

Research Article



Qur'anic Imperatives and the Ethics of Politeness, A Multimodal Perspective in Cross Cultural Pragmatics

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 28/12/2025

Revised: 31/01/2026

Accepted: 12/02/2026

Published: 30/03/2026



Keywords:

Cross cultural pragmatics

Communication ethics

Multimodality

Politeness theory

Qur'anic discourse

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Politeness theory has traditionally examined conversational strategies for protecting face and managing social relationships. However, politeness goes beyond strategic language choices and includes ethical communication across different modes.

This study examines Qur'anic imperatives that guide interpersonal behavior and argues they can inform pragmatic analyses by relating linguistic, paralinguistic, and embodied aspects of conduct within an ethical frame.

Methodology: Out of approximately 1,848 imperative forms in the Qur'an, a purposive sample of 55 verses was chosen from 20 chapters based on their relevance to interaction and polite behavior. The study uses an analytical approach informed by three major traditions in politeness research: face management, relational work, and multimodal rapport management. It extends these by emphasizing an ethical perspective on communication. The analysis investigates how these imperatives encode politeness through verbal, tonal, and embodied communicative resources.

Results: The findings identify five domains of Qur'anic politeness: relational work, discursive framing, identity construction, voice control, and gaze management. The results show that politeness in the Qur'an is not negotiated situationally but codified as prescriptive discourse rooted in fairness, humility, restraint, and respect. Politeness functions as a linguistic strategy, a relational practice, and an ethical discipline that unifies word, tone, and bodily comportment.

Conclusion: This study proposes an account of politeness as strategic, relational, multimodal, and ethical, positioning the Qur'anic model as a comparative case in cross-cultural pragmatics. The findings expand politeness theory beyond Western conversational models and offer insights into how ethical imperatives shape communicative behavior across diverse cultural and religious traditions.

1. Introduction

Politeness remains a central concept in pragmatics, shaping how speakers manage face, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and sustain social harmony. Early models, most notably Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of face management and Leech's (2014) politeness maxims, conceptualized politeness as a universal set of strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts. Subsequent scholarship challenged this universality, reframing politeness as a discursively and contextually constructed phenomenon that extends beyond face management to encompass broader

norms of interaction and appropriateness (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003; Locher & Watts, 2005). More recent work has expanded the field into multimodal domains, recognising paralinguistic cues (such as tone, prosody, and gaze) as integral to the performance of politeness (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Alongside this, Culpeper (2011) advances impoliteness research by situating it within a wider interdisciplinary framework, showing that impoliteness encompasses not only linguistic forms but also behavioral triggers and non-linguistic acts that participants tend to evaluate as emotionally

► Cite this paper as: Alsharif AA. Qur'anic Imperatives and the Ethics of Politeness, A Multimodal Perspective in Cross Cultural Pragmatics. 2026;5(1): 1-16. DOI: 10.58803/jclr.v5i1.144



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negative. Despite these developments, research tended to concentrate on conversational data, leaving prescriptive religious discourse, a domain where politeness and ethically unacceptable interactions are explicitly codified, largely overlooked. This study addresses that gap by analyzing Qur'anic imperatives as a valuable resource, extending politeness theory into prescriptive discourse and placing more emphasis on its normative and ethical dimensions. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the word of God, and it contains approximately 1,848 imperatives (Azima, 1984), many of which govern not just ritual practice but also inter-personal interaction. These imperatives can be classified as a type of directive discourse, in that politeness is not negotiated in conversation but rather institutionalized through explicit prescription. Such prescriptions offer a unique opportunity for expanding the theory of politeness, providing insight into how fairness, humility, restraint, and respect are codified as enduring communicative norms.

1.2. Literature review, toward ethical and multimodal politeness

Despite the considerable progress made across three waves of politeness research, each still leaves room for further exploration of the ethical and embodied dimensions of politeness. The first wave (Brown & Levinson, 1987) conceptualized politeness as a universal set of strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts. While this model provided a foundational framework, it reduced politeness to individual mitigation strategies and has been repeatedly critiqued for its Western bias and questionable claims to universality (Eelen, 2001; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). The second wave (Watts, 2003; Locher & Watts, 2005) reconceptualized politeness as relational work, emphasizing its situated and negotiable character. Although this perspective addressed the rigidity of earlier universalist claims, it simultaneously narrowed politeness to context-bound appropriateness, thereby excluding the possibility of broader normative or cross-situational standards (Haugh, 2010). The third wave of politeness research (e.g., Spencer-Oatey, 2008) broadened the scope of the field through the rapport-management framework, which integrates linguistic strategies (e.g., address terms, speech acts), paralinguistic cues (e.g., tone, prosody), and contextual variables (e.g., social roles, rights, and obligations) as interrelated dimensions of interpersonal rapport. Some recent critiques (Al-Hindawi & Alkhazaali, 2016; Kádár, 2017) argue that although research has increasingly documented multimodal cues in interaction, there remains a gap in integrating these insights into a more holistic ethical model of communication. This has resulted in a persistent fragmentation across the waves—strategic, relational, and multimodal approaches

often speaking past one another rather than converging into a comprehensive account.

What remains an active area of inquiry, therefore, is how to relate interactional practices to normative standards of respectful conduct. Politeness can be understood as evaluative and ethical. Voice, gaze, and bodily comportment function as more than context-sensitive cues; they constitute behaviors open to moral appraisal, measured against broader ideals such as fairness, humility, restraint, and respect. Insights from psychology offer a compelling parallel. Research on courtroom communication has shown that nonverbal behavior often conveys more meaning than spoken language, particularly because formal legal protocols restrict what participants may explicitly express. In Australian court judgments, "body language" has been recognized as an implicit communicative channel shaping perceptions of witness credibility and, ultimately, influencing judicial outcomes. Denault and Bozin (2024) demonstrate that references to body language in written court judgments reveal both the use and misuse of nonverbal cues, prompting a call for greater scholarly and professional attention to how nonverbal conduct is interpreted and evaluated.

Recent scholarship has revisited the ethical foundations of politeness, proposing that assessments of politeness and impoliteness reflect moral reasoning as much as pragmatic function. Kádár (2017) argues that (im)politeness serves as a form of moral evaluation sustaining the "moral order" of social interaction, while Culpeper (2011) emphasizes that impoliteness entails moral judgment alongside linguistic deviance, as breaches of respect are perceived as ethical violations. These perspectives extend Goffman's (1967) seminal view of face-work as a moral enterprise underpinning social order. This ethical orientation opens new avenues for analyzing politeness as a codified ideal embedded within institutional and cultural systems. Religious texts, in particular, offer fertile ground for such inquiry, as they articulate enduring norms of both surface and deeper levels of human interactions. The intersection of religious discourse and politeness theory has received limited systematic attention. Most studies have concentrated on speech acts, honorifics, or formulaic expressions in Arabic, neglecting the imperative as a linguistic form through which ethical conduct and social discipline are prescribed.

