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Qualitative Interviewing as an Ethical-Spiritual Encounter: An Islamic Reflexive Perspective

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Abstract

Muslim scholars have articulated a rich epistemological foundation linking knowledge to moral and spiritual accountability. However, translating these principles into concrete qualitative research practice, particularly interviewing, remains underdeveloped, as interviewing continues to be framed by assumptions of procedural neutrality and researcher detachment. This gap motivates the present article, which reconceptualises qualitative interviewing as an ethical and spiritual encounter grounded in Islamic epistemology, arguing that interviews are morally conscious engagements rather than neutral data-collection tools. Rather than collecting new empirical data, the article critically revisits the author's ethnographic and interview-based fieldwork at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), synthesising these reflections with literature on qualitative methodology and Islamic epistemology to build a conceptual framework. This framework theorises how Islamic values shape rapport-building, listening, interpretation, and conduct, and introduces five core values: *niyyah* (intention), *adab* (etiquette), *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (trust), and *shahadah bil hal* (witnessing through conduct). The article shows how *da'wah bil hal*, expressed through character rather than preaching, can deepen reflexivity, trust, and humanise the research encounter.

Keywords: Islamic epistemology, qualitative interviewing, research ethics, Islamic research methodology

Abstrak

Sarjana Islam telah mengemukakan asas epistemologi yang kukuh dalam mengaitkan ilmu dengan akauntabiliti moral dan spiritual. Sungguhpun begitu, ia tidak diterjemahkan dengan baik kepada amalan penyelidikan kualitatif, khususnya temu bual. Ini kerana temu bual terus dirangka mengikut andaian bahawa prosedur adalah neutral dan penyelidik adalah terasing dan tidak memberi kesan kepada proses penyelidikan. Jurang inilah yang mendorong artikel ini untuk membina semula konsep bahawa temu bual ialah pertemuan beretika dan berteraskan epistemologi Islam. Ia bukan alat pengumpulan data yang neutral. Artikel ini tidak melibatkan pengumpulan data empirikal baharu, sebaliknya menilai semula secara kritis pengalaman kerja lapangan etnografi dan temu bual yang dijalankan oleh penulis di Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM). Refleksi tersebut disintesiskan dengan literatur berkaitan dengan metodologi kualitatif dan epistemologi Islam bagi membangunkan suatu kerangka konseptual. Kerangka ini menghuraikan bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam membentuk proses membina hubungan, mendengar, mentafsir dan melaksanakan temu bual, serta memperkenalkan lima nilai teras, iaitu *niyyah* (niat), *adab* (tatasusila), *ihsan* (kecemerlangan), *amanah* (kepercayaan) dan *shahadah bil hal* (kesaksian melalui perbuatan). Artikel ini menunjukkan bahawa *da'wah bil hal*, yang dizahirkan melalui akhlak dan peribadi, dan bukannya semata-mata melalui penyampaian secara lisan. Ia berupaya memperdalam refleksiviti, membina kepercayaan dan memanusiakan pertemuan dalam proses penyelidikan.

Keywords: Epistemologi Islam, temu bual kualitatif, etika kajian, metodologi penyelidikan Islam

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative interviewing has long been recognised as more than a mechanical technique of data extraction. Within dominant methodological traditions, it is still frequently framed through assumptions of procedural neutrality and researcher detachment. In addition to that, historically, certain strands of ethnographic inquiry were entangled with colonial and imperial projects, where knowledge production served administrative control and cultural domination. These legacies invite critical reflection on researchers' moral positioning and the ethical implications of inquiry.

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, knowledge-seeking (*'ilm*) is inseparable from moral responsibility. Inquiry is not a value-neutral enterprise but a purposeful act situated within a framework of *tawhid*, accountability, and ethical conduct. Classical and contemporary Muslim scholars such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud have articulated a vision of knowledge that integrates faith, reason, and adab, emphasising that intellectual pursuits must contribute to moral and spiritual formation. While their contributions provide a rich epistemological foundation, translating these principles into concrete qualitative research practices, particularly interviewing, remains underdeveloped.

This article addresses that gap by proposing an Islamic reflexive perspective on qualitative interviewing. It argues that Muslim researchers, as morally situated agents, inevitably embody values that shape their presence, interpretation, and relational engagement in the field. Rather than aspiring to moral neutrality, the interview may be understood as an ethical encounter in which intention (*niyyah*), etiquette (*adab*), excellence (*ihsan*), trust (*amanah*), and embodied witnessing (*shahadah bil hal*) guide methodological practice. By placing contemporary qualitative scholarship in conversation with Islamic epistemology, this study reframes interviewing as a human encounter grounded in dignity, humility, and accountability before God. In doing so, it extends existing discussions of reflexivity and relational research while offering a spiritually conscious model of ethically grounded inquiry.

2.0 THE PROBLEM OF MORAL NEUTRALITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

One of the enduring assumptions within modern social science methodology is the aspiration toward value-neutrality. Rooted in Enlightenment epistemology and later articulated through positivist traditions, the ideal of neutrality proposes that researchers can and should detach themselves from moral commitments in the pursuit of objective knowledge. Although qualitative inquiry has increasingly challenged strict positivist paradigms, the language of methodological neutrality, impartiality, and researcher detachment continues to shape mainstream research training and ethical frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The researcher is often encouraged to minimise personal beliefs, suspend normative commitments, and avoid "bias", as though moral positioning impedes credible inquiry.

However, numerous critical scholars have argued that the claim to neutrality is itself a moral and political stance. Knowledge production is never socially or historically innocent. As Said (1978) demonstrated in his analysis of Orientalism, scholarly representations of "the Other" were deeply entangled with imperial power structures, even when framed as objective description. Similarly, Cohn (1996) showed how ethnographic and administrative knowledge in colonial India functioned as instruments of governance and control. These critiques reveal that methodological neutrality

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can obscure underlying power relations rather than eliminate them. The problem, therefore, is not merely bias but the illusion that research can exist outside moral and political frameworks.

