



# Ethical Foundations of Family Communication in Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib's Thought

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## Abstract:

*Family communication plays a decisive role in shaping moral integrity, emotional stability, and ethical continuity within human relationships. This study examines how Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib conceptualizes ethical communication and how his teachings can strengthen family communication within a normative religious framework. Employing a qualitative normative–religious research design, the study conducts an interpretative library-based analysis of Nahj al-Balaghah as the primary source, supported by classical and contemporary Islamic ethical scholarship. The findings identify five interrelated ethical principles governing family communication: wisdom (hikmah), truthfulness (sidq), gentleness (rifq), self-restraint (hilm), and moral accountability in speech. These principles demonstrate that communication is not a neutral social skill but a morally accountable practice that reflects character and spiritual consciousness. The study contributes a coherent normative ethical framework that integrates classical Islamic moral philosophy into contemporary discourse on family communication. It implies that strengthening family relationships requires ethical reflection, emotional discipline, and moral responsibility in everyday speech.*

**Keywords:** Family communication; Islamic ethics; Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib; Normative–religious study; Communication morality

## Abstrak:

Komunikasi keluarga memiliki peran mendasar dalam membentuk integritas moral, stabilitas emosional, dan kesinambungan etika dalam relasi manusia. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib mengonseptualisasikan komunikasi etis serta relevansinya dalam memperkuat komunikasi keluarga dalam kerangka normatif–religius. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif normatif–religius melalui analisis interpretatif berbasis kepustakaan terhadap Nahj al-Balaghah sebagai sumber utama, yang diperkuat oleh kajian pemikiran etika Islam klasik dan kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima prinsip etika komunikasi keluarga, yaitu *hikmah* (kebijaksanaan), *sidq* (kejujuran), *rifq* (kelembutan), *hilm* (pengendalian diri), dan akuntabilitas moral dalam bertutur. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi keluarga bukan sekadar keterampilan sosial, melainkan praktik etis yang sarat tanggung jawab moral dan spiritual. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan menawarkan kerangka etika normatif komunikasi keluarga berbasis pemikiran klasik Islam serta memberikan implikasi bagi penguatan pendidikan keluarga dan pembinaan karakter.

**Kata kunci:** Komunikasi Keluarga; Etika Islam; Sayyidina Ali Ibn Abi Talib; Studi Normatif–Religius; Moralitas Komunikasi

## INTRODUCTION

Family communication has become a critical issue in contemporary society, as it plays a fundamental role in shaping moral values, emotional stability, and social cohesion. As the primary environment for human Development, the family functions not only as a space for biological reproduction but also as the earliest arena for ethical education and character formation. Effective communication within the family strengthens trust, empathy, and mutual understanding, whereas dysfunctional communication often leads to conflict, emotional alienation, and moral fragmentation (Abdullah et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2024; Saidin, 2024). Empirical studies in education and social sciences demonstrate that weak family communication correlates with increased domestic conflict, behavioral problems, and declining moral sensitivity among younger generations. In societies undergoing rapid cultural and technological transformation, family communication patterns are increasingly challenged by external pressures, including digital mediation and shifting value systems (Abdullah et al., 2025; Arafat et al., 2024). Therefore, examining family communication from a moral and normative perspective is essential to reinforce its ethical foundations and to promote social harmony at a broader societal level.

Despite its acknowledged importance, family communication in many contemporary Muslim societies faces significant ethical and normative challenges. Communication is frequently reduced to a functional exchange of information, detached from moral responsibility and spiritual consciousness (Hadi et al., 2024; Marpuah et al., 2025). This reductionist understanding has led to increased verbal aggression, emotional neglect, and authoritarian speech patterns within families, particularly in hierarchical relationships between parents and children or spouses. Moreover, the erosion of ethical speech, manifested in harsh language, dishonesty, and a lack of self-restraint, undermines family cohesion and weakens moral authority (Madani, 2024; Safitri, 2025). These problems are exacerbated by modern lifestyles that prioritize efficiency over reflection and ethical discipline over emotional expression. While religious teachings emphasize that speech reflects faith and character, these principles are often neglected in everyday family interactions. Consequently, there is an urgent need to revisit normative Islamic perspectives that conceptualize communication as a moral act governed by ethical accountability.

