Nonetheless, most of the public relations literature, particularly textbooks in Western countries remain Eurocentric, with Judeo-Christian ethical underpinnings. Islamic teachings and ethics receive little or no attention in most Western public relations textbooks. According to Toth and Aldoory (2010) argue that the Leeds University assessment on the possibility of creating a global public relations curriculum suggested "the difficult tension between uniformity vs. diversity; the need for cultural awareness; the attention to language differences in meanings of public relations course titles and concepts; and the possible backlash against a historical, United States dominance of education (pp, 10-11).

Kirat (2016) defines public relations in Islam as a vehicle of creating a healthy environment for both the individual and the community to establish the Islamic community (*Umma*) which should live in harmony within itself and with others according to Islamic principles and values. The Qur'an states that Islam is a religion for all people, and all times, "One day we shall raise from all peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves. And we shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people): and we have sent down to thee a book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims." (Al Nahl: 89). Another verse affirms, "We have explained in detail in this Quran, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude: but man is, in most things, contentious." (Al Kahf: 54). Islamic ethics are based on the Qur'an, *Haddith* (Sayings of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)) and *Sunnah* (Acts of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)).

Allah bestowed the most perfect qualities on Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). The Qur'an explicitly asked all Muslims to follow the steps of Prophet Mohammad: For you in the Messenger of Allah is a fine example to follow (Al-Ahzab 33:21). "And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character" (Al Qalam: 4). His daily behavior was exemplar in honesty, mercy, and generosity. He did what he preached, and his actions followed his sayings. For this reason Allah requires that Muslims "Obey Allah and obey the messenger", (An-Nisa: 59) and "Whatever the Messenger giveth you take it and whatever he forbiddeth abstain from it." (Al-Hashr: 7). In another verse, "And verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the last day and remembereth Allah much." (Al-Ahzab: 31). According to

this verse, Allah asks every Muslim to follow the good example of the prophet as a role model and an ideal in life. In another verse he has been made a ‘Hakam’ – judge – for the Muslims by Allah Almighty. No one remains Muslim if he does not accept the prophet’s decisions and judgments:

“But no, by thy Lord, they can have no real faith until they make thee judge in all disputes between them and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions but accept them with the fullest conviction.” (An-Nisa: 65). The virtues of prophet’s deeds consisted of his good conduct, combining at the same time mercy (for followers) and awe for those who opposed him. His Shari’ah (law) is a just one, moderate between intemperance and negligence

This paper builds on previous studies that reflected on the relevance of Islamic ethics in advertising in some Arab and Islamic countries (Lewis, 2016; Kalliny, 2012; Haque et al., 2010; Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002; Melewar *et al.*, 2000;), consumption in Islamic contexts (Fischer, 2016; Wilson et al. 2013; Jafari, 2012; Sandikci, 2011; Yusuf, 2010; Kruckeberg, 1996), and public relations in Islamic countries (Kirat, 2015; Parsons, 2008), to create a better understanding of how Islamic values influence global public relations strategies, tactics, and programs.

The advent of globalization and rise of new market opportunities in Islamic countries has generated considerable debate among scholars and practitioners regarding appropriate ethical marketing communication strategies and tactics to use when dealing with Muslim consumers (Lewis, 2016; Sandikci, 2011; Yusuf, 2010; Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010; Birch et al., 2001; Kruckeberg, 1996). And although, there are numerous studies examining issues pertaining to some Islamic values in advertising (Cader, 2015; Kalliny et al., 2011; Haque *et al.*, 2010; Melewar *et al.*, 2000), there has been limited discussion in the literature pertaining the influence of Islamic ethics on global advertising and public relations strategies (Kirat, 2015; Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002).