Within qualitative research specifically, interviewing is now widely recognised as a relational and co-constructed process rather than a neutral extraction of facts. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasise that qualitative inquiry is value-laden, shaped by interpretive paradigms, researcher positionality, and ethical commitments. Interviews are social encounters structured by asymmetries of power, language, class, gender, and institutional authority. To imagine that such encounters are morally neutral risks reducing participants to data sources rather than recognising them as persons with dignity and vulnerability.

From an Islamic epistemological standpoint, the notion of moral neutrality is even more problematic. Knowledge (*'ilm*) in Islam is inseparable from ethical responsibility and accountability before Allah. Al-Attas (1980) argues that knowledge is not merely an act of acquiring information but a means of situating things in their proper places within a framework of *tawhid*. Similarly, Al-Faruqi (1982) maintains that the Islamization of knowledge requires integrating revelation, reason, and moral purpose, and rejecting any bifurcation between facts and values. In this worldview, research cannot be morally neutral because all human action, including intellectual labour, is subject to intention (*niyyah*) and divine accountability.

More recently, Syafaq et al. (2024) extend this position, arguing that a reconstructed Islamic epistemology must integrate metaphysics, reason, and revelation as mutually constitutive pillars rather than treating them as competing sources of authority. On this reading, the perceived tension between rational inquiry and revealed guidance dissolves once both are understood as expressions of the same ontological reality (*wujud*). This reinforces the claim that research grounded in Islamic epistemology cannot bracket moral and metaphysical commitments in pursuit of a putatively neutral method.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic ethos of knowing is relational rather than exploitative. The command in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) to "know one another" (*li-ta'arafu*) establishes knowledge as a means of mutual recognition rather than domination. This contrasts sharply with historical moments in which ethnographic knowledge served imperial expansion (Pratt, 1992; Said, 1978). Within Islamic thought, therefore, the ethical dimension of inquiry is not an optional supplement but an intrinsic condition of legitimate knowledge-seeking.

The problem of moral neutrality in qualitative research is thus twofold. First, neutrality may mask implicit power structures embedded within research relationships. Second, it risks divorcing inquiry from moral accountability. An Islamic reflexive perspective challenges both tendencies by asserting that interviewing is inevitably a moral encounter. The researcher does not enter the field as an ethically empty observer but as a morally situated agent whose intentions, comportment, and interpretive choices carry spiritual and social consequences. Recognising this reality does not undermine methodological rigor; rather, it deepens reflexivity by foregrounding the ethical and spiritual dimensions of knowledge production.

By reframing qualitative interviewing as an ethically conscious practice, this article does not reject contemporary qualitative methodologies but extends them. It affirms the insights of relational and reflexive research traditions while grounding them within a tawhidic framework that integrates epistemology with moral responsibility. In doing so, it moves beyond the problematic aspiration of moral neutrality toward a model of morally accountable inquiry.

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This article adopts a reflexive and conceptual qualitative methodology. Rather than generating new empirical interview data, the study seeks to theorise qualitative interviewing as an ethically and spiritually informed research practice grounded in Islamic epistemology. Such an approach is methodologically appropriate for examining questions of researcher conduct, ethical orientation, and epistemological positioning, where reflexive analysis and conceptual clarification constitute recognised modes of qualitative inquiry.

The primary empirical foundation of this article lies in the author's cumulative professional experience conducting ethnographic fieldwork for her PhD research and subsequently engaging in interview-based qualitative studies as a research officer at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM). These experiences are not treated as data analysis, but as situated methodological encounters that are critically revisited through reflexive interpretation. In qualitative research traditions, reflexivity is widely acknowledged as a legitimate means of articulating ethical knowledge embedded in research practice, particularly in methodological and ethics-oriented scholarship.

The methodological approach consists of three interconnected components. First, reflexive analysis is employed to critically examine the author's past interactions with research participants, focusing on how Islamic ethical values shaped rapport-building, interview conduct, interpretive judgment, and relationships with research participants. This reflexive engagement foregrounds the role of researcher positionality and moral consciousness in qualitative interviewing.

Second, a targeted exploration of relevant literature supports and contextualises these reflections. This includes scholarship on qualitative interviewing and ethnography, as well as classical and contemporary works on Islamic epistemology, ethics, and da'wah. By integrating contributions from figures such as al-Bīrūnī, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, al-Attas, al-Faruqi, and more recent reconstructions of Islamic epistemology that integrate metaphysics, reason, and revelation (Syafaq et al., 2024), alongside contemporary methodological literature, the study situates its arguments within both Islamic intellectual traditions and established qualitative research discourse.

Third, the study synthesises reflexive insights and theoretical perspectives to develop a conceptual framework that articulates how Islamic ethical-spiritual principles may be meaningfully embedded in qualitative interviewing. This framework is proposed as an analytical and ethical heuristic rather than a prescriptive instrument, offering a way to reinterpret the qualitative interview as a human encounter characterised by ethical presence, trust, and moral responsibility.

This synthesising move parallels recent methodological work by Alkouatli (2024), who similarly constructs a bricolage of Islamic and interpretivist concepts, weaving tawhid (divine oneness), a spiritual epistemology of knowledge, and everyday embodied practice, to centre a conceptually explicit Islamic paradigm in interview-based research with 35 Muslim-Canadian educators, indicating that faith-informed frameworks can operate as rigorous, transferable methodological architectures rather than as supplementary ethical commentary appended to conventional qualitative design.