Abdul-Raof (2006, 2013) have explored the rhetorical and pragmatic features of Qur'anic discourse, noting its intricate use of directive forms. Azima's (1984) exhaustive study identified approximately 1,848 imperatives within the Qur'an, highlighting the centrality of command structures in shaping ritual and interpersonal conduct. Yet few studies have examined these imperatives through the

lens of politeness theory. Recent work in Qur'anic pragmatics has begun to address this gap by exploring how divine directives guide human interaction (Abdul-Raof, 2013). This aligns with the call in pragmatics to integrate moral philosophy into linguistic analysis, recognizing that language not only organizes interaction but also shapes individuals' moral and relational selves (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Within this framework, Qur'anic imperatives exemplify what Locher and Watts (2005) term "normative relational work"—a codified system defining ideal communicative conduct. By embedding politeness within divine instruction, the Qur'an reconfigures politeness as a dimension beyond everyday human interactions by anticipating future behaviour and stopping inner thoughts from provoking impolite behaviour governing both speech and embodied behavior. Al-Khatib's (2012) study of Qur'anic politeness through Brown and Levinson's model and Leech's maxims illustrates how the text conveys moral refinement via speech acts balancing directness and deference. However, his analysis remains largely descriptive, emphasizing thematic illustrations of politeness rather than systematically treating imperative structures or their ethical implications. Moreover, his framework conceptualizes politeness chiefly as a communicative strategy, overlooking its role as an embodied moral and relational act. The present study builds upon and revises this discussion by suggesting a systematic analysis of Qur'anic imperatives through the combined lenses of politeness and ethical linguistics, revealing how these directives encode both divine authority and moral gentleness—an intersection largely absent in prior scholarship.

Integrating the Qur'anic imperative corpus into politeness research broadens the field in two key ways. First, it expands the empirical base beyond conversational and institutional data to encompass prescriptive and sacred discourse. Second, it connects multimodal politeness with moral philosophy, viewing paralinguistic features such as voice, tone, and gaze as ethically evaluative cues. This study demonstrates how Qur'anic imperatives support the notion that politeness entails universality, proposing a possible shared ethical baseline—gentleness, humility, fairness, and restraint—that transcends cultural variation while retaining contextual nuance. This ethical dimension, often absent in the three waves of politeness research, calls for integrating moral and prescriptive orientations alongside strategic, relational, and multimodal perspectives.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, theory-driven approach within applied linguistics, aimed at interpreting language use in its natural textual and interactional context (Pandey, 2025). Rather than

relying on statistical generalization, the analysis foregrounds meaning, pragmatic function, and interpersonal regulation through interpretive discourse analysis. Within this framework, the Qur'an was systematically examined for imperative constructions, given their directive force and their central role in shaping norms of social and communicative conduct.

Although the Qur'an contains approximately 1,848 imperatives (Azima, 1984), the present study deliberately restricts its scope to imperatives that regulate interpersonal behavior and politeness. This restriction reflects the study's conceptual focus rather than an attempt at exhaustive coverage. Over a two-year period, the corpus was collected, reviewed, and reassessed through repeated close reading to ensure analytical rigor and theoretical consistency. The iterative nature of this process allowed for refinement of inclusion criteria and stabilization of analytical categories.

2.1. Sampling procedure and politeness relevance

A purposive, iterative sampling strategy was employed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the first stage, all chapters of the Qur'an were screened for imperative forms whose directive force plausibly engaged interpersonal conduct. Politeness relevance was operationally defined using established pragmatic criteria drawn from Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory, Leech's (2014) politeness maxims, and Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework. Imperatives were considered politeness-relevant when they explicitly or implicitly regulated face management, social harmony, moral positioning, mitigation, or interpersonal alignment within interaction.

Imperatives addressing fairness, restraint, humility, respectful address, gentleness in speech, gaze management, or voice modulation were therefore included. By contrast, imperatives concerned exclusively with ritual performance, doctrinal belief, or theological obligation, without discernible interpersonal or interactional implications, were excluded. In the second stage, verses lacking clear relevance to social interaction or communicative conduct were systematically removed. This two-stage procedure ensured that inclusion decisions reflected stable, theory-informed judgments rather than preliminary or impressionistic selection.

The final dataset comprised 55 imperatives drawn from 20 chapters of the Qur'an. This corpus is not intended to be statistically representative of all Qur'anic imperatives; rather, it constitutes an analytically sufficient subset that achieves functional saturation for the purposes of discourse-pragmatic analysis. Consistent with qualitative linguistic

research, adequacy was determined by the recurrence and stability of pragmatic patterns across diverse contexts, rather than by numerical coverage.

2.2. Analytical framework and categorization

The analysis follows an interpretive, theory-driven discourse-pragmatic framework rather than a formal coding-based thematic analysis. While no predefined coding protocol was applied, categories were not derived post hoc. Instead, they were analytically motivated and developed through systematic comparison of imperative functions across contexts, guided by established politeness and pragmatics theory.

Operational Domains and Unified Exclusion Logic. Five analytical domains were identified based on recurring pragmatic functions by which imperatives regulate interpersonal conduct. Each domain has explicit inclusion criteria and is governed by a unified exclusion logic: an imperative is excluded if it addresses religious duty, doctrinal belief, or moral orientation without an interpersonal addressee or an interactional enactment. To enhance transparency, each domain is briefly defined below with boundary illustrations. Boundary examples are provided to illustrate category limits and to demonstrate how analytically adjacent imperatives were systematically included or excluded based on pragmatic function rather than surface form.

1. Relational Work: Regulation of interpersonal relations and ethical conduct toward others.

Inclusion: Imperatives that explicitly govern behavior toward people in social interaction (e.g., kindness, fairness, restraint).

Exclusion (unified logic): Imperatives concerning ritual or belief without an interpersonal target.

Boundary (included): “وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا” – “Speak kindly to people” (2:83).

Boundary (excluded): “أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ” – “Establish prayer” (2:43): ritual obligation with no interpersonal addressee.

