



## Policing with Ihsan: Integrating Cultural Sensitivity and Islamic View in Modern Law Enforcement

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines how contemporary law enforcement frameworks must critically incorporate cultural sensitivity and the Islamic values of Ihsan (excellence and compassion). In an increasingly diverse and globalized world, policing necessitates a profound comprehension of the complex identities of the communities it serves, in addition to the technical application of the law. This study offers a revolutionary approach to law enforcement by fusing the spiritual and ethical underpinnings of Ihsan with modern theories of cultural competence, intersectionality, and multicultural communication.

The study highlights the contributions of intellectuals like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Allama Iqbal as it explores the historical development of cultural awareness from the 16th century to the present. The article shows how policing based on Ihsan acting as if in the presence of the Divine can lower use-of-force incidents, increase community trust, and promote social harmony through an examination of case studies and international standards. The results imply that navigating the complexity of contemporary, diverse societies requires a “service-oriented” model that prioritizes human dignity and empathy. In addition to being in line with international human rights standards, this strategy provides officers with a strong spiritual incentive to carry out their responsibilities with the utmost honesty and compassion.

### INTRODUCTION

In light of the complexity, diversity, and interconnectedness of 21<sup>st</sup>-century societies, traditional “control” models are increasingly showing themselves to be insufficient for modern law enforcement. Today, building a foundation of mutual respect and trust between the state and its citizens is more important for effective policing than simply enforcing the law mechanically. This article presents the idea of “policing with Ihsan,” a thorough and multifaceted framework that incorporates the fundamental Islamic ethical precept of Ihsan, which is commonly translated as “doing what is beautiful,” “excellence in conduct,” “spiritual perfection,” or “benevolence” with contemporary cultural sensitivity and diversity practices. Ihsan is a social

requirement that calls for the highest levels of honesty and compassion in all public interactions, not just a personal virtue. The ability to comprehend, honor, and negotiate the customs, beliefs, and behaviors of various groups without being influenced by one’s own prejudice or ethnocentric judgment is known as cultural sensitivity. The rapidly changing demographics of urban centers around the world highlight the need for such an integrated model. As the state’s front-line representatives, law enforcement officers often deal with people whose dietary habits, dress codes, and greeting customs are derived from deeply ingrained religious and cultural traditions (Navarro, 2023).. For example, in many Eastern or Indigenous cultures, a straightforward gesture like making eye contact, which in many Western contexts denotes honesty and directness, may

be interpreted as hostile, confrontational, or deeply disrespectful. In a similar vein, the idea of personal space and social norms with members of the opposite sex can vary significantly across different cultural landscapes. Without a robust framework for cultural sensitivity, these minor misunderstandings can quickly escalate into significant conflicts, undermining the legitimacy of police institutions and creating a cycle of mutual suspicion.

Additionally, the Islamic viewpoint gives this problem a significant ethical and spiritual component. Ihsan stands for the pinnacle of faith (Iman), in which a person behaves with an unwavering, continuous awareness of God's presence. In the context of law enforcement, this translates to a dedication to justice that is tempered by mercy, empathy, and the pursuit of "beauty" in every encounter rather than just being procedural. It transforms the officer from merely upholding the law into a Muhsin who strives for excellence in everything. In Muslim-majority nations like Pakistan, where the philosophical contributions of individuals like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Allama Iqbal offer a link between contemporary education and spiritual values, this integration is especially pertinent. By adopting a policing model rooted in Ihsan, law enforcement agencies can transition from colonial-era models of surveillance and control to modern service models that prioritize the human dignity of every individual, regardless of their background or social standing. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of how these concepts can be practically applied to create a more just and harmonious society.

## MATERILS AND METHODS

This article utilizes a qualitative, multidisciplinary approach to analyze the intersection of Islamic ethics and modern policing practices. The methodology involves a comprehensive review of existing literature on cultural competence, intersectionality, and Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) related to justice and governance. Primary data is drawn from a detailed analysis of law enforcement training modules and case studies focused on community-police relations in diverse urban settings. The research also incorporates a comparative analysis of global policing standards, such as those set by INTERPOL (2023) and the United Nations (2025), against the ethical requirements of Ihsan. By synthesizing these diverse and often divergent sources, the study develops a robust conceptual framework for "Policing with Ihsan," evaluating its potential impact on operational efficiency, such as the significant reduction of use-of-force incidents, the improvement of officer well-being, and the increase in crime reporting rates among minority communities. This methodology ensures a balanced perspective that honors both the spiritual traditions of Islam and the practical, evidence-based requirements of modern law enforcement in a globalized era. The study also explores the historical development of cultural sensitivity,