As a reflective and conceptual paper, this study does not involve new data collection or direct engagement with human subjects. Instead, its contribution lies in theory-building and methodological clarification, proposing a spiritually conscious model of qualitative interviewing

that extends existing discussions on reflexivity, ethics, and relational research through an Islamic ethical lens.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines how qualitative research traditions, both Western and Islamic, have shaped contemporary understandings of interviewing, knowledge-seeking, and the researcher–participant relationship. It highlights the historical misuse of ethnographic inquiry in colonial contexts and contrasts it with the Islamic tradition of knowledge, grounded in humility, ethical responsibility, and cross-cultural understanding. By situating classical Muslim scholars, Qur'anic guidance, and modern Islamic epistemological discourse alongside contemporary qualitative methodologies, this section establishes the conceptual foundations that inform the article's proposed framework for da'wah-conscious interviewing.

4.1 Qualitative Research and Faith-based Inquiry

Certain historical trajectories of knowledge production, particularly during colonial modernity, were at times aligned with capitalist and imperial interests. In her elaboration on the objective of ethnographic studies, Clair (2003) exposed that in the past, the actual objective of studying unfamiliar cultures was to colonize what was dubbed the "primitive worlds." Early ethnographic accounts vindicate the prejudice of the writers, where other cultures are perceived as 'the Other' and are described as uncivilized and immoral. These records date as early as 5 B.C., in Herodotus' nine-volume tomes, and extend until the mercantilist period in Europe through the 1800s. Clair also stated that ethnography was utilized to serve the colonizers' interests. Often framed within civilisational or moral justifications, such inquiries were legitimised through narratives of 'civilising missions'. Colonizers used knowledge from their inquiries to subjugate them. Historians, poets, explorers, and missionaries kept careful journals detailing the conquest of the strange cultures (Cohn, 1996; Said, 1978; Pratt, 1992).

On the other hand, in Muslim ethnographic practice, the motivation to learn about foreign cultures and their people is not to colonize them, but rather to get to know them and to call for Islam. Allah mentions in Surah Al-Hujurat:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَـٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَـٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Which means: *'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another' (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13).*

In the same verse, Allah warns us not to perceive ourselves as superior or better than those we study, as He says: *'Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Acquainted' (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13).*

This motivation to explore and understand diverse societies has long inspired Muslim ethnographers to travel across regions and civilizations. Among the most distinguished figures are Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (973-1050 CE) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304–1369 CE), whose works are recognised as foundational contributions to cross-cultural understanding and early ethnographic thought (Kamaruzzaman, 2003; Senin et al., 2019; Pišev, 2013; Rahmadjon, 2024). Al-Bīrūnī, a polymath from Central Asia, spent years in India acquiring proficiency in Sanskrit and studying

Hindu scriptures. His Kitāb al-Hind (The Book of India) systematically examined Indian customs, beliefs, and sciences with a remarkable commitment to objectivity and empathy (al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, 1910). Unlike many of his contemporaries, he sought to understand Indian thought from within its own intellectual framework, avoiding ethnocentric judgment and adopting a comparative approach that juxtaposed Islamic and Indian philosophies (Rahmadjon, 2024). This methodological orientation positions al-Bīrūnī as a precursor to modern ethnography (Kamaruzzaman, 2003; Senin et al., 2019; Rahmadjon, 2024).

As for Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, his significance lies in the vast scope of his travels, spanning approximately 75,000 miles across Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China (Dunn, 2012). Over nearly three decades, he engaged with rulers, scholars, Sufis, merchants, and villagers alike, producing *al-Rihlah* (*The Travels*), an invaluable record of political institutions, social customs, family relations, and religious life across both Muslim and non-Muslim societies (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, trans. Gibb, 1958). Although his narratives occasionally mix observation with hearsay, they remain among the richest ethnographic sources of the fourteenth century (Dunn, 2012; Pišev, 2013). Together, al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa exemplify an Islamic intellectual legacy of exploration grounded not in domination, but in humility, curiosity, and ethical engagement with human diversity.

4.2 Reflexivity, Positionality, and the Muslim Researcher

Recent qualitative scholarship has begun to interrogate more directly how Muslim researchers' own intersecting identities shape access, rapport, and interpretation in the field, extending discussions of reflexivity beyond the conventional insider–outsider binary. Baz (2024) develops an "intersectional reflexivity" approach from fieldwork with Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim lone mothers at a South Asian women's organisation, arguing that a researcher's positionality is not a fixed status conferred by shared religion, ethnicity, or gender, but a socially constructed and continuously negotiated set of relations that shift according to setting, participant, and the passage of time. In a related vein, Hall et al. (2023) propose an intersectional framework of positionality, partiality, reflexivity, and situated knowledges specifically for research involving Muslim populations, cautioning against the assumption that co-religiosity automatically produces trust, comparable data, or interpretive privilege. Alkouatli (2024) extends this methodological conversation by constructing a bricolage of Islamic and interpretivist concepts to centre a conceptually explicit Islamic paradigm in interview-based research with Muslim educators, demonstrating that faith-informed frameworks can function as rigorous and transferable methodological architectures rather than as supplementary ethical commentary appended to conventional qualitative design.

Read together, these contributions suggest that an Islamic reflexive perspective on interviewing must attend not only to the researcher's intention and conduct, as emphasised in classical *adab* and *muhasabah* literature, but also to the situated, intersectional, and shifting nature of the researcher's own position relative to participants throughout the research process. This article builds on that recognition in developing its own conceptual framework below, while grounding positionality specifically within the Islamic ethical vocabulary of *niyyah*, *adab*, *ihsan*,*amanah*, and *shahadah bil hal*.