2. Discursive Framing: Regulation of how speech is framed in interaction.

Inclusion: Imperatives guiding tone, manner, or framing of speech in communicative encounters (e.g., gentleness, softening, mitigation).

Exclusion: Doctrinal proclamations that do not regulate interactional stance or face management.

Boundary (included): “وَقُولُوا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا” – “Speak to him gently” (20:44).

Boundary (excluded): “قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ” – “Say: He is Allah, One” (112:1): doctrinal proclamation, not interactional framing.

3. Identity Construction: Regulation of social identity and positioning of self in relation to others.

Inclusion: Imperatives shaping humility,

deference, or non-dominance vis-à-vis others.

Exclusion: Moral or spiritual imperatives lacking social positioning or relational enactment.

Boundary (included): “وَلَا تُصَوِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ” – “Do not turn your cheek away from people” (31:18).

Boundary (excluded): “اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ” – “Remember the favor of Allah upon you” (5:20): reflective instruction without social interaction.

4. Voice Control — Regulation of vocal behavior as a politeness strategy.

Inclusion: Imperatives governing volume, tone, or vocal restraint in interaction.

Exclusion: Metaphorical or devotional imperatives without literal communicative behavior toward others.

Boundary (included): “وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ” – “Lower your voice” (31:19).

Boundary (excluded): “قُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ” – “Say, ‘My Lord, I seek refuge in You’”: devotional command, not regulation of speech toward others.

5. Gaze Management — Regulation of visual conduct affecting interpersonal propriety.

Inclusion: Imperatives directing gaze behavior in social encounters.

Exclusion: Imperatives addressing belief or internal moral stance without embodied interpersonal enactment.

Boundary (included): “قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ” – “Tell the believers to lower their gaze” (24:30).

Boundary (excluded): “آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ” – “Believe in Allah and His Messenger” (4:136): belief instruction without interactional behavior.

The analysis was conducted by a single analyst, consistent with interpretive discourse analysis in Qur’ānic linguistics and pragmatics. Rather than inter-coder reliability, analytical rigor was ensured through iterative cross-contextual comparison, continuous verification against classical exegetical sources, and sustained alignment with established pragmatic theory. Category boundaries were refined through repeated reassessment of verses to ensure internal coherence and conceptual consistency across the dataset.

2.3. Rationale for imperative focus

The focus on imperative constructions is grounded in three interrelated principles that ensure analytical precision. First, selection was based on grammatical form—specifically, the imperative mood—following Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), who classify imperatives as prototypical directive speech acts. Regardless of whether the command targets verbal or non-verbal behavior, the imperative functions as a linguistic mechanism for regulating interaction.

Second, imperatives were included when they governed interpersonal conduct within social

interaction, encompassing verbal communication (e.g., speech content, tone, and manner of address), non-verbal communicative features (e.g., gaze management and voice modulation), and relational behaviors (e.g., fairness, humility, and restraint). This approach aligns with multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) and the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974), both of which recognize that language systematically organizes verbal and non-verbal dimensions of communicative competence.

Finally, imperatives were retained only when demonstrably linked to politeness or face management. Directives addressing purely ritual obligations without interpersonal dimensions were excluded, ensuring that the dataset reflects linguistic

prescriptions for socially appropriate conduct rather than theological or ritual mandates.

3. Results

The Fifty-five imperatives with direct relevance to politeness were identified. They cluster into five domains, relational work, discursive framing, identity construction, voice control, and gaze management. The distribution across domains is reported in Table 1. Each domain is illustrated with representative verses and analyzed in light of established frameworks. The findings show that the Qur'an addresses politeness across verbal, paralinguistic, and embodied planes and that it codifies preferred patterns of restraint, gentleness, fairness, and humility.

Table 1.
Interactional Domains as Thematic Categories Elicited from Qur'anic Imperatives

Domain	Number of Verses	Example Imperative	Politeness Strategy
Relational Work	26	وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ 26,182	Fairness, restraint, protection of rights
Discursive Framing	14	فَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا 17,23	Gentle and noble speech
Identity Construction	6	وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا 17,37	Humility and modesty
Voice Control	5	وَإِغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ 31,19	Paralinguistic restraint
Gaze Management	4	قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ 24,30	Visual restraint
Total	55		

As shown in Table 1 above the selected imperatives were organized into five thematic categories that emerged from the analysis:

- 1. Relational Work:** Directives regulating fairness, reciprocity, restraint, and justice in interpersonal dealings.
- 2. Discursive Framing:** Imperatives prescribing the choice of words, gentle speech, and patience in communication.
- 3. Identity Construction:** Instructions on humility, moderation, physical comportment, and community-oriented self-presentation.
- 4. Voice-Control:** Imperatives addressing vocal modulation, tone, and respectful delivery.
- 5. Gaze Management:** Commands prescribing visual restraint and modesty in interaction.

The findings demonstrate that the Qur'an frames politeness across verbal, paralinguistic, and embodied dimensions, codifying Each of the five thematic categories identified in the Results section is further divided into multiple subcategories that capture specific dimensions of politeness: first, relational work includes eight subcategories such as fairness, reciprocity, conflict resolution, cooperative morality, justice, family and gender relations, discursive etiquette, and gratitude; Second, discursive framing comprises six subcategories including kindness, avoidance of disrespect, humility, recognition, clarity, and hope.

Third, identity construction consists of four subcategories addressing reliance, modesty, embodied display, and individual responsibility. Fourth, voice control includes four subcategories covering moderation, lowering the voice, addressing authority, and voice as provocation. Finally, gaze management contains two subcategories concerning avoidance of excessive gaze and lowering the gaze. While these subcategories are enumerated here, their interpretive significance, practical implications, and connections to established politeness frameworks will be examined in depth in the Discussion section that follows.

4. Discussion

In this section, all five domains will be defined in accordance with their pragmatic meanings. To provide a clearer interpretive framework for the analysis, the discussion begins by outlining two foundational dimensions that inform the manifestation of politeness in Qur'anic discourse: internal politeness and vertical politeness. *Internal politeness* refers to those imperatives that regulate the inner self prior to communication, cultivating emotional, cognitive, and behavioural discipline so that impoliteness is prevented at its source. These include controlling one's emotions, gaze, and voice; restraining impulses; regulating inner reactions such as anger, envy, or jealousy; preventing premature judgment, misinformation, or disrespect; reducing self-assertion and overconfidence; and discouraging revenge or pride. In parallel, *vertical*

politeness encompasses the imperatives that guide how speech should be formulated, articulated, and linguistically encoded. This dimension regulates the phrasing of claims, the articulation of intentions, references to God's will, and the embedding of humility and ethical responsibility within the very structure of one's speech. Together, these two dimensions provide some of the conceptual basis for understanding how the subsequent domains operate to shape ethical and relational conduct.