In practical terms, contemporary family life increasingly reflects communication patterns marked by emotional distance, misinterpretation, and escalating conflict. Observations across various Muslim communities reveal that family disputes often originate not from substantive disagreements but from the way words are spoken and emotions are expressed. Digital communication technologies further intensify these challenges by reducing face-to-face interaction and encouraging impulsive speech (Koroniotis et al., 2023; Miniurova et al., 2021). Parents may unintentionally model aggressive or dismissive

communication styles, which children then internalize. These phenomena indicate a widening gap between Islamic ethical ideals of communication and lived family practices. Although religious instruction remains present, its moral dimensions are frequently confined to ritual observance rather than applied to daily interpersonal interactions (Miranda et al., 2022; Rustan, 2021). This disjunction underscores the need to rearticulate ethical communication principles that resonate with contemporary family realities.

Psychological, sociological, and educational frameworks have primarily dominated previous research on family communication. Scholars such as Hartle et al. (2022) and Nisa' (2024) emphasize interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, and conflict management as key determinants of healthy family communication. Similarly, Shuhari et al. (2021), Anikin (2024), and Puaschunder (2020) explore the role of communication in moral education, highlighting its impact on children's character Development. While these studies provide valuable empirical insights, they often conceptualize communication as a technical or behavioral skill rather than a moral and spiritual practice. Islamic perspectives are frequently referenced only normatively, without systematic engagement with classical ethical sources. As a result, the normative depth and moral philosophy underlying Islamic communication ethics remain underexplored within family studies.

Classical Islamic scholars such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh extensively discuss the ethics of speech, self-restraint, and moral education (Soleh et al., 2023; Ulfah et al., 2024). However, their contributions are rarely integrated into contemporary family communication research. Studies that do address Islamic ethics often focus on Qur'anic injunctions in general terms, without examining the rich ethical reflections of individual moral authorities. Moreover, limited attention has been given to Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib as a foundational ethical thinker whose insights on communication remain highly relevant (Ishak et al., 2023; Bunyani, 2021). Existing literature often overlooks the practical implications of his teachings for family relationships. This gap indicates a need for research that systematically analyzes classical Islamic ethical thought to construct a coherent normative framework for family communication.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib's ethical philosophy of communication, as articulated in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, and in its explicit examination of this philosophy within the context of family life. Unlike previous studies that emphasize general Islamic values or modern behavioral models, this research offers a normative religious framework grounded in classical moral wisdom (Heckler, 2020; Vinet, 2021). By positioning Sayyidina Ali's teachings as a conceptual foundation for family communication, this study advances the state of the art in Islamic family studies. It demonstrates that communication is not merely a social skill but a moral discipline requiring reflection, restraint, and accountability. Addressing this issue is crucial for

revitalizing ethical communication practices in Muslim families facing contemporary moral challenges.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the central research problem of this study is: how does Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib conceptualize ethical communication, and how can his teachings strengthen family communication within a normative religious framework? This study argues that Sayyidina Ali's emphasis on wisdom (*hikmah*), truthfulness (*sidq*), gentleness (*rifq*), and self-restraint (*hilm*) provides a comprehensive ethical model for family communication. His perspective offers a corrective to communication practices that are driven by emotional impulsivity and power imbalances. By applying these principles, family communication can function as a moral instrument that nurtures compassion, respect, and spiritual integrity.

This research offers original insights by reconstructing an Islamic normative framework for family communication based on the ethical teachings of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib. It enriches contemporary discourse on family communication by integrating classical moral philosophy with contemporary family challenges. The study underscores that effective family communication is not value-neutral but constitutes an ethical practice essential to sustaining family cohesion and moral continuity. By re-centering communication within a religious-ethical paradigm, this research offers theoretical and practical implications for Islamic family education, moral Development, and social harmony.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative normative–religious research design grounded in library-based interpretative analysis. (Glennon, 2023). This design is selected because the research objective is not to measure empirical behavior or social frequency, but to examine normative values, ethical principles, and moral reasoning embedded in classical Islamic texts. Qualitative normative research is particularly suitable for analyzing religious thought, as it enables in-depth interpretation of ethical concepts and philosophical meanings articulated by authoritative figures in Islamic intellectual history. By adopting this design, the study seeks to develop a conceptual framework of family communication ethics grounded in Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib's moral teachings, rather than to generalize statistically.

The research is conducted in a non-field, textual research setting, namely academic libraries and digital manuscript repositories that provide access to classical Islamic sources (Rohman et al., 2024). The primary "research location" is therefore the corpus of classical Islamic literature, with *Nahj al-Balaghah* serving as the central textual locus of analysis. In normative–religious research, texts function as primary informants (Kobko-Odarii et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study treats Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib as the principal normative authority, with his sermons, letters, and aphorisms serving as the primary data units. To

strengthen the interpretation, the study also relies on six secondary scholarly informants, including classical and contemporary Islamic thinkers such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, Fazlur Rahman, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mark Halstead, and Azyumardi Azra. These scholars represent diverse backgrounds in Islamic ethics, moral philosophy, and education, providing interpretative depth and comparative perspectives.

