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Maqasid al-Shariah and Interreligious Nursing Care: A Qualitative Study of Muslim–Buddhist Clinical Encounters in Malaysia

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Abstract

Religion shapes moral reasoning and healthcare practice in pluralistic societies, yet limited empirical research has examined how Islamic ethical principles guide Muslim healthcare providers in interreligious clinical encounters. This study aimed to develop an Islamic ethical framework for interreligious nursing care involving Muslim nurses and Chinese Buddhist patients in a Malaysian tertiary teaching hospital. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Data were collected between December 2023 and September 2024 through purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews with 15 Muslim registered nurses, 11 Chinese Buddhist patients, and 3 experts in Islamic jurisprudence and healthcare ethics. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major themes: navigating ethical and religious tensions; compassion (rahmah) and trust (amanah) as moral anchors; cultural negotiation and communication sensitivity;

and the need for a structured Islamic ethical framework. Interreligious nursing care involves dynamic moral negotiation rather than religious withdrawal. Islamic moral virtues—particularly compassion and trust—together with the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shariah) functioned as inclusive ethical resources that supported equitable and respectful care across religious boundaries. Based on these insights, a Maqasid-grounded ethical framework is proposed to guide interreligious nursing practice within pluralistic healthcare environments. This study contributes to religion–health scholarship by highlighting the moral agency of healthcare providers and advancing Islamic bioethics toward lived ethical application in multi-faith clinical settings. The findings also underscore the importance of integrating religion-informed ethical reflection into nursing education and institutional policy to support respectful interreligious healthcare practices. © 2026, Qualitative Research Association of Malaysia (QRAM). All rights reserved.

Author keywords

Interreligious healthcare; Islamic bioethics; Maqasid al-Shariah; nursing ethics; religion and health; SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)

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