Global public relations debate

There is an ongoing scholarly debate on the role of ethics in advertising and marketing communication. According to Turnbull, Howe-Walsh, and Boulanouar (2016) the debate can be summarized in two schools of thought (Lugmani et al., 1989; Agrawal, 1995; Fastoso and Whitelock, 2007). Those who advocate a standardized approach to the marketing communication mix argue that standardized products and services offer advantages of economies of scale and furnish a solid and consistent global brand image (Schmid and Kotulla, 2011). A standardized approach capitalizes on the synergy of brand image, and harness the potential for cost savings, better planning and control (Melewar *et al.*, 2000). On the other hand, proponents of tweaking the marketing communication mix to fit emergent local markets highlight the downside of a standardized marketing communication strategy that ignores the local cultural variations even if that standardization is Islamic in nature (Navarro *et al.*, 2010; Fischer, 2016). Moreover, socio-economic and cultural factors constitute major obstacles to standardization of marketing communication (Haque *et al.*, 2010).

The importance of Islamic ethics

A number of studies (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2000; PRSA, 2000; Boynton, 2006) have examined the topic of professional values in public relations. Some scholars focused on ethics and professionalism (Winston, 2005; & Barnard, 2008; Panina & Bierman, 2013). The importance of studying public relations from an Islamic perspective arises from that fact that many Muslim countries use Islamic laws (*shariah*) based on the Qur'an (the Muslim Holy book) and the Sunnah (the sayings and practices of Prophet Mohammed) in addition to the rulings of prominent Muslim scholars who rely on *Ijma'a*, *Qiyas*, and *Ijtihad* (Alserhan, 2011; Charrad, 2001). Thus, the core values and traditions in many Islamic countries differ substantially from Western countries, which derive most of their values systems from Judaism and Christianity. A number of studies have reflected on the importance of adhering to Islamic business ethics when communicating with consumers in Islamic contexts (Jafari & Sandikci, 2016; Hassan *et al.*, 2008; Marta *et al.*, 2004; Abbasi *et al.*, 1989). Understanding the underpinnings of Islamic ethical values make it easier for companies to design persuasive messages to consumers in Muslim countries (Alserhan & Alserhan, 2012; Behboudi *et al.*, 2014; Cader, 2015).

An extant literature highlights the holistic nature of the Islamic teachings and ethics that should normatively regulate various aspects of socio-economic, cultural, and political life and create a unique culture in most of the Muslim countries (Kruckeberg, 1996; Arham, 2010; Feiz *et al.*, 2013; Wilson, 2012; Yusuf, 2010).

The basic principles of Islamic ethics in public relations

In Islamic literature the word ethics correlates with *Akhlaq*, which pertains to what is right and what is wrong. According to Beekun (1997), this concept include: *khayr* (goodness), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *'adl* (justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *ma'ruf* (known and approved), and *taqwa* (piety). Thus, good and pious actions are considered salihat, and wrong and impious actions are known as sayyi'at (Fakhry, 1991, pp. 12-13).

Islamic teachings revolve around a fundamental concept called *Tawheed* (Unity). In general, *Tawheed* refers to a unified creation, under one omnipresent, omnipotent Creator (*Allah*). The acceptance of *Allah's* unity, and overarching control over every "thing" living, seen and unseen is the cornerstone of Islamic creed. *Tawheed* is an acknowledgement of transcendence in human relations which highlights the "process" of each act undertaken (Wilson and Hollensen, 2010). In addition, *Tawheed* explains how Muslims articulate their personal and communal interests to serve the Islamic community (*Umma*) (Al Faruqi, 1992). Thus, Islamic ethics should be followed when conducting all business and marketing activities, including public relations which is the node of communicating with various stakeholders. What makes Islamic ethics different from other codes of ethics is the fact that *Allah* "is closer to man than his jugular vein, and has eternal knowledge of everything (Beekun, 1997). Armstrong (2004), argues that this constant awareness of *Allah* is what makes observant Muslims different from others.