Data collection is conducted through systematic documentation and text selection techniques. Relevant texts are identified through keyword-based searches focusing on ethical communication themes such as *qawol* (speech), *hikmah* (wisdom), *sidq* (truthfulness), *rifq* (gentleness), and *hilm* (self-restraint). Passages that explicitly address moral responsibility, interpersonal ethics, and relational conduct are selected and organized thematically. This selective documentation ensures analytical focus and prevents conceptual dispersion beyond the scope of family communication ethics (Esquivel, 2025).

Data analysis follows an interactive qualitative model consisting of data condensation, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, data condensation is achieved by summarizing and focusing on core ethical ideas in communication. Second, data reduction involves categorizing texts into thematic clusters such as ethical speech, emotional restraint, and moral authority within relationships. Third, data are presented through conceptual mapping and narrative exposition that illustrate the interconnections among ethical principles. Finally, data verification is performed by continuously re-examining interpretations against the broader framework of Islamic moral teachings to ensure analytical coherence and consistency.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, the study applies source triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Interpretations of Sayyidina Ali's statements are cross-checked with Qur'anic principles and corroborated by classical and contemporary Islamic ethical scholarship. Conceptual validity is maintained by ensuring alignment between extracted ethical principles and established Islamic moral doctrines. This triangulation process minimizes subjective bias and enhances the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section presents the study's main findings on the strength of family communication from the perspective of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib. The findings are derived from a thematic interpretative analysis of selected passages from Nahj al-Balaghah and relevant Islamic ethical literature. Rather than empirical observations, the results are articulated as normative ethical principles that structure family communication within an Islamic moral framework. The analysis identifies five interrelated principles: wisdom (*hikmah*), truthfulness (*sidq*), gentleness (*rifq*), self-restraint (*hilm*), and moral accountability in speech.

### **Wisdom (*Hikmah*) as the Ethical Foundation of Communication**

The first significant finding of this study demonstrates that Sayyidina Ali positions *hikmah* (wisdom) as the foundational ethical principle governing communication. Wisdom is not conceptualized merely as intellectual capacity but as a moral faculty that regulates speech through reflection, discernment, and awareness of consequences. This ethical orientation is encapsulated in Sayyidina Ali's aphorism, "The tongue of a wise person is behind his heart, while the heart of a fool is behind his tongue" (Ali ibn Abi Talib). The statement normatively establishes a hierarchy in which ethical reflection precedes verbal expression, indicating that speech should be subordinated to moral judgment rather than emotional impulse.

From an analytical perspective, this finding suggests that family communication is framed as a value-laden moral practice rather than a neutral exchange of information. Speech is constructed as an intentional act whose ethical quality depends on the speaker's internal moral regulation. The prioritization of reflection over spontaneity positions communication as a site of ethical responsibility, where words function as extensions of character and moral consciousness. This understanding challenges the instrumental models of communication that prioritize efficiency or expressiveness without ethical evaluation.

Theoretically, *hikmah* operates as a meta-ethical regulator that integrates cognition, emotion, and morality within family communication. By emphasizing restraint and deliberation, Sayyidina Ali's framework aligns communication with ethical intentionality and emotional awareness. In contemporary contexts characterized by rapid interaction and emotional reactivity, this principle offers a normative counterbalance, situating communication within a moral economy of responsibility, foresight, and relational care.

### **Truthfulness (*Sidq*) and the Normative Construction of Trust**

The second key finding highlights the central role of *sidq* (truthfulness) in Sayyidina Ali's ethical conception of communication. Truthfulness is consistently framed as the moral foundation of trust, credibility, and relational stability. Sayyidina Ali repeatedly warns against falsehood and hypocrisy, portraying them as sources of moral decay and social disruption (Ali ibn Abi Talib). Within this framework, truthful speech is not optional or situational but constitutes a normative obligation that sustains ethical coherence in interpersonal relationships.

Analytically, this finding indicates that trust within family relationships is normatively constructed through honesty and moral transparency rather than emotional proximity alone. Truthfulness functions as an ethical infrastructure that enables stable relationships and moral authority. Deceptive communication, whether through lying, manipulation, or concealment, is corrosive of relational

integrity, undermining both emotional security and moral legitimacy. This conceptualization elevates communication from a pragmatic tool to a moral mechanism that structures trust and accountability.