tracing its roots from early interactions during the Age of Exploration to the sophisticated multicultural communication strategies used today. This methodology ensures a balanced perspective that honors both the spiritual traditions of Islam and the practical requirements of modern law enforcement.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century, a time characterized by the Age of Exploration and the subsequent rise in global trade and cultural exchange, is the historical beginning point for cultural sensitivity. For merchants, diplomats, and explorers alike, the need for mutual understanding became a practical necessity as European, Asian, and African civilizations began to interact more frequently. These early encounters, while often fraught with conflict, laid the groundwork for the modern understanding that different societies possess unique values and traditions that must be respected for successful interaction (Bentley, 2022). The ability of professionals to function effectively within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities has developed into the formal study of cultural competence in the modern era.

In the realm of law enforcement, literature emphasizes that cultural competence is directly correlated with institutional legitimacy and public safety. Studies have indicated that agencies with high levels of cultural competence experience up to a 30% reduction in use-of-force incidents (National Institute of Justice, 2025). This is because culturally aware officers are better equipped to de-escalate tensions through "linguistic empathy" and "non-verbal sensitivity," recognizing that communication is a process of translating intent into mutual understanding (Navarro, 2023).

The literature also highlights the risk of over-generalization or stereotyping if training is superficial, emphasizing the need for a deep, nuanced understanding of individual and community identities. The concepts of 'Adl (justice) and Ihsan are at the center of the Islamic contribution to this field. While 'Adl provides the foundation for legal fairness and the equal application of the law, Ihsan adds a layer of spiritual excellence and compassion. Khan (2019) argues that Ihsan necessitates a state that goes above and beyond the "minimum" legal requirements to create a society in which every person can recognize their moral worth. This is in line with contemporary concepts of intersectionality, which scholars like Crenshaw (2017) popularized. These concepts recognize that people's experiences of discrimination or privilege are shaped by overlapping identities like race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status. Philosophical perspectives from the South Asian context further enrich this discussion. Khan (2021), a 19<sup>th</sup>-century reformer, advocated for a rationalist approach to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western cultures, emphasizing that modern education is the key to social reform and mutual understanding. Similarly, Allama Iqbal's (2020) concept of Khudi (selfhood) suggests that a just society is built upon individuals who have developed their spiritual and ethical

values to transcend narrow cultural boundaries. These perspectives provide a robust theoretical foundation for a policing model that is both culturally sensitive and ethically grounded, offering a unique synthesis of traditional wisdom and modern social science. The literature review thus reveals a growing consensus that effective policing in a diverse world requires a holistic approach that addresses both the technical and the ethical dimensions of law enforcement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ihsan's incorporation into law enforcement procedures results in significant operational and social advantages that go far beyond strict regulation compliance. According to our analysis, "Policing with Ihsan" shifts the officer's role from that of a reactive enforcer to that of a proactive community partner who is deeply invested in the citizens' welfare. One of the primary results of this approach is the mitigation of harmful stereotypes. During investigations, raids, and everyday interactions in law enforcement, biased decision-making is frequently caused by stereotypes based on religion, age, or ethnicity. Officers are encouraged to base their actions on objective facts and individual circumstances rather than oversimplified and frequently incorrect assumptions by adhering to the Ihsan principle, which requires treating every person with the dignity of a divine creation. Practical applications of this model are particularly evident in how officers handle sensitive situations, such as entering places of worship or interacting with diverse family structures. For instance, daily prayer times and modest dress codes are essential to the fabric of life in many Muslim communities. When acting in accordance with the spirit of Ihsan, a culturally sensitive officer would honor these customs by involving female officers in interactions with women and avoiding interruptions during prayer times whenever possible. An atmosphere of mutual respect is created as a result of this "internal sensitivity," which in turn leads to an increase in the number of crimes reported by members of minority communities who had previously felt marginalized, misunderstood, or even targeted by the police. Citizens are significantly more likely to cooperate with law enforcement when they have the impression that their core values and religious identities are truly respected. This leads to improved intelligence gathering, more efficient crime prevention, and a social fabric that is more resilient. Ihsan provides the ethical fuel necessary to sustain this cooperation, which is the lifeblood of contemporary community policing. In addition, the economic and social contexts that intersect with cultural identity must be discussed. Law enforcement must be trained to distinguish between criminal intent and actions driven by economic desperation or a lack of resources. Recognizing that poverty frequently intersects with cultural identity in complex ways, a policing model based on Ihsan places a premium on "social de-escalation." Non-discrimination agencies can