Each domain will then be examined in detail through its subcategories and illustrative examples, drawing on cross-disciplinary perspectives to ensure that their interpretations are viewed through multiple lenses that support the manifestation of politeness. The discussion will begin with the dominant politeness imperative, which centers on relational work and the ways individuals are expected to treat one another. It will conclude with an exploration of paralinguistic cues, including the management of gaze and the culturally appropriate restraint of prolonged eye contact.

4.1. Relational work in Qur'anic imperatives

In pragmatics, relational work denotes the linguistic processes through which speakers negotiate interpersonal meaning. Locher and Watts (2005) conceptualize it as the continual effort involved in shaping and managing relationships, encompassing the full spectrum of (im)politeness and appropriateness. It extends beyond the mitigation of face-threats to the active construction, maintenance, and adjustment of social bonds. The Qur'an's extensive use of imperatives provides a distinctive model for examining how divine discourse regulates human interaction. Many directives operate as relational acts, guiding communication, cooperation, conflict restraint, forgiveness, and the preservation of dignity. These imperatives promote fairness, humility, solidarity, and generosity, positioning politeness within an ethical and spiritual framework. This study focuses on Qur'anic imperatives that directly structure interpersonal conduct across social, communal, and familial contexts. Interpreted through politeness theory, they perform relational work by managing face, fostering cohesion, and aligning interaction with moral responsibility. Each analytical section represents a thematic cluster reflecting a specific dimension of relational communication in Qur'anic discourse.

4.1.1. Imperatives Promoting Fairness and Equity

1. "وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ" (26:182) – "And weigh with an even balance."
2. "وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ" (26:183) – "And do not diminish from the people their due."
3. "أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ" (6:152) – "Give full measure and do not be among the deficient."

4. "وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا" (17:34) – "And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned."
5. "وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ" (16:126) – "And if you punish, then punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient, it is better for those who are patient."

First, the promoting-fairness-and-equity imperatives exemplify negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), protecting others' rights and preventing exploitation in transactions. Verses such as "وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ" (26:182) "And weigh with an even balance" and "وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ" (26:183) – "And do not diminish from the people their due" illustrate directives rooted in negative politeness strategies. They prevent imposition and safeguard the rights of others, aligning with Brown and Levinson's concern for "face" by protecting social harmony through fairness. These verses while has their potential internal politeness as resisting greed or bias. A complementary vertical reading is warranted where the directive constrains how commitments are formulated or upheld in speech (e.g., oath-keeping, truthfulness in transactions).

4.1.2. Imperatives of reciprocity and solidarity

6. "وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ" (2:273) – "And do not forget the favor between yourselves."
7. "وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ" (15:88) – "And lower your wing to the believers."
8. "خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ" (7:199) – "And take what is given freely, and enjoin what is right, and turn away from the ignorant."

Imperatives of Reciprocity and Solidarity imperatives reflect positive politeness by emphasizing humility, reciprocity, and shared goodwill (Leech, 2014: *Approbation and Generosity Maxims*). The injunction "وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ" (2:273) – "And do not forget the favor between yourselves" emphasizes mutual recognition of goodwill, functioning as a positive politeness strategy. Similarly, "وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ" (15:88) – "And lower your wing to the believers" employs metaphorical language of humility, reinforcing solidarity and group cohesion. Beyond its interpersonal dimension, the verse also invokes an internalized form of politeness, positioning humility as a dispositional readiness that governs one's conduct toward fellow believers.

4.1.3. Imperatives of conflict resolution and restraint

9. "ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ" (23:96) – "Repel [evil] by that which is best."

10. "وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا فَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ" (8:46) – “Do not dispute and lose heart, lest your unity fade”
11. "فَعَفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ" (109:1) – “So pardon and overlook until Allah brings His command.”
12. "وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ" (16:125) – “Dispute with them in the best manner.”
13. "وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ" (16:126) – “Let your punishment be proportionate...but if you are patient, it is better.”

These imperatives function as regulative directives that guide behavior toward harmony while minimizing face-threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987). "ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ" (23:96) reframes aggression as benevolence, promoting a preferred conflict sequence where offense is countered with goodness. This aligns with Leech's (2014) Agreement Maxim, emphasizing harmony over retaliation. In addition, "وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا" (8:46) is a preventive prohibition designed to protect communal unity. The discouragement of dispute preserves collective “face” and uses gentle restraint rather than coercion. The image of unity fading “like lost wind” reinforces non-confrontational negative politeness.

The command "فَعَفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا" (2:109) centers forgiveness as a restorative act, mitigating the urge to retaliate. By shifting ultimate judgment to divine authority (“until Allah brings His command”), the verse softens imposition and preserves addressee autonomy. Likewise, "وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ" (16:125) elevates argument into ethical discourse, requiring civility and respectful persuasion. It acts as a meta-pragmatic rule guiding how disagreements should be performed—by decorum, rationality, and moral sensitivity.

Finally, "وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ...فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ" (16:126) establishes graded politeness: proportional retaliation is permitted, but patience is valued as the superior moral response. This balances justice with restraint, presenting a hierarchy of preferred actions. Together, these imperatives form a Qur'ānic model of ethical pragmatics—directives that regulate conflict without humiliation, promote restraint without weakness, and preserve both divine and human face. The Qur'ān frames conflict resolution as a disciplined moral practice rooted in politeness, self-control, and communicative wisdom.

4.1.4. Imperatives of Cooperative Morality

14. "وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ" (5:2) – “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.”

15. "فَاجْمَعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ" (10:71) – “Then resolve upon your plan and gather your decision.”