From a theoretical standpoint, *Sidq* situates family communication within a broader Islamic ethical paradigm that links truthfulness with moral responsibility and social order. By framing honesty as a religious and ethical imperative, Sayyidina Ali's perspective reinforces the idea that sustainable family relationships depend on moral consistency. This finding contributes to normative communication theory by emphasizing that trust is not merely affective but ethically constituted through truthful and transparent speech.

### **Gentleness (*Rifq*) as a Principle of Compassionate Speech**

The analysis further reveals that *rifq* (gentleness) constitutes a defining characteristic of ethical communication in Sayyidina Ali's thought. Harsh, aggressive, or humiliating speech is normatively positioned as counterproductive, as it tends to generate resistance rather than moral receptivity (Ali ibn Abi Talib, 2001). In contrast, gentle communication reflects compassion (*rahmah*) and fosters emotional openness within interpersonal relationships, particularly in the family context.

From an analytical perspective, this finding demonstrates that communication effectiveness is ethically linked to emotional sensitivity and respect for human dignity. Gentleness functions as a moral strategy that reduces defensiveness and promotes receptivity, thereby strengthening relational bonds. Rather than being treated as a mere interpersonal skill, *rifq* is conceptualized as an ethical disposition that governs how authority, advice, and correction are communicated within the family.

Theoretically, *Rifq* introduces an affective dimension into normative communication ethics. It bridges moral intention with emotional expression, suggesting that ethical speech must consider not only what is said but how it is delivered. This finding positions gentleness as an indicator of moral maturity and spiritual awareness, reinforcing the argument that ethical family communication requires compassion-driven engagement rather than coercive or authoritarian verbal practices.

### **Self-Restraint (*Hilm*) and Emotional Control**

Another significant finding is the prominence of *hilm* (self-restraint) as a core ethical principle underlying the strength of family communication. Sayyidina Ali conceptualizes emotional control, particularly in situations of anger or provocation, as a marker of genuine strength and moral excellence (Ali ibn Abi Talib). Self-restraint is presented as the ethical capacity to regulate emotional impulses before they manifest as harmful speech.

This finding suggests that communication effectiveness is inseparable from the speaker's emotional state. Verbal conflict within families is not primarily

caused by disagreement itself but by the failure to manage emotional responses. *Hilm* functions as an internal ethical mechanism that prevents the escalation of conflict by disciplining emotional expression. Speech, therefore, becomes a reflection of emotional governance rather than emotional overflow.

From a theoretical perspective, he situates communication within a moral psychology that emphasizes emotional discipline as a prerequisite for ethical interaction. This principle reinforces the notion that strong family communication depends on inner moral control as much as linguistic clarity. By framing emotional restraint as an ethical strength, Sayyidina Ali offers a normative model that challenges reactive, confrontational communication patterns in contemporary family dynamics.

### Moral Accountability and the Ethical Weight of Speech

The final significant finding indicates that Sayyidina Ali conceptualizes communication as a morally accountable act with ethical and spiritual consequences. Speech is not regarded as morally neutral; rather, it reflects inner character and actively shapes social reality. Sayyidina Ali emphasizes that individuals are accountable for their words, which function as indicators of moral orientation and ethical responsibility (Ali ibn Abi Talib, 2012).

Table 1. Normative Ethical Framework of Family Communication in the Perspective of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib			
Ethical Principle	Normative Meaning in Sayyidina Ali's Thought	Ethical Function in Communication	Implication for Family Communication
Wisdom ( <i>Hikmah</i> )	Moral discernment that precedes and governs speech	Regulates verbal expression through reflection and ethical foresight	Encourages deliberate, intentional, and emotionally aware communication
Truthfulness ( <i>Sidq</i> )	Ethical obligation to align speech with moral integrity	Constructs trust, credibility, and moral authority	Sustains relational stability and ethical transparency within the family
Gentleness ( <i>Rifq</i> )	Compassionate orientation toward others in speech	Shapes respectful and non-coercive interaction	Strengthens emotional bonds and reduces relational resistance
Self-Restraint ( <i>Hilm</i> )	Ethical control of emotions, especially anger	Prevents impulsive and harmful verbal reactions	Maintains emotional balance and prevents conflict escalation
Moral Accountability	Responsibility for speech as a morally consequential act	Integrates ethical intention with spiritual awareness	Positions family communication as a medium of moral transmission and character formation

Analytically, the Table above indicates that family communication is a primary medium for moral transmission. Ethical values are not only taught through explicit instruction but are internalized through everyday verbal interaction. Words spoken within the family carry formative power, shaping



character, moral sensitivity, and spiritual awareness over time. Communication thus operates as a continuous ethical practice rather than a series of isolated interactions.