ensure that they are acting as "global citizens" with localized expertise by aligning local practices with global standards like the UN's guidelines on human rights (UNODC, 2024). The shift from the "control" model of the colonial era to the "service" model of the modern era is more than just a change in policy; it is also a fundamental shift in the institutional culture, which values empathy, patience, and understanding as much as it values efficiency and enforcement.

The police force's internal culture is another area where this model has had an impact. A police force that is culturally sensitive must start from within. Effective community relations begin with healthy internal diversity. Law enforcement agencies can ensure equitable promotions and disciplinary actions by fostering fairness and understanding among their ranks. This, in turn, results in a force that is more motivated and professional. In order to solve complex problems more creatively and efficiently, diverse teams bring a wide range of perspectives to the table. In an interconnected world where local police interact with international tourists, immigrants, and foreign businesses daily, this "global awareness" becomes an operational necessity. Our research suggests that when Ihsan serves as the guiding principle, the organization and the community as a whole reap the benefits.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic principles of excellence (Ihsan), compassion (Rahma), and justice (Adl) provide a coherent ethical foundation for addressing the current crisis in policing by reorienting it toward dignity, fairness, and service. These principles not only offer moral clarity but also align closely with empirically supported approaches such as procedural justice, community policing, and implicit bias reduction, demonstrating that the model is both practical and applicable in diverse, pluralistic societies. The case for "Policing with Ihsan" rests on a threefold logic: first, that contemporary law enforcement is facing a legitimacy crisis driven by public distrust, perceived injustice, and weakened community relationships; second, that these Islamic ethical values directly respond to such challenges by emphasizing empathy, accountability, and moral responsibility; and third, that these values reinforce strategies already proven to improve policing outcomes. However, successful implementation requires addressing several critical challenges. Normative alignment remains a major obstacle, as policing cultures often prioritize control, authority, and risk aversion, making it necessary to undertake sustained organizational change to embed values like compassion and ethical excellence. Institutional inertia also poses a barrier, since officers are typically rewarded based on measurable outputs such as arrest rates and response times, which discourages investment in trust-building and harm reduction unless performance metrics are restructured. Finally, accountability ambiguity can arise if compassionate policing

is not guided by clear and consistent standards, leading to perceptions of favoritism or inconsistency. Without transparent protocols, efforts toward compassionate policing risk being misunderstood as discretionary leniency, potentially undermining both justice and public safety. The true test of this model's viability lies in how effectively it performs under real-world conditions, which makes a clear, phased, and measurable implementation strategy essential. In the first phase (0–12 months), law enforcement agencies should establish a solid foundation by conducting independent audits of enforcement data, disaggregated by ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status, to identify patterns of bias and inequality. Alongside this, agencies must design and implement comprehensive training programs that emphasize cultural sensitivity, implicit bias awareness, and the practical application of Ihsan-based policing principles. These initial steps ensure that reform efforts are grounded in evidence while equipping officers with the ethical and professional tools needed for meaningful change. The second and third phases focus on application and expansion. During the second phase (12–24 months), agencies should introduce pilot programs in diverse urban areas, allowing these principles to be tested in practice through continuous feedback from both communities and officers, ensuring ongoing refinement. In the final phase (24–36 months), successful initiatives can be scaled nationally and internationally, supported by policy reforms that formally embed Ihsan principles into legal and institutional frameworks. This structured progression—from assessment to implementation to expansion—provides a practical and evidence-based pathway for transforming policing into a more equitable, community-centered, and service-oriented institution.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

QG contributed to conceptualization, methodology design, data curation, and drafting of the manuscript. MSB performed analysis, and validated the results.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No conflict of interest among the authors to declare

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Data will be made available on a fair request to the corresponding author

#### **ETHICS APPROVAL**

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