These highlight group solidarity and collective responsibility, aligning with positive face strategies. The verse “وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ” (5:2) — “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression” — operates as a dual directive, simultaneously commanding and prohibiting. Pragmatically, it constitutes a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987) that reinforces group solidarity through moral alignment. The use of “تَعَاوَنُوا” (cooperate) linguistically encodes reciprocity and shared moral responsibility, framing righteousness (البر) and mindfulness (التقوى) as mutually enacted virtues. The second clause — “ولا تعاونوا على الإثم والعدوان” — functions as a face-saving constraint, discouraging complicity in wrongdoing while maintaining the addressee's agency through a non-impositional tone. Together, the two imperatives articulate a cooperative ethics of communication, emphasizing that moral politeness extends beyond interpersonal courtesy to collective accountability. Similarly, “فَاجْمَعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ” (10:71) — “Then resolve upon your plan and gather your decision” — exemplifies a strategic directive rooted in institutional and deliberative discourse. The imperative “اجمعوا” (gather/unite) performs an organizational speech act, urging interlocutors to act cohesively and decisively. Pragmatically, this directive demonstrates cooperative politeness rather than confrontation: it encourages unity of purpose and clarity of intention while implicitly challenging opponents to act consistently with their beliefs. Within the framework of Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management, the verse negotiates face and sociality rights—it calls for collective coherence without dismissing the interlocutors' rational agency. Commands encouraging cooperation may reflect **internal** discipline where self-interest must be curbed, and **vertical** politeness where collective action is coordinated through discursively organised instruction.

4.1.5. Imperatives of Justice in Social Relations

16. "فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ" (4:135) – “So judge between the people in truth and do not follow desire.”
17. "فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ" (38:22) – “So judge between us with truth, and treat us not with injustice.”

These are institutional politeness imperatives that ensure impartiality and fairness in judgment. The verse “فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ” (4:135) — “So judge between the people in truth and do not follow desire” — functions as a judicial directive that constrains personal bias and ensures equitable

treatment. Pragmatically, it represents a face-preserving act in the domain of institutional authority: the addressee (a judge, leader, or decision-maker) is urged to perform decisions that uphold social harmony and protect the moral “face” of all parties involved. The negative clause “ولا تتبع الهوى” — “do not follow desire” — acts as a preventive politeness device, guarding against favoritism or emotional influence that may threaten the public’s perception of fairness. Within Brown and Levinson’s (1987) framework, this imperative minimizes potential face-threatening acts inherent in hierarchical judgment by embedding the directive in moral universality rather than personal power. Similarly, “وأوفوا بالعهد” (17:34) — “Fulfill every commitment” represents imperatives that promote trust-building and social credibility, thus preserving interlocutors’ face needs in formal transactions.

4.1.6. Imperatives in Family and Gender Relations

18. “وَلَا تَمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتُدُوا” (2:231) – “And do not hold onto them [wives] for injury in order to transgress.”
19. “مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ... وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ” (2:241) – “Let them benefit [the divorced women a provision that is fair and just.”
20. “إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ” (28:27) – “I want to give you in marriage one of these two daughters.”
21. “اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ” (28:26) – “Hire him, for the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.”

The Qur’ānic imperatives in this cluster function as regulatory, protective, and restorative acts that promote justice and moral accountability in family relations. The prohibition “وَلَا تَمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتُدُوا” (2:231) prevents the misuse of legal authority and operates as a negative politeness strategy, safeguarding the vulnerable “face” of women. The terms “ضِرَارًا” and “لِّتَعْتُدُوا” highlight intentional harm and reinforce ethical restraint within marital contexts. Similarly, “مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ... وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ” (2:241) transforms financial obligation toward divorced women into an act of positive politeness, linking generosity to fairness through “بِالْمَعْرُوفِ.” This reframes divorce not as conflict but as an opportunity for dignity and moral grace. In “إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ” (28:27), the direct “I want” constitutes a potentially face-threatening act, yet the provision of choice — “one of these two daughters” — mitigates imposition and aligns with negative politeness by preserving autonomy. Likewise, “الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ... اسْتَأْجِرْهُ” (28:26) expresses admiration indirectly through evaluative description rather than explicit praise, functioning as a hinting strategy that maintains modesty and social propriety. Collectively, these imperatives

show how Qur’ānic discourse shapes ethical pragmatics in gender and family interactions. The directives are not coercive commands but morally charged guidance that protects dignity, promotes fairness, and humanizes authority, embodying a divine model of relational politeness grounded in responsibility and compassion.

4.1.7. Imperatives of Discursive Etiquette and Verification

22. “فَتَّبِعُوا” (49:6) – “So verify [the news].”
23. “وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمًا” (17:36) – “Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.”

The Qur’ānic concept of discursive etiquette parallels *adab al-kalām*, regulating how individuals speak, verify, and transmit information. Unlike ordinary politeness, this form of etiquette governs truth management—when to investigate, when to speak, and when silence is required. The imperative “فَتَّبِعُوا” (49:6) instructs verification before communication, functioning as both negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) by preventing harm to others’ face, and aligning with Leech’s Tact Maxim through epistemic restraint. In contrast, “وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمًا” (17:36) prohibits epistemic overreach, mandating self-limitation and caution against asserting or pursuing what one does not know. These commands establish ethical boundaries for speech acts, determining when speaking is permissible and when withholding judgment becomes morally required. They construct a framework of epistemic etiquette, where responsibility for truth, verification, and fairness becomes essential to respectful communication and communal dignity.

“فَتَّبِعُوا” encourages cooperative truth-checking, while “وَلَا تَقْفُ” enforces intellectual humility—both protecting what may be called the “epistemic face”: one’s moral credibility in communication. Because they safeguard truth, justice, and social harmony, scholars view these imperatives as expressions of ethical pragmatics rather than mere procedural politeness. Thus, Qur’ānic discourse frames speech as an act of moral accountability, in which knowledge, restraint, and verification are inseparable from respectful and responsible communication.

4.1.8. Imperatives of Gratitude and Humility

24. “أَعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا” (38:43) – “Work, O family of David, in gratitude.”
25. “فَلَنْ كُلُّ يَعْْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ” (17:84) – “Say, each works according to his own manner.”

The imperatives “أَعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا” (Work, O family of David, in gratitude, 38:13) and “فَلَنْ كُلُّ يَعْْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ” (Say, each works according to his own

manner, 17:84) exemplify virtue-oriented or voluntary politeness in Qur'ānic discourse. The first imperative transforms duty into gratitude-based relational work—a call to act through humility and appreciation rather than obligation. Pragmatically, it enacts positive politeness by aligning divine command with shared moral identity (“O family of David”) and by framing gratitude as an inner disposition rather than external compliance. The second verse, “each works according to his own manner,” introduces meta-discursive politeness that acknowledges diversity and moral autonomy. It operates as negative politeness by respecting individuality and softening potential doctrinal confrontations through the recognition of differences. Together with the forgiveness directive “فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا” (Pardon and overlook, 2:109), these verses model supererogatory politeness—a moral surplus that transcends obligation and restores harmony through empathy and forbearance.