Theoretically, moral accountability situates family communication within a theological and ethical horizon that distinguishes it from instrumental communication models. By framing speech as subject to moral evaluation and spiritual consequence, Sayyidina Ali's perspective integrates communication ethics with moral accountability. This finding contributes to normative communication theory by emphasizing that ethical responsibility, rather than mere effectiveness, constitutes the ultimate measure of communicative strength within the family.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce and extend existing Islamic ethical literature by demonstrating that Sayyidina Ali's perspective on family communication is structured within a coherent normative framework rather than isolated moral exhortations. The emphasis on *hikmah*, *sidq*, *rifq*, *hilm*, and ethical accountability aligns with classical Islamic ethics that position communication as a morally charged act. Unlike instrumental communication models that prioritize efficiency or expressiveness, Sayyidina Ali's teachings frame speech as an extension of ethical character and spiritual responsibility (Abbas et al., 2023; Sari, 2023). This confirms earlier scholarly arguments that Islamic moral thought integrates communication with ethical intentionality and accountability.

Compared with classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh, the present findings indicate strong conceptual convergence, particularly regarding the regulation of speech and emotional discipline. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on silence and restraint as safeguards against moral failure closely parallels Sayyidina Ali's prioritization of reflective speech (Azhari et al., 2022). In contrast, Ibn Miskawayh's moral psychology underscores emotional control as the foundation of ethical excellence (Fayzullaeva, 2021). However, this study highlights a distinctive contribution in Sayyidina Ali's thought by explicitly situating family communication as a primary locus of ethical formation, rather than treating it as a general social practice.

When viewed in dialogue with contemporary theories of family communication, the findings both resonate with and diverge from modern approaches. Concepts such as emotional regulation, trust-building, and compassionate dialogue are also emphasized in modern communication theory; however, these are often framed in psychological or relational terms (Ishak et al., 2023; Rezai, 2022). Sayyidina Ali's framework differs by embedding these principles within a theological and moral horizon, in which communication is evaluated not only by relational outcomes but also by ethical accountability and spiritual consequences (Aziz et al., 2024; Ellias et al., 2025). This distinction underscores the normative depth of the Islamic ethical approach.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of family communication by offering a normative–religious model that integrates ethical reasoning, emotional discipline, and moral responsibility. It expands communication ethics scholarship by demonstrating that ethical communication can be grounded in spiritual values without sacrificing conceptual rigor. By framing communication as a moral practice governed by ethical principles, the study challenges value-neutral assumptions prevalent in contemporary communication research. It enriches interdisciplinary dialogue between religious ethics and communication studies.

In practice, the findings provide normative guidance for family communication education and moral Development initiatives. The ethical principles identified, wisdom, truthfulness, gentleness, self-restraint, and accountability, may inform family counseling frameworks, parenting education, and character-building programs within religious and educational institutions. Rather than prescribing rigid behavioral rules, this framework emphasizes moral intentionality and ethical awareness as foundations for sustainable family relationships. As such, the study provides a conceptual basis for fostering ethically grounded, emotionally sensitive, and spiritually informed family communication practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that, from the perspective of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib, the strength of family communication lies in its moral–ethical foundation rather than in technical or instrumental effectiveness. The central lesson (*hikmah*) derived from this research is that family communication is a morally accountable act that reflects inner character and spiritual consciousness. The five interconnected principles identified wisdom (*hikmah*), truthfulness (*sidq*), gentleness (*rifq*), self-restraint (*hilm*), and moral accountability demonstrate that ethical reflection must precede speech, that honesty sustains trust, that compassion nurtures emotional bonds, and that emotional discipline prevents relational harm. These findings affirm that family communication functions as a primary medium of moral transmission, shaping character and ethical sensitivity through everyday interaction. In this sense, strong family communication is not merely about reducing conflict but about cultivating moral integrity, emotional balance, and spiritual awareness within familial relationships.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to Islamic family studies and communication ethics by offering a coherent normative–religious framework grounded in classical moral philosophy, particularly the ethical thought of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib. Unlike prior studies that approach family communication through psychological or behavioral lenses, this research advances the field by positioning communication as an ethical discipline with theological significance. Its strength lies in systematically integrating classical Islamic sources with contemporary family challenges, thereby enriching

interdisciplinary dialogue between religious ethics and communication theory. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its textual, non-empirical nature, relying solely on normative interpretation rather than direct observation of lived family practices. Future research may extend this framework through empirical studies, such as qualitative interviews or mixed-method approaches, to examine how these ethical principles are enacted, negotiated, or challenged in contemporary Muslim family contexts.

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