Turnbell, Howe-Walsh, and Boulanouar (2016) examine the field of Islamic marketing and state six principles including Unity (*Tawheed*), Faith (*Iman*), Trusteeship (*Khilafah*), Balance (*Tawazun*), and Justice (*‘Adl*). *Tawheed* impels on all Muslims to treat all people fairly and equally without discrimination. Faith (*Iman*) concerns the conscience, and orders Muslims act conscientiously within the *Shariah* (Islamic Law). Qur’an states, “Indeed, they who have believed and done righteous deeds - those are the best of creatures” (Al Bayyinah: 7). *Iman* is the belief in Oneness of Allah, his angles, prophets, and revealed books, the hereafter as well as destiny Muslims should choose what is lawful (*Halal*) and avoid what is forbidden (*Haram*). Although, halal and clear and haram is also clear, some people see a gray area between what is halal and what is haram. Trusteeship (*Istikhilaf*), deals with the intelligence *Allah* has bestowed on the human creation over other creation (Dhabouadi, 2006), and emphasizes the trusteeship (rather than ownership) of the Earth's resources. Thus, human beings have to strive on earth and to ensure virtue and eliminate evil. This active engagement and participation in world’s affairs is part of *tazkiyah* (purification). In a nutshell, it means that all the resources on Earth belong to *Allah*, although owned by some people, and are distributed unevenly among them (Bassiouni, 1993).

Using their human intellect, human beings should re-distribute these resources evenly among them and in a *halal* way (Al Faruqi and Al Faruqi, 1976). Balance (*Tawazun*), emphasizes moderation. Qur’an emphasizes *Wasatiyah*, “Thus, We have made you a justly balanced community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you” (Al-Baqarah, 2:143). This principle stresses that valuing human beings and doing the virtuous things is more important than profit maximization (Siddiqi, 1981; Saeed *et al.*, 2001; Chapra, 1992), because Islam emphasizes duties over rights (Alserhan, 2011). Thus, business success and money and wealth as mere allurements, whereas “the things that endure, good deeds, are the best in the sight of Allah...” (Qur’an, 18:46). Accordingly, individual needs as well as communal and social needs should be balanced. Justice (*‘Adl*) is an important part of Islamic teachings. The Qur’an emphasizes *‘Adl*: “Allah commands justice, the doing of good...” (Al-Nahl, 90). Justice (*‘Adl*) requires treating all people equally without discrimination, prohibits usury, and calls for honoring of contracts (Mustapha, 1989). In this sense, *‘Adl* also embodies balance and equity. Finally, free will (*Al hurriyya*) means that human beings have freedom of choice in their behavior - they can do the right thing, or the wrong thing according to their socio-economic contexts (Alserhan, 2011). Endowed by intelligence, human beings are free to choose whatever course of actions they choose. Nonetheless, every human being is solely responsible for his/her actions. According to Turnbell et al., (2016), these six dimensions that make up an overview of Islamic ethics are intertwined and consistent with the overarching concept of unity (*Tawheed*).

Kirat (2016) refers to five approaches to Islamic communication and public relations work, which include, sincerity, consistency, gentleness, and gradual propagation. Sincerity and truthfulness to *Allah* requires being honest and truthful. One verse states, “shun the word that is false” (Al-Hajj, 30). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) “spoke assertively of the virtue of truthfulness as a pillar of strong faith” (Berenger & Taha, 2013, p.96). Practicing what one preaches is a cornerstone in public relations. Many

public relations problems arise from inconsistency between words and deeds. One verse states: “Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not”(Al-Saff:3). In communication, the way the message is presented is as important as the message itself. *Allah* advised Moses and Aaron to address Pharaoh, who proclaim himself as god, in a soft tone, and gentle manner: “But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)” (Taha: 44). Another verse, describes how gentle and tactful Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) was in communicating his message: “And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you” (Al Imran: 159). Kirat (2016) argues that a gradual approach to propagation is essential for effective Islamic public relations. He adds that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had set priorities for his mission by focusing on the most important things.