These relational-work imperatives articulate a multi-layered Qur'ānic framework of moral politeness: one that protects rights, promotes solidarity, restrains conflict, and embeds respect in ethical responsibility. Gratitude, tolerance, and forgiveness function as interactional virtues that reconfigure facework into moral facework, transforming directives into identity-forming invitations. While Brown and Levinson (1987) conceptualize politeness as strategic face-management and Leech (2014) as cooperative maxims, the Qur'ān broadens the frame into a moral-pragmatic paradigm—a vision of politeness toward virtue, truth, and community, not merely toward interlocutors.

4.2. Discursive Framing

In the context of this study, the concept of Discursive Framing in Politeness refers to the way Qur'ānic discourse guides speakers not only in what should or should not be said, but also in how it should be expressed — in terms of linguistic structure, tone, and ethical orientation. Through divine imperatives that instruct believers in both modes of speech and principles of restraint, the Qur'ān establishes a communicative model grounded in social appropriateness, relational sensitivity, and spiritual responsibility. This type of framing transcends the semantic level of language to operate at a meta-pragmatic level, where politeness is embodied in the very manner of expression — whether through gentleness, humility, or moderation in speech. Accordingly, as analyzed in this study, discursive framing reveals how Qur'ānic imperatives contribute to the construction of politeness as a moral act of discourse, one that regulates human interaction not merely through strategic politeness, but through an inherent ethical intentionality embedded in divine

communication.

4.2.1. Framing Speech Through Kindness and Gentleness

26. “فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا” (17:23) – “So speak to them a gentle word.”
27. “فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا” (20:44) – “And speak to him with gentle speech.”
27. “وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا” (5:4) – “And speak to them a word of appropriate kindness.”
29. “وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا” (2:83) – “And speak kindly to people.”
30. “وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ” (17:53) – “And tell My servants to say that which is best.”

These imperatives—“speak a gentle word” (17:23), “speak with gentle speech” (20:44), “speak an appropriate word” (4:5), “speak kindly to people” (2:83), and “say that which is best” (17:53)—function as framing acts that regulate how one should speak. By pairing *qul/qūlū* with moral descriptors such as *karīm*, *layyin*, *ma'rūf*, *ḥusn*, and *aḥsan*, the Qur'ān encodes an ethical stance directly into the command.

While Brown and Levinson view politeness as strategic face management and Leech as interpersonal cooperation, the Qur'ānic imperatives transcend both models by embedding politeness in moral intentionality. Gentle speech (*layyin*), noble speech (*karīm*), and kind speech (*ma'rūf*, *ḥusn*) are not surface strategies but virtue-infused directives that constitute what this study terms ethical pragmatics. In this paradigm, speech framing becomes moral framing: the form of communication reflects the speaker's ethical disposition and spiritual awareness. Thus, Qur'ānic politeness is not simply a matter of managing face—it is a form of face sanctification, where speech becomes an act of worship (*'ibāda lughawīyya*), affirming the divine mandate of mercy in communication. Collectively, these verses construct a hierarchy of gentleness: Together they delineate a Qur'ānic model of communicative virtue—a politeness system that integrates form, tone, and ethics. This system reframes the purpose of politeness from mere social negotiation to moral elevation, teaching that language itself can embody mercy, justice, and respect.

4.2.2. Framing Speech Through Avoidance of Disrespect

31. “فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمْ أُفٍّ” (17:23) – “So do not say to them [your parents] ‘uff’.”
32. “لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنًا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا” (2:104) – “Do not say ‘Ra'ina,’ but say instead ‘Unzurna.’”

Although Qur'ānic imperatives are

grammatically articulated as strict directives, their pragmatic essence lies not in coercion but in didactic refinement. They appear to prohibit — “Do not say” — yet their deeper function is formative, aiming to cultivate moral awareness in communication. This duality reveals a uniquely Qur’ānic pattern: the imperative form as a pedagogical frame for politeness, one that reshapes the ethics of discourse through divine instruction. Thus, the linguistic surface of obligation conceals a pragmatic invitation to adopt a more refined, relationally aware communicative style. The prohibition “فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَفٍّ” epitomizes what can be called preventive politeness, a moral pre-emption of face-threats before they occur. The interjection “uff”, minimal in form, is maximal in implication: it signals emotional impatience and constitutes a micro-act of impoliteness in Culpeper’s (2011) sense, where small cues can perform significant face damage. The Qur’ānic avoidance of even this particle demonstrates an acute sensitivity to interactional morality, where the smallest violation of tone undermines parental dignity. Here, politeness operates as restraint-in-action: the management of emotion and respect through silence, tone control, and lexical awareness. In Leech’s (2014) terms, this reflects the Tact and Modesty Maxims, while in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model it aligns with negative politeness, as it minimizes potential imposition and protects relational harmony. The command “لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنًا” extends politeness into the lexical-discursive domain. While “Ra’ina” is linguistically neutral, it had accrued derisive connotations in certain social contexts. By substituting it with “Unzurna”, the Qur’ān performs a reframing act, a deliberate recalibration of expression to avoid potential impoliteness. This exemplifies Culpeper’s (2011) concept of impoliteness triggers, where specific lexical items may carry socially or contextually harmful implications, even if unintended. The Qur’ānic corrective replaces ambiguity with transparency, converting a possible face-threat into a face-enhancing alternative. In pragmatic terms, this reflects positive politeness (showing consideration) and discursive sensitivity, where linguistic choice itself becomes an instrument of ethical care.

4.2.3. Framing speech through humility and non-pretentiousness

33. "قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ" (38:86) – “Say, I do not ask of you for it any reward, nor am I of the pretentious.”
34. "وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكَ غَدًا" (18:23) – “And never say of anything, ‘Indeed, I will do that tomorrow’.”

Both verses articulate an ethics of response

guiding how speakers should frame their answers when questioned, challenged, or expected to express intentions. In Q.38:86, the Prophet is instructed to respond with sincerity and detachment from material or rhetorical gain: “I do not ask of you any reward.” The crucial clause follows this “nor am I of the pretentious,” which explicitly rejects affectation and artificial eloquence. The verse, therefore, establishes a model for authentic, unpretentious answering speech grounded in integrity rather than persuasion. In Leech’s (2014) framework, it embodies the Modesty Maxim, which involves suppressing self-praise and aligning with ethical transparency—speech that seeks truth rather than making a good impression. Similarly, Q.18:23 regulates forward-looking assertions, forbidding speakers from making overconfident claims about future actions without invoking divine will. Together, these imperatives form a meta-pragmatic system of humility in answering—a discipline of self-restraint that keeps truthfulness and sincerity at the heart of communication. In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) terms, these imperatives enact both negative politeness (avoiding imposition and over-assertion) and positive politeness (building rapport through sincerity). The Prophet’s reply, “I do not as Qur’ānic model here transforms politeness from strategic face management into ethical sincerity—communication purified of self-interest and pretension.