4.3 Da'wah Beyond Preaching: The Interview as Human Encounter

Classically, *da'wah* refers to inviting others to the path of Allah. Within Islamic ethical discourse, Muslims are understood as morally and religiously responsible for portraying ethical conduct and inviting others toward goodness through actions. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً

Which means: *'Convey from me (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single sentence.'* (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 3461, narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr).

Beyond that, the act of calling to Allah is not limited to advice and purposeful conversations; it is also through the presence, appearance, and presentability of *da'i*. Allah says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّن دَعَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَـٰلِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِى مِنَ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ

Which means: *'And those words are better than someone who calls others to Allah, does good, and says, "I am truly one of those who submit"?' (Surah Fussilat, 41:33)*

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَـٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ

Which means: *'Invite to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord alone knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is tightly guided.' (Surah An-Nahl, 16:125)*

While often associated with preaching or missionary work, Islamic tradition also emphasizes *da'wah bil hal*, conveying the message through actions, conduct, and inner spiritual state. This includes ethical dealings, emotional presence, and empathy, as well as active listening, which is mandatory in qualitative interviewing. For Muslim researchers, this perspective opens the possibility of grounding interviewing practices in Islamic ethical principles, elevating the process beyond a mere data collection endeavour. This includes all major stages in ethnographic interviews ─ from rapport building, ethnographic observation and conversation, and eventually leaving the field. These encounters are significant as they depend heavily on the researcher's ability to build trust and rapport, engage in non-judgmental listening, and reflect with humility and respect.

5.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW AS ETHICAL-SPIRITUAL DA'WAH

More recently, Muslim scholars have proposed integrating *tawhidic* worldviews into social science research (Noor & Mokhtar, 2021) and advocate for embedding Qur'anic values in educational and sociological inquiry (Auf et al., 2025; Anwar, 2023; Tsani et al., 2024). Dadach (2024) situates this tawhidic paradigm as a unifying epistemic commitment that underlies inquiry across the natural and social sciences, a framing increasingly being operationalised within Malaysian and Indonesian higher education curricula (Subhan et al., 2024). This article builds on these emerging contributions, proposing a practical model for da'wah-informed qualitative interviewing. In contemporary qualitative research, an interview is often described as a dialogical space; one that emphasizes human connection, empathy, and the co-construction of meaning. For Muslim

researchers, especially those grounded in Islamic ethical traditions, the qualitative interview offers more than just a tool for data collection; it can become a moral and even spiritual encounter. Far from the conventional image of da'wah as preaching or public proselytization, this approach emphasizes *da'wah bil hal*, calling others to the truth through character, presence, and ethical behavior.

Indeed, this is the essence of Islamic *da'wah*. Prophetic traditions in Islam exemplify an ethical paradigm in which listening, compassion, and interpersonal engagement precede moral exhortation. His ability to listen without judgment and to speak with wisdom and care won over hearts long before formal sermons were delivered. This article, therefore, recommends a conceptual framework that invites Muslim researchers to view their fieldwork not merely as an academic endeavour but as an opportunity to present themselves as Muslim-conscious researchers and da'i through the research process.

The framework rests on the premise, widely discussed in qualitative methodology, that interviewing is value-laden rather than fully neutral. It is always shaped by the interviewer's values, attitudes, and presence. This article employs a conceptual framework that weaves together principles from Islamic ethics and qualitative research methodology, anchored in the central Islamic concept of *da'wah*. The aim is to reinterpret the qualitative interview not simply as a methodological tool for data collection, but as a form of presentability, as an act through which the researcher's conduct, character, and intention invite reflection and connection with divine values, and in this case, Islamic values.

5.1 Five Core Islamic Values in Interview Practice

Central to this framework are five interrelated Islamic values*: niyyah* (intention), *adab* (etiquette), *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (trust), and *shahadah bil hal* (witnessing through one's state). Each value is deeply rooted in Qur'anic and Prophetic tradition. These values have been extensively discussed by classical thinkers, such as al-Ghazali and contemporary Muslim scholars, including Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi, Kamali, and others who have articulated Islam's ethical worldview (Al-Attas, 1980; Al-Faruqi, 1982; Al-Ghazali, 2013; Kamali, 2008). Together, these values offer a conceptual foundation for reinterpreting qualitative interviewing as an ethically and spiritually informed practice.

While the five core values: *niyyah*, *adab*, *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *shahadah bil hal*, provide a conceptual foundation, their significance becomes clearer when examined within concrete interviewing situations. Qualitative interviewing is not an abstract ethical exercise but a lived encounter shaped by emotion, vulnerability, and interpretive judgment. The following table (Table 1) demonstrates how these Islamic values may guide real methodological decisions in the field.

Table 1 Five core Islamic values in interview practice

Islamic Values	Application in Interviewing
Niyyah (Intention)	Begin with a sincere intention to understand the participant's experiences truthfully and respectfully. *Niyyah* requires the researcher to purify their purpose, avoiding exploitation or misrepresentation, and approaching the conversation as an ethical encounter rooted in sincerity and humility.
Adab (Etiquette)	Demonstrate proper manners in speech, listening, and conduct throughout the interview. *Adab* includes showing respect for participants' time, background, and worldview, and maintaining

Islamic Values	Application in Interviewing
	sensitivity in both verbal and non-verbal communication. It encourages researchers to create a safe, dignified space where respondents feel valued and heard.
Ihsan (Excellence)	Approach the interviewing process with excellence and care, through thorough preparation, mindful presence, and empathetic engagement. *Ihsan* calls the researcher to uphold high standards in question design, listening quality, emotional sensitivity, and professionalism in documenting and representing participants' narratives.
Amanah (Trust)	Safeguard participants' stories as a trust entrusted to the researcher. *Amanah* requires strict confidentiality, honest interpretation, and responsible handling of all shared information. It positions the researcher as a custodian of participants' experiences, ensuring their narratives are presented accurately and with integrity.
Shahadah bil hal (Witnessing through one's state)	Embody Islamic ethics through conduct, sincerity, and presence during the interview. Rather than overt preaching, *shahadah bil hal* reflects da'wah through character, demonstrating humility, empathy, patience, and non-judgmental engagement. The researcher's behaviour becomes a subtle form of witnessing to Islamic values.