Rahman (1983) focuses on four aspects of Islamic ethics emanating from the Qur’an and Haddith. They include, *Iman*, *Taqwa*, *Ihsan*, and *Islam*. *Ihsan* refers to benevolence and pertains to devotion, love, and dedication to *Allah*. All these aspects come under the umbrella of *Islam*, which refers to peace, purity, and subordination to *Allah*. Thus, Muslims are supposed to be kind, and work to end exploitation in various business contexts.

Islamic ethics and consumer relations

To business people, investors, sellers and consumers there are a number of Islamic guidelines that should be followed. There should be no fraud or deceit, the Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said, “When a sale is held, say, “There’s no cheating” (Al-Bukhari). Exaggeration and deceit are forbidden. Sellers are advised not to make oaths during transactions. The Prophet (pbuh) said, “Be careful of excessive oaths in a sale. Though it finds markets, it reduces abundance” (Muslim). Mutual understanding and mutual consent are two important pillars for beneficial seller-consumer relations. The Prophet (pbuh) said, “The sale is complete when the two parties involved depart with mutual consent” (Al-Bukhari). One of the most important teachings of Islam in trade is being honest and strict in regard to weights and measures. The Qur’an states, “And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance”(Al-Rahman, 10). The Prophet (pbuh) asked sellers, “You have been entrusted with affairs over which some nations before you were destroyed” (Al-Tirmidhi). The Prophet (pbuh) emphasized that honesty and kind dealings with customers are the secrets of success in business. He adds, said, “The truthful and honest merchant is associated with the Prophets, the upright and the martyrs” (Al-Tirmidhi). In another Haddith, “God shows mercy to a person who is kindly when he sells, when he buys and when he makes a claim” (Al-Bukhari).

The Prophet forbade monopolies. “Whoever monopolizes is a sinner” (Abu Dawud). Moreover, although Islam is for free enterprise, the price of the commodities should not be fixed unless there is a crisis or extreme necessity. Hoarding goods and products cause many economic and social difficulties to many consumers. Some business people hoard products in order to increase their future prices is forbidden. More importantly, trade in haram items, such as gambling, intoxicants, and illicit drugs is forbidden. Prophet Mohammad said Hallal is clear and Haram is clear, but there are

some doubtful area in between, and Muslims should avoid these doubtful things. He adds, “Every king has a sanctuary, and God’s sanctuary is the things he had declared unlawful” (Al-Bukhari). Islamic ethics also provide some guidelines for consumers. Consumers should purchase in moderation, without being stingy or extravagant. They are those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but follow a middle way between them (Al-Furqan, 25: 67).

Corporate Social responsibility (*Takaful*): An Islamic perspective

Compared to many western ethical theories, the Islamic perspective of corporate social responsibility (CSR) posits a holistic approach. Ahmed (2003b) argues that the moral and ethical principles derived from divine revelations are more enduring, eternal and absolute. Thus, the concept of CSR in Islam follows *Shariaa*, manifests itself in *Taqwa*, *‘Adl*, *Birr*, and *Khilafa* and aims at creating and consolidating equality, justice and human dignity. Thus, Muslim public relations practitioners are supposed to be guided by the Islamic values of honesty, truthfulness, fairness, kindness, tolerance and uprightness, instead of deceit, envy, backbiting and cheating (Farook et al., 2011).