4.2.4. Framing Speech Through Gratitude and Recognition

35. "أَعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا" (34:13) – “Work, O family of David, in gratitude.”
36. "وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ" (18:39) – “And if you had entered your garden and said, ‘What Allah has willed has occurred; there is no power except in Allah.’”

These imperatives frame politeness through gratitude and humility, ensuring that discourse acknowledges divine agency rather than centering the ego. This reflects Approbation and Agreement Maxims in Leech’s framework. The directive “أَعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا” (34:13) – “Work, O family of David, in gratitude” frames not only action but the accompanying discourse of thankfulness. Likewise, “وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ” (18:39) – “And if you had entered your garden and said, ‘What Allah has willed [has occurred]’” encourages attributive speech acts that acknowledge divine agency rather than personal pride. These imperatives frame politeness as rooted in gratitude, aligning with both the Approbation and Agreement Maxims (Leech, 2014).

4.2.5. Framing speech for clarity and comprehensibility

37. "وَإِخْلُصْ عَقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي، بِفَقْهُوا قَوْلِي" (20:27) – “Unloosen

the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech.”

Moses' prayer highlights clarity as a politeness strategy: intelligible speech avoids miscommunication, which might otherwise threaten rapport. This corresponds to Spencer-Oatey's (2008) emphasis on rapport management through clarity. Moses' prayer " *وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي،* " (20:27) - "Unloosen the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech" frames clarity as a prerequisite for successful politeness. Miscommunication risks threatening face; therefore, the imperative highlights intelligibility as a discursive resource of politeness. This resonates with Spencer-Oatey's (2008) concept of rapport management, where clarity safeguards mutual understanding and reduces relational strain. Prayers for clarity combine internal recognition of human limitation with vertical aims of producing intelligible, ethically framed speech.

4.2.6. Framing speech through hope and discursive softening

38. " *وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَن يَهْدِيَنِّي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَا رَشَدًا.* " (18:24) - "And say, 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to nearer than this to right conduct.'"

39. " *فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِّي خَيْرًا مِّن جَنَّتِكَ.* " (18:36) - "Perhaps my Lord will give me something better than your garden."

From the surface level, the use of hedges such as 'asā ("perhaps") in these verses operates as divine guidance on how humans should linguistically position themselves before God, expressing humility, uncertainty, and dependence on divine will. This represents what might be termed vertical politeness, a pragmatic recognition of epistemic limitation in addressing the divine. At the same time, these hedges function horizontally in social interaction as hinting or mitigating strategies that enable speakers to project optimism without arrogance. In " *فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِّي خَيْرًا مِّن جَنَّتِكَ* " ("Perhaps my Lord will give me something better than your garden"), the speaker balances confidence and humility, assuring others of hope and faith while avoiding overt rivalry. This double-layered politeness creates a discursive equilibrium between reassurance and restraint, transforming competition into moral persuasion. In pragmatic terms, the hedge 'asā acts as a softener of assertive force, serving both as an epistemic mitigator (reducing the claim's certainty) and a persuasive device (enhancing acceptance). This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of negative politeness (mitigation of imposition) and Leech's (2014) Tact Maxim, which frames hedging as a moral strategy that respects others' autonomy while maintaining faith in divine justice. Thus, the

Qur'ānic hedge simultaneously conveys deference toward God and diplomatic assurance toward others a dual politeness that integrates the theological and interpersonal dimensions of communication. The Qur'ānic hedging particle 'asā ("perhaps") embodies vertical mitigation and internal humility. Both dimensions operate simultaneously but are applied only where clearly indicated.

4.3. Identity construction

The concept of identity construction in pragmatics and sociolinguistics refers to the ways individuals create, negotiate, and display their sense of self through language and interaction. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity as "the social positioning of self and other," emphasizing that identity is not a fixed attribute but is discursively constructed within a specific context. In politeness research, identity construction is central because linguistic choices — such as tone, mitigation, humility, or bodily comportment — frame how individuals are perceived by others and how they align themselves within social hierarchies. As Locher and Watts (2005) argue, relational work always entails identity work: through politeness strategies, speakers not only manage face but also construct identities of respect, humility, authority, or solidarity. In this study, Qur'anic imperatives are examined as identity-framing devices: they regulate how individuals construct themselves discursively, not only in their speech but also in their bodily conduct and communal self-presentation. By prescribing humility, moderation, and gratitude, the Qur'an frames politeness as a form of identity work that sustains both social harmony and ethical selfhood.

4.3.1. Framing the self through reliance and humility

40. " *وَاجْعَل لِّي مِن لَّدُنكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا.* " (17:80) - "And grant me, from Yourself, a supporter."

41. " *وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَن يَهْدِيَنِّي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَا رَشَدًا.* " (18:24) - "And say, 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to a more suitable course of action.'"

Both verses frame identity through humility and divine reliance. Instead of constructing the self as autonomous or authoritative, the speaker is instructed to frame discourse in ways that acknowledge human limitation and seek external support. From a politeness perspective, this aligns with negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which minimize imposition by acknowledging one's own insufficiency. The use of 'perhaps' (عسى) also functions as a mitigating device, softening assertiveness and projecting modesty, a discursive strategy consistent with Leech's (2014) Modesty Maxim.

4.3.2. Framing the self through modesty in conduct

42. "وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا" (17:37) – “And do not walk upon the earth exultantly.”

43. "وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ" (31:19) – “And be moderate in your walking.”

These imperatives frame self-presentation in public as an aspect of politeness. Walking arrogantly or dressing carelessly in communal worship is presented as socially disruptive and impolite, while moderation and adornment index humility, respect, and consideration for others. This reinforces the idea that politeness is not only a matter of words or tone, but also of bodily comportment, which projects identity and relational stance.

These verses extend politeness beyond verbal interaction into the discursive framing of bodily conduct. Walking exultantly (مرحًا) constructs an arrogant identity that threatens others' negative face by signaling superiority. In contrast, moderation in walking (أقصد) frames identity as balanced, approachable, and respectful. Both examples resonate with Brown & Levinson's notion of positive politeness, in which modest conduct reduces social distance, and with Leech's Approval Maxim, by minimizing self-aggrandizement and maximizing respect for others.