a) *Niyyah* (Intention): Framing the Interview as an Ethical Encounter

Intention is the foundation of all actions in Islam, as articulated by al-Ghazali (2013) in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din,* who similarly holds that the moral worth of a deed rests upon the sincerity of the intention behind it. *Niyyah* refers to the inner motive or purpose behind an action. In qualitative interviewing, *niyyah* guides the researcher to approach the encounter not merely as a means to extract information but as an opportunity to seek understanding, reduce harm, and cultivate sincerity. Al-Attas (1980) emphasises that knowledge acquisition in Islam is inseparable from spiritual purpose and ethical consciousness, while Al-Faruqi (1982) frames intention as the starting point of an integrated Islamic worldview. When entering an interview, a Muslim researcher must orient their purposes not only toward academic goals but must also realize that the encounter and the research must either directly or indirectly affect the subjects or respondents.

Ideally, the *niyyah* of research is articulated in the objectives. The objectives have to be clearly explained to the research subjects to ensure full agreement to participate. Subjects should not be coerced into participating, let alone lied into taking part. Although this might discourage respondents from participating or staying until the end of the research, sincere intention from both sides transforms an interview from a transactional act into a spiritual and ethical engagement in which both contribute equally to the establishment of new understanding/knowledge. This value is grounded in the Qur'anic command to devote worship and purpose sincerely to Allah, and in the Prophet ﷺ's teaching that the worth of every deed is determined by intention:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

Which means: *'And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth.' (Surah Al-Bayyinah, 98:5)*

The Prophet ﷺ further affirmed that the moral worth of any act, including the researcher's conduct in an interview, rests entirely on the sincerity of intention behind it. He said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

Which means: *'Actions are but by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended.'*
Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 1; Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 1907 (narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab).

b) *Adab* (Etiquette): Managing Rapport, Silence, and Disagreement

Adab embodies proper behaviour, politeness, and respect, especially in all interactions, starting even at the rapport-building stage. Al-Attas (1995) describes *adab* as the discipline of body, mind, and soul that situates a person in the right place with the right conduct. In interviewing, adab manifests in careful listening, respectful questioning, cultural sensitivity, and honouring the dignity of participants. Halstead (2007) explains that Islamic moral behavior encompasses gentleness, patience, empathy, and sensitivity. These qualities are essential in building rapport and maintaining ethical relationships between researchers and participants. *Adab* ensures that the researcher does not dominate the exchange, but instead creates an atmosphere of trust and respect where respondents feel valued, heard, and protected. Etiquette is practiced through careful listening, patience, respect for silence and pauses, and awareness of cultural sensitivity in both verbal and non-verbal cues. Research as practised by Muslim researchers ensures that the researcher does not dominate the exchange, thereby creating a space in which participants feel valued and heard. This ethic resonates with the Qur'an's praise of the Prophet ﷺ's character, which serves as the exemplar for adab in all social conduct, including the conduct of an interview:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

Which means: *'And indeed, you are of a great moral character.' (Surah Al-Qalam, 68:4)*

The Prophet ﷺ likewise tied the completeness of one's faith to the consideration one extends to others, a principle that translates directly into how a researcher ought to receive a participant:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

Which means: *'None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.'*
Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 13; Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 45 (narrated by Anas ibn Malik).

c) *Ihsan* (Excellence): Emotional Labour and Representational Care

Ihsan, as defined by the Prophet ﷺ, means "to worship Allah as if you see Him". It extends to all forms of human action, including intellectual and interpersonal works (Kamali, 2008). Applying *ihsan* to qualitative interviewing means approaching every stage of the research process with excellence, thorough preparation, compassion, and attentiveness. Consider a scenario in which a participant discloses traumatic experiences—perhaps related to religious discrimination or personal loss. The researcher faces several decisions: whether to probe further, how to respond empathetically, and how to document the account responsibly. A purely procedural ethics framework might focus on consent and confidentiality. Ihsan, however, demands emotional attentiveness and post-interview care. Applied to interviewing, this includes preparing trauma-sensitive questions, offering participants the option to pause or discontinue, conducting follow-up communication when appropriate, and avoiding sensationalised representation in publication.

Moreover, *ihsan* shapes transcription and interpretation. When selecting excerpts for publication, the researcher exercises discretion to ensure that participants are neither caricatured nor reduced to isolated quotes. Member-checking, which is sharing interpretations with

participants for clarification, may also be understood as an expression of *ihsan*, reinforcing accuracy and care. Aydin (2020) highlights that *ihsan* encompasses moral beauty, emotional sensitivity, and the pursuit of excellence in human dealings. When researchers practise *ihsan*, they demonstrate care in designing questions, protect participants from emotional harm, maintain professionalism in documentation, and uphold integrity in representing their narratives. Through *ihsan*, the interview becomes an act of mindful presence and ethical responsibility. This standard of excellence is rooted in the Qur'anic command that pairs justice with ihsan as the twin foundations of righteous conduct, in Surah An-Nahl:

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

Which means: *'Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct (ihsan) and giving to relatives' (Surah An-Nahl, 16:90).*

The Prophet ﷺ gave ihsan its most enduring definition in the Hadith of Jibril, describing it as an awareness of being seen by Allah that should inform every act, including the researcher's conduct in the field:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

Which means: *'[Ihsan is] that you worship Allah as though you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then indeed He sees you.'*

Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 8; Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 50 (Hadith of Jibril, narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab).

d) *Amanah* (Trust): Confidentiality, Data Stewardship, and Interpretive Justice.

