

Qur'anic Foundations, Limits, and Manifestations of Bodily Privacy

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Introduction

Bodily privacy, centered upon the principle of bodily integrity, is one of the most fundamental human rights. In contemporary discourse, concepts such as bodily autonomy and the right over one's body are regarded as essential components of individual freedom. Nevertheless, despite the considerable attention devoted in the Qur'an to bodily interactions and human conduct, this subject has received relatively little systematic investigation within Islamic and Qur'anic scholarship.

The principal question addressed in this study is whether a coherent semantic framework concerning the human right over the body can be derived from the Holy Qur'an. The study argues that such a framework can indeed be established on the basis of Qur'anic principles, particularly human dignity (karāmah) and human agency. Accordingly, this research seeks to develop a conceptual framework by examining bodily privacy through three interrelated Qur'anic foundations: ontological (the body as a divine trust), anthropological (the body as the locus of reason and human dignity), and axiological (the religious obligation to protect bodily integrity). Ultimately, the study proposes a Qur'anic model of ethical engagement with the human body, harmonizing human dignity with social responsibilities and a life of faithful devotion.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology based on documentary and library research to examine the Qur'anic foundations of bodily privacy through the analysis of relevant Qur'anic verses and Prophetic and Imamic traditions. The research begins with a conceptual analysis of key terms, including privacy, bodily integrity, and the right over the body, drawing upon lexical, legal, and juristic sources. These concepts are subsequently examined through the interpretation of relevant Qur'anic verses and narrations in order to identify their underlying Qur'anic foundations. Alongside authoritative Qur'anic commentaries and Twelver Shi'i jurisprudential sources, contemporary legal scholarship and studies in bioethics have also been consulted to provide a comprehensive analytical framework. Finally, by integrating ontological, anthropological, and ethical analyses derived from the Qur'an, the study formulates a conceptual model of ethical interaction with the human body within the broader framework of Qur'anic discourse.



Results and Findings

The study develops a conceptual framework for bodily privacy through the analysis of three interconnected Qur'anic foundations: ontological, anthropological, and ethical. By examining selected Qur'anic verses concerning visual conduct, physical contact, bodily covering, entry into private spaces, coercive behavior, and physical harm, the research identifies the legitimate boundaries governing interaction with the human body while clarifying the role of individual agency in defining those boundaries. Based upon these foundations, a Qur'anic model of ethical engagement with the human body is proposed, in which human dignity, social obligations, and faithful living are integrated within the ethical vision of divine revelation.

From an ontological perspective, bodily privacy rests upon three fundamental principles: God's absolute ownership of the human body, humanity's delegated authority to exercise stewardship over it, and the conditional nature of all bodily use under divine governance. Anthropologically, the Qur'an attributes a unique status to the human body by portraying it as an essential aspect of human reality. Human beings, created with intrinsic dignity and endowed with an innate monotheistic disposition (*fiṭrah*), are therefore entitled to a protected sphere that is inviolable by others, bodily privacy being one of its most important manifestations. Accordingly, the anthropological foundations of bodily privacy are established upon three principal concepts: the unity of body and soul, intrinsic human dignity, and the body as the locus of reason and free will.

Finally, from an axiological perspective, the Qur'an presents the protection of bodily privacy as both a religious and a moral obligation grounded in the ethical principles of Islam. Within this framework, the human body is understood as a divine trust, and safeguarding its sanctity constitutes an inseparable aspect of human servitude to God. Three core ethical values—modesty and chastity, respect for the rights of others, and faithful stewardship of the body—serve as the primary foundations supporting this Qur'anic understanding of bodily privacy.

Conclusion

The findings of this study may be summarized as follows:

1. Bodily privacy in the Qur'an rests upon three foundational dimensions. Ontologically, the human body is not an individual's absolute possession but a trust bestowed by God, and any exercise of authority over it must remain within divinely prescribed limits. Anthropologically, the body serves as the locus of reason, free will, and faith, rendering it inseparable from human dignity and moral responsibility. Axiologically, the protection of bodily privacy constitutes both an individual right and a religious-social obligation supported by values such as modesty, chastity, justice, and the prohibition of bodily harm.



2. The Qur'an establishes clear religious boundaries governing bodily privacy. Regulations concerning modest dress (Q. 24:31), the prohibition of unlawful gazing (Q. 24:30–31), the prohibition of spreading indecency (Q. 24:19), and the prohibition of harming believers (Q. 33:58) collectively demonstrate the existence of a coherent divine framework regulating bodily privacy.

3. Concrete manifestations of violations of bodily privacy can likewise be identified in the Qur'an and its exegetical tradition. These include exposing another person's body without consent, illicit visual intrusion and bodily assault, and both physical and psychological harm inflicted upon believers.

4. Restrictions upon bodily privacy are legitimate only when justified by superior public interests and supported by valid religious evidence. Situations such as preventing the spread of public indecency (Q. 24:19) or implementing divinely prescribed legal punishments under their legitimate conditions constitute examples of lawful limitations. Any interference lacking a valid religious basis, however, is considered unjustifiable.

5. A conceptual distinction must be maintained between the "limits" and the "manifestations" of bodily privacy. Limits refer to the general legal and ethical principles governing the protection or restriction of bodily privacy, whereas manifestations denote the concrete practical instances in which this privacy is either respected or violated. The present study has sought to distinguish clearly between these two dimensions while providing a systematic Qur'anic account of each.

Keywords

bodily privacy, human dignity, ontological foundations, anthropological foundations, bodily responsibility .

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics . The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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