According to Kirat (2016), corporate social responsibility is a moral and religious initiative based on the belief that a company should avoid ‘to do bad’ and be ‘good’ regardless of the financial implications. The main point here is not an advertising gimmick, but a true charitable contribution to alleviate human sufferings. Thus, invoking the *Shariaa* and *Taqwa* in business communication imply that the business is not merely driven by profit maximization, but rather by the pursuit of the ultimate happiness in this life and the Hereafter. Consequently, business people acknowledge their moral responsibility for the wellbeing of other human-beings such as consumers, employees, shareholders and local communities (Dusuki, 2008). That means using altruism, rather than cheap advertising, to articulate individual self-interest and societal interests (Naqvi, 2003). Eventually, the drive to serve individual self-interest is retooled to serve the social justice for the Islamic *Ummah* and the society at large. Faith, *Taqwa*, which is an overarching concept, also refers to fear of Allah, and impels pious public relations practitioners to use socially-responsible programs to serve the interests of the Islamic *Umma*. Qur’an states, “O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has *Taqwa*. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All Aware.” (Al-Hujuraat, 13). Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) emphasized the importance of *Taqwa* by saying, “The most common thing which leads people to Paradise is *Taqwa* of Allah and good conduct, and the most common thing which leads people to the Hell Fire is the mouth and the private parts.” (Tirmidhi). Indeed, most of the principles of Islam ethics particularly *‘Adl*, *Khilafa*, and *Birr*, constitute excellent vehicles for an ideal practice of corporate social responsibility. Dusuki (2008) asserts: “...The firm must always operate in a good and socially responsible manner regardless of the financial consequences. By so doing, the firm will be blessed by God and will achieve ultimate happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter.” (p.20). This notion is in tandem with Sherry Baker’s *enlightened self-interest model*, that stipulates “Business do well by doing good.”(Seitel, 2014, p. 128).

Islamic ethics and public relations education

Studying and applying Islamic ethics in public relations can build on the Islamic advertising and marketing literature (Arham, 2010; Feiz *et al.*, 2013; Haque *et al.*, 2010; Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). Islamic public relations is important because acknowledging cultural and religious sensitivity is essential for effective communication in Islamic societies.

Pursuant to *Adl*, not only public relations, but all marketing activities should be in the spirit of Islam and governed by Islamic ethics (Arham, 2010). This suggests that in addition to public relations research, tactics, strategy, message design, all aspects of campaign process and practice should adhere to Islamic values. This fits nicely into the overarching concept of unity (*Tawheed*) which is a fundamental linchpin of the Islamic ethical framework.

Some scholars caution that neglecting Islamic ethics could jeopardize brands, because communication and advertising that ignore “the sensitivities of Islamic values and culture, may result in lost sales and perhaps company image” (De Run *et al.*, 2010, p. 29). By extension, public relations messages could also be negatively perceived if they neglect the peculiarities of the local culture, core values and ethics in Islamic societies.

Scholars argue that advertising needs to take into account the socio-cultural and religious sensitivities of the consumers in Islamic states (Haque *et al.*, 2010). They posit advertising should be consistent with religious understanding and advertising appeals need to ensure they observe religious knowledge. They do suggest including religious terminology in advertising as a means to provide consumers with the affirmation of the Islamic integrity of the brand (Haque *et al.*, 2010). Islamic values is an important one and relates to *Iman*. Consideration of *Iman* is hence an important consideration for public relations practitioners in Islamic States.

If communicators in general, and advertisers in particular, are advised not to mislead vulnerable groups including the poor, less educated, and elderly (Luqmani *et al.*, 1989), public relations practitioners are advised to respect and care about all vulnerable groups in their community. Guided by the Islamic principles of ‘*adl, ihsan*, and *Khilafah*, Muslim public relations professionals should ensure that symmetric communication with vulnerable groups lead to mutual understanding and serve the interests of these groups as well as the interest of the dominant coalition.

A further consideration for public relations practitioners is how to represent various segments of their target audiences. A number of scholars underscore the need for media and advertising messages to respect women (Al-Makaty *et al.*, 1996; Al-Olayan and Karande, 2002; Luqmani *et al.*, 1989) and recognize their inalienable rights and contribution to society (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). A similar advice should be given by Islamic ethics educators to public relations students and practitioners. Some studies highlight the merit of ensuring women are modestly dressed with long dresses that cover their body and head (Lewis, 2016; Al-Olayan and Karande, 2002). Islamic ethics call for treating women with kindness, and

consequently, advises against objectification and commodification of women in media messages. Thus, public relations messages pertaining to women should be humane and not demeaning. Indeed, abiding by the Islamic ethical principles of *'Adl* and *Ihsan*, leads to sending messages that contain no objectification or commodification of women.