Amanah signifies trustworthiness, accountability, and the safeguarding of what is entrusted. In research, participants entrust their stories, emotions, and vulnerabilities to the interviewer. Thus, the researcher must uphold confidentiality, avoid misrepresentation, and protect participants' privacy. *Amanah* is both a moral and legal obligation in Islam, and is described as a foundational value shaping Muslim social ethics (Kasim et al, 2020; Khalil, 2020). In qualitative research, this translates into secure handling of digital recordings, avoidance of selective quotation that distorts meaning, and honest acknowledgment of analytical uncertainty.

An applied dilemma may arise when a participant makes controversial or politically sensitive statements. The researcher, therefore, must decide whether publication may cause unintended harm. *Amanah* demands weighing academic transparency against potential risk. While qualitative research values authenticity, Islamic ethics emphasise harm minimisation (*la darar wa la dirar*). The researcher thus becomes a custodian rather than a mere disseminator of narratives.

This obligation is anchored in the Qur'anic command to render every trust to those to whom it is due, which the researcher assumes the moment a participant discloses their story. It is stated in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا

Which means: *'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due.' (Surah An-Nisa, 4:58).*

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The Prophet ﷺ placed betrayal of a trust among the defining signs of hypocrisy, underscoring the gravity of any breach of amanah, including the mishandling of a participant's narrative:

آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ: إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ، وَإِذَا اؤْتُمِنَ خَانَ

Which means: *'The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he is entrusted he betrays the trust.'*

Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 33; Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 59 (narrated by Abu Hurairah).

e) *Shahadah bil hal*: Ethical Presence in Plural Contexts

Shahadah bil hal refers to conveying the ethical and spiritual message of Islam not through preaching but through one's presence, conduct, and inner state. Al-Qaradawi (1995) and Ahmad (1992) both emphasise that da'wah through character and action often has a greater impact than verbal persuasion. In qualitative interviewing, this means demonstrating humility, empathy, calmness, and ethical restraint; qualities that silently "witness" one's faith and moral commitments. Bennett (2015) notes that lived Islam is often communicated through behaviour and interpersonal engagement rather than explicit discourse. For Muslim researchers, *shahadah bil hal* may be understood as an embodied expression of ethical witnessing, articulated here within the Islamic framework of da'wah, where the researcher's mannerisms, listening skills, non-judgmental stance, and sincerity subtly convey Islamic values throughout the interview process. This mode of witnessing echoes the Qur'an's praise of one who calls others to Allah through the unity of word and righteous conduct, rather than through word alone:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Which means: *'And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says: Indeed, I am of the Muslims.' (Surah Fussilat, 41:33)*

The Prophet ﷺ likewise instructed his companions to convey their message through gentleness rather than harshness — a principle that shapes how a researcher's demeanour may silently demonstrate Islamic ethics during an interview:

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَسَكِّنُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا

Which means: *'Make things easy for people and do not make it difficult; make them calm (with glad tidings), and do not repel them.'*

Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 6125 (narrated by Anas ibn Malik).

The Islamic tradition encourages *muhasabah* (self-accountability), which parallels the qualitative researcher's reflexivity. A Muslim researcher constantly reflects on: What is my *niyyah* in this research? How am I embodying the values of Islam in this encounter? What effect might my presence, faith, or demeanor have on this participant? In classical ethical thought, *muhasabah* is not merely psychological introspection but a spiritually anchored process of moral auditing. Al-Ghazali (2013), in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, describes self-examination as a necessary discipline for purifying intention (*niyyah*) and safeguarding actions from subtle corruption by ego (*nafs*) or worldly ambition. For al-Ghazali, actions derive their ethical worth not only from outward conformity to rules but from inward sincerity and constant vigilance over motive. This spiritual anthropology has direct implications for qualitative interviewing, where the researcher's interior state, which is often invisible to participants, shapes the relational atmosphere, interpretive judgment, and representational outcomes of the research process.

An empirical illustration of this triangulated self-reflexivity can be found in Alkouatli's (2024) study of thirty-five Muslim-Canadian educators, in which *muhasaba* was described as an ongoing, supported critical self-reflexivity triangulated against a tawhidic conceptual framework, evaluating one's actions beyond one's own perspective rather than as a private cognitive exercise. One educator in that study, Rasha, modelled this practice with young learners by asking, after a conflict, what their situation was with Allah right now, and whether He was pleased or displeased with them, turning reflection simultaneously toward the person wronged and toward accountability before God. An analogous discipline for the qualitative researcher might ask, at each stage of interpretation, how a chosen quotation, omission, or framing would appear if evaluated before Allah rather than only before a supervisor or an ethics board. Read this way, *muhasaba* is not merely an abstract virtue but a concrete interviewing and analytic habit that can be rehearsed, much as Alkouatli's educators rehearsed it with their own students.

In contemporary qualitative methodology, reflexivity performs a function analogous to *muhasabah*. Scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2018) argue that qualitative inquiry requires researchers to interrogate their positionality, assumptions, and power in knowledge production. Yet Islamic *muhasabah* extends reflexivity beyond epistemological awareness toward moral and eschatological consciousness. The researcher is not only accountable to disciplinary standards or institutional ethics committees but ultimately to God. This dual accountability deepens the seriousness of interpretive acts. Decisions about probing sensitive questions, framing narratives, selecting quotations, or omitting contextual details are not neutral editorial choices; they are morally weighted actions subject to ethical scrutiny.

Additionally, *muhasabah* guards against the subtle instrumentalisation of participants' narratives. Al-Attas (1980) emphasises that knowledge in Islam entails placing things in their proper places (*wadha'al-shay' fi mahallihi*). Misrepresentation, exaggeration, or selective quotation distorts that proper placement and thus constitutes an ethical breach. Through continuous self-questioning, like 'Why am I highlighting this excerpt? Does this interpretation serve truth or my argument? Am I protecting the dignity of the participant?' the researcher enacts a form of interpretive justice grounded in *amanah* (trust). In this sense, *muhasabah* becomes a safeguard against both unconscious bias and methodological complacency.

Importantly, *muhasabah* also tempers over-identification. When researchers share religious or cultural proximity with participants, empathy may blur analytical clarity. Kamali (2008) underscores that Islamic ethics demands balance (*wasatiyyah*) and justice (*'adl*) even in emotionally charged contexts. Self-accountability, therefore, requires the researcher to ask whether compassion has slipped into uncritical affirmation, or whether protective instincts toward one's community have constrained honest analysis. Such questioning does not undermine solidarity; rather, it refines it through principled fairness.

At a relational level, *muhasabah* shapes comportment during the interview. The Qur'anic ethos of humility and awareness that "Allah is All-Aware" cultivates restraint in speech, patience in listening, and caution in judgment. As Halstead (2007) notes, Islamic moral conduct emphasises gentleness and respect in interpersonal dealings. When interior self-scrutiny accompanies outward etiquette (*adab*), the researcher's presence becomes ethically coherent rather than performative. The alignment between inner intention and outward behaviour strengthens trust and authenticity in the research relationship.

Ultimately, *muhasabah* reframes qualitative interviewing as an ongoing moral discipline rather than a series of procedural steps. It is not confined to pre-fieldwork preparation or post-interview reflection; it permeates transcription, analysis, writing, and publication. Each stage invites renewed ethical interrogation. In integrating *muhasabah* into methodological reflexivity, the researcher acknowledges that scholarly inquiry is inseparable from spiritual accountability. Thus, the qualitative interview becomes not only a site of knowledge production but also a space of moral cultivation, where intellectual rigor and ethical consciousness are continuously refined in tandem.

6.0 ETHICAL TENSIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

While integrating Islamic ethical principles into qualitative interviewing offers a spiritually grounded and morally conscious framework, it also raises important ethical tensions and methodological challenges. A reflexive and critical approach requires acknowledging these complexities rather than presenting the model as uncomplicated or universally transferable. This section discusses five interrelated tensions: (1) the risk of instrumentalising da'wah, (2) researcher bias and over-identification, (3) power asymmetries in the interview relationship, (4) negotiating institutional ethical frameworks, and (5) applicability in plural or non-Muslim contexts.

6.1 The Risk of Instrumentalising Da'wah

Reframing the qualitative interview as a site of *da'wah bil hal* introduces a delicate ethical balance. While Islamic tradition encourages Muslims to embody ethical excellence in all interactions, there is a potential risk that *da'wah* becomes instrumentalised, subtly transforming research encounters into covert missionary spaces. Such an approach would contradict both qualitative research ethics and Islamic moral teachings.

Islamic jurisprudence emphasises sincerity (*ikhlas*) and prohibits deception in dealings with others. Al-Ghazali (2013) warns that actions outwardly aligned with virtue may lose moral worth if inwardly driven by ego or hidden agendas. Similarly, Al-Qaradawi (1995) stresses that da'wah must be rooted in wisdom (*hikmah*), gentleness, and respect for human dignity, not coercion or manipulation. Within qualitative research, covert persuasion or moral positioning would violate principles of informed consent, transparency, and respect for participant autonomy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Thus, *da'wah bil hal* in research must remain embodied rather than strategic. It is expressed through integrity, humility, and ethical presence, not through persuasive intent. The primary purpose of the interview remains understanding participants' lived experiences. Ethical tension arises when researchers fail to distinguish between embodying moral character and directing participants toward specific beliefs. Maintaining clarity of *niyyah* becomes essential in preventing the instrumentalisation of spiritual values.

6.2 Researcher's Bias and Over-identification

A second methodological challenge concerns bias and over-identification. Contemporary qualitative scholarship recognises that researchers are never neutral observers; their social position, beliefs, and identities shape their interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In Islamic reflexive practice, this recognition aligns with *muhasabah* (self-accountability), where the researcher continuously examines intention and interpretive judgment.

However, an ethically engaged stance may produce a different kind of risk: over-identification with participants. When researchers share religious identity, institutional affiliation, or cultural background with interviewees, rapport may deepen, but critical distance may diminish. The desire to protect Islam's image, defend communal narratives, or affirm shared values can subtly influence data interpretation. This dynamic is documented empirically in fieldwork with Muslim communities: Baz (2024) found that shared ethnicity, gender, and linguistic background with Pakistani and Bangladeshi lone mothers did not, by itself, secure trust, and that positionality instead had to be renegotiated across different participant groups and stages of fieldwork, while Hall et al. (2023) similarly caution that assumed co-religiosity can mask rather than resolve power asymmetries between Muslim researchers and Muslim participants.

Said's (1978) critique of representation reminds scholars that even well-intentioned researchers may unconsciously reproduce selective portrayals. Within an Islamic framework, *amanah* requires honest representation, even when findings are uncomfortable. As Kamali (2008) argues, Islamic ethics demand justice (*'adl*) in judgment and fairness in testimony. Thus, reflexivity must extend beyond spiritual self-awareness to methodological discipline, ensuring that empathy does not override analytical rigor.

The tension here lies in balancing *ihsan* (excellence and compassion) with critical scholarship. Ethical interviewing must not collapse into uncritical affirmation. Rather, it should integrate compassion with intellectual honesty.