Scholarly research suggest that for media and advertising messages to be effective in some Islamic countries, the messages need to be fair, truthful, and avoid deception (Arham, 2010; Haque *et al.* , 2010; Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). Public relations professionals also need to understand this fact. They will do the right thing if they abide by the Islamic ethical principle of *'Adl*. Marketing and communication messages and promotions that exaggerate product or service benefits and leave consumers feeling deceived should be avoided (Luqmani et al., 1989; Haque et al., 2010; Arham, 2010). Islamic ethics do not condone flagrant lies, cover-ups, and spinning, and consider these acts unacceptable.

The style of communicating public relations messages in Islamic societies should also adhere to Islamic ethics. Communication should be considerate, polite, value diversity and emphasize justice (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). Controversial issues pertaining to violence, alcohol, gambling, nudity, and obscene pop culture should be avoided (Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1995; Wilson and Hollensen, 2010). Melewar et al. (2000) suggest that images of dogs and statues should be avoided. On the other hand Luqmani et al., (1989) encourage the use of poetic symbolism such as Arabic proverbs and pictures of horses, camels, and falcons. By following the ethical value of unity (*Tawheed*), public relations practitioners should use a communication style that satisfy the needs of their stakeholders.

Localizing rather than standardizing public relations education

Standardization of public relations education may not be helpful in the global marketplace. In a similar context, some studies have argued that localizing advertising messages is more effective than standardization (Kanso & Neslon, 2002). Religion, customs, and value systems are important factors that influence the practice of public relations in various socio-economic conditions. In addition to the variations in socio-economic contexts, public relations educators and practitioners need to consider the specific nature of the communication style, tactics, and campaign strategy from an Islamic ethics perspective. Public relations professionals should use effective messages that resonate with their target audience. Even, within Islamic countries, messages pertaining to global Islamic brands such as clothing, travel and tourism, halal supply chains, and Islamic banking and Islamic finance may require some modification and adaptation to suit the cultural and societal needs of a specific local Islamic community.

Conclusion

Many textbooks in Islamic countries educate students about Judeo-Christian ethics. Nonetheless, these textbooks do not mention any thing about the Islamic ethics. Excellence in public relations require adhering to rigorous ethical standards. For businesses to succeed they need to promote their ethical standards by hiring individual who value justice, honesty and truthfulness. They should also guard against insider trading and fraud, and corruption. Most of the recent business failure resulted from swindling of money and corruption.

This paper highlights the need for public relations educators to incorporate Islamic ethics in their curricula. Although, Islamic ethics involve an array of teachings pertaining to human interactions in various socio-economic settings, the paper include some verses from the Qur'an, as well as Hadiths and actions of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). The major components of Islamic ethics include unity *Tawheed* (unity), *Iman* (faith), *Khilafah* (trusteeship), *'Adl* (justice), and *Ihsan* (benevolence), and *Hur-riyya* (free will). Public relations students in Islamic countries should learn these Islamic ethical principles guidelines by heart. If applicable, these ethical guidelines will lead to honest and effective communication within and outside organizations.

The current paper builds on our knowledge of the current advertising standardization debate. It suggest that public relations education should not be standardized considering the divergent socio-economic contexts. The paper calls for including Islamic ethics in public relations education. Lack of empirical study is one of the limitations of this paper. Moreover, although many of the English public relations textbooks used in the UAE do not contain basic education on Islamic ethics, some Muslim countries have a reasonable component of Islamic ethics in their curricula. Future studies could examine public relations curricula in all Islamic countries and explore the implications of the presence or lack of Islamic ethics in their public relations textbooks.

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