6.3 Power Asymmetries in The Interview Relationship

Although qualitative interviewing is often described as dialogical and relational, structural asymmetries remain. The researcher controls research design, question framing, data interpretation, and publication. Even when rapport is strong, participants remain vulnerable to misrepresentation. Colonial ethnographic traditions demonstrate how knowledge production can reinforce power hierarchies (Cohn, 1996; Pratt, 1992; Said, 1978). An Islamic ethical lens intensifies awareness of these asymmetries. *Amanah* frames participant narratives as a trust, while *adab* requires attentiveness to dignity and emotional safety. Yet structural power cannot be eliminated simply through good intentions. Institutional affiliation, academic status, and publication authority continue to position the researcher advantageously.

Halstead (2007) notes that Islamic moral education emphasises humility and respect in interpersonal dealings. In the interview context, this may translate into practices such as member-checking, transparent explanation of research aims, and opportunities for participants to clarify or retract statements. Nevertheless, the tension persists: ultimate interpretive authority rests with the researcher. This challenge underscores the need to combine spiritual virtues with procedural safeguards. Ethical consciousness alone is insufficient without methodological mechanisms that mitigate power imbalance.

6.4 Negotiating Institutional Ethical Frameworks

A fourth challenge arises in navigating secular institutional review processes. Contemporary research is typically governed by institutional ethics committees that prioritise confidentiality, consent, and harm reduction. These frameworks are shaped largely by Western bioethical traditions emphasising autonomy and procedural compliance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). While many of these principles align with Islamic values such as *amanah* and justice, tensions may arise

when spiritual motivations are misunderstood or when religious reflexivity is seen as incompatible with scholarly neutrality. For instance, openly framing research within *da'wah* discourse might be perceived as compromising objectivity within secular institutions.

Al-Faruqi (1982) argued that the Islamization of knowledge requires engagement, and not withdrawal from contemporary epistemological systems. Muslim researchers must therefore navigate dual accountability: compliance with institutional ethical codes and fidelity to Islamic moral consciousness. Rather than viewing these as opposing systems, the challenge is to articulate Islamic ethical commitments in universally intelligible ethical language—emphasising dignity, sincerity, trust, and non-maleficence. This negotiation requires intellectual clarity and transparency. It also demands careful articulation of how Islamic values enhance, rather than undermine, research integrity.

6.5 Applicability in Plural and Non-Muslim Contexts

Finally, applying an Islamic ethical-spiritual interviewing framework in plural or non-Muslim contexts requires careful consideration. In increasingly diverse research environments, participants may not share the researcher's faith commitments. The risk lies in assuming shared moral vocabulary or inadvertently imposing religious interpretations. The Qur'anic principle of *li-ta'arafu* (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13) affirms mutual recognition across difference. Classical Muslim scholars such as al-Bīrūnī modelled engagement with non-Muslim societies through intellectual humility and methodological fairness (Senin et al., 2019). His comparative work demonstrates that Islamic ethical commitment need not translate into an exclusivist interpretation.

From a methodological standpoint, *da'wah bil hal* in plural contexts must remain subtle and embodied. It is expressed through patience, fairness, and empathy rather than theological articulation. Bennett (2015) observes that lived Islam is often communicated through ethical comportment rather than explicit discourse. Thus, the framework proposed in this article is not dependent upon participants' religious affiliation but upon the researcher's ethical self-discipline.

Nevertheless, tension persists: how can a framework explicitly grounded in Islamic epistemology remain accessible within secular or interfaith research spaces? The answer lies in distinguishing between theological grounding and ethical universality. While rooted in *tawhid*, values such as sincerity, trustworthiness, justice, and excellence resonate across traditions. Articulated carefully, they enrich rather than restrict qualitative inquiry.

These ethical tensions do not invalidate the proposed framework; rather, they highlight its seriousness. Integrating Islamic ethical-spiritual values into qualitative interviewing requires constant reflexivity, methodological rigor, and intellectual humility. The aspiration is not to sanctify research practice, but to deepen moral accountability within it. By acknowledging risks of instrumentalisation, bias, power asymmetry, institutional negotiation, and plural applicability, this framework invites continued refinement. Ethical interviewing, from an Islamic perspective, is not a perfected state but an ongoing practice of *muhasabah,* where the researcher remains conscious that every interpretive act carries both scholarly and moral weight.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This article has presented the argument that qualitative interviewing, when viewed through an Islamic epistemological lens, transcends its conventional methodological function and becomes

an ethical-spiritual encounter. Grounded in reflexive engagement and informed by the author's research experience, the study demonstrates that interviewing can embody *da'wah bil hal* not as overt persuasion, but as ethical presence expressed through sincerity, humility, and compassion.

By integrating five core Islamic values: *niyyah*, *adab*, *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *shahadah bil hal*, the article proposes a framework that situates interviewing within a morally accountable paradigm of knowledge production. This framework does not reject contemporary qualitative methodologies; rather, it deepens them by foregrounding spiritual intentionality, relational dignity, and interpretive justice. It also acknowledges the ethical tensions inherent in such an approach, including risks of instrumentalisation, bias, and power asymmetry, thereby underscoring the necessity of sustained reflexivity and methodological rigor.

More broadly, the article contributes to the ongoing project of articulating an Islamic-informed research methodology that bridges epistemology and empirical practice. It invites Muslim scholars to view fieldwork not merely as academic labour, but as an arena of moral cultivation and responsible knowledge-seeking. By reframing the qualitative interview as a space of ethical encounter and humanisation, this study affirms that scholarly inquiry and spiritual accountability need not stand apart. Instead, when harmonised, they enrich both research integrity and the ethical mission of knowledge in Islam.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper

Declaration of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and ClaudeAI to assist with language refinement, structural organization, and stylistic improvement. The author reviewed, revised, and verified all content and takes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and scholarly integrity of the manuscript.

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