4.3.3. Embodied politeness through identity display

44. "خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ" (7:31) – “Take your adornment at every place of prostration.”

The verse “Take your adornment at every place of prostration” (7:31) positions adornment not as mere decoration but as a communicative act with social and ethical significance. Recent research by Gruber et al. (2024, p.1003) highlight that “clothing behavior remains an understudied research area within social psychology,” yet existing evidence consistently demonstrates its influence on impression formation and relational dynamics. Within communal settings, preparing one's appearance fosters a respectful public presence and signals consideration for others sharing the space. This aligns with Spencer-Oatey's (2008) view that visual and bodily conduct, alongside speech, forms a core component of rapport management. Contemporary psychological research reinforces this interpretation. Merino et al. (2024) show that appearance is closely tied to identity, self-worth, and perceived competence, and is often experienced as a social responsibility rather than a mere aesthetic choice. Social-behavioral studies further find that individuals elevate their appearance when in the company of those they respect, making

adornment an implicit politeness strategy that expresses appreciation and regard. Since communal acts unfold in an interactive environment between individuals and within the shared moral space, physical preparation and presentable appearance serve as markers of readiness, sincerity, and ethical commitment. In this sense, the Qur'anic directive anticipates what recent research confirms that is the appearance functions as an embodied communicative medium that shapes the emotional and moral climate of collective interaction. In this regard, the verse offers a concise model of embodied politeness, where outward appearance reflects inner ethical intention and contributes to creating a dignified and harmonious social space. By prescribing proper appearance in a communal context, the verse embeds politeness in identity construction at both the individual and group levels.

4.3.4. Framing the self through individual responsibility

45. "فَلَنْ كُلُّ يُعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ" (17:84) – “Say, ‘Each works according to his own manner.’”

This verse frames identity as shaped by individual tendencies and responsibility. From a politeness perspective, it discourages comparison or judgment, instead granting space for difference. This can be read as a discursive off-record strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987), where acknowledgment of diversity reduces potential face-threats in social evaluation. It also resonates with Leech's Agreement Maxim by affirming everyone's manner, the discourse mitigates conflict and frames difference respectfully.

In summary, Politeness emerges not only in *how* one addresses others but also in *how one constructs oneself* through discourse and action. When mapped against Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness strategies, Leech's (2014) politeness maxims, and Spencer-Oatey's (2008) notion of rapport management, the Qur'anic imperatives both align with and extend existing theories. They align in that humility, modesty, mitigation, and respect are recognized universal politeness strategies. They extend theory, however, by embedding these strategies into identity construction itself — guiding speakers to frame their words, their conduct, and their self-presentation in ways that foster social harmony and ethical responsibility.

4.4. Voice control

Politeness operates not only through wording but also through paralinguistic cues such as tone, pitch, volume, and rhythm that shape how speech is interpreted. Classic work by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) acknowledges delivery as central to face-management, while Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasizes the role of paralinguistic signals in

rapport and relational alignment. In this light, Qur'anic discourse frames voice control as a key politeness strategy. Commands to avoid harshness, refrain from raising the voice, and moderate one's tone position vocal behavior as part of ethical interaction. Here, politeness operates at the paralinguistic level: regulating the voice becomes as essential as choosing appropriate words, allowing the Qur'an to construct social harmony through disciplined, respectful vocal conduct.

4.4.1. moderation in voice as a politeness strategy

46. "وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا" (17:110) – "And do not raise your voice in prayer, nor be silent upon it, but seek a way between that."

This imperative frame politeness through balanced vocal expression. A voice that is too loud risks intrusion and ostentation, while one that is too soft undermines communicative clarity. By prescribing moderation, the Qur'an situates politeness as a matter of relational appropriateness. Theoretically, this reflects negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) which avoid imposition, and Leech's (2014) Tact Maxim, which emphasizes balance and consideration. The uniqueness lies in the fact that this is presented not as mere etiquette, but as divine advice, elevating moderation of voice to a principle of dignified communication.

4.4.2. Lowering the voice as a sign of respect

47. "وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ" (31:19) – "And lower your voice, for indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of the donkey."

While politeness research (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014) largely focuses on verbal strategies, paralinguistic cues like voice-control receive much less attention. What is notable in this verse is that the instruction to lower one's voice appears in the Qur'an as divine advice. This elevates prosodic restraint into a principle of interaction, where humility and moderation are not just social options but culturally framed as markers of respect. From a politeness perspective, lowering the voice minimizes potential face-threats by avoiding aggression or arrogance, while signaling deference. Although rarely emphasized in theoretical models, these imperatives suggest that prosodic humility can itself be interpreted as a politeness resource, broadening the scope of what counts as relational work.

4.4.3. Respectful address toward authority figures

48. "لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا" (24:63) – "Do not make the calling of the Messenger among yourselves like your calling of one

another."

49. "لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ" (49:2) – "Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet or speak aloud to him as you speak aloud to one another."

50. "إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ" (49:4) – "Indeed, those who call you from behind the chambers — most of them do not understand."

These verses extend politeness to hierarchical relations, framing respectful address as inseparable from volume and tone. Loudness and casualness in addressing the Prophet are explicitly prohibited. This aligns with negative politeness strategies (deference, acknowledging authority) and supports Spencer-Oatey's rapport management, where vocal deference maintains power balance and avoids relational damage. Once again, the significance lies in their framing as divine imperatives: Qur'anic discourse transforms what might otherwise be cultural etiquette into a timeless model of hierarchical politeness.

4.4.4. Voice as a tool of manipulation

51. "وَاسْتَفْزِرْ مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ" (17:64) – "And provoke through your voice whoever you can among them."

In contrast, this verse highlights how voice can function as a tool of manipulation. Here, the paralinguistic feature of voice is linked to provocation, temptation, and face-attack. Its inclusion demonstrates that voice-control is double-edged: it can build politeness and rapport, but also destroy it. Politeness theory typically focuses on strategies for reducing conflict, but this verse reminds us that paralinguistic cues can equally serve hostile discursive purposes when divorced from ethical restraint. In summary, These Qur'anic imperatives demonstrate that politeness operates not only in words but in the modulation of voice itself. Moderation, lowering the voice, and avoiding loudness in hierarchical settings all function as strategies of respect and relational harmony. Although politeness theory has largely foregrounded lexical and grammatical strategies, the Qur'an broadens the frame by treating voice-control as a divinely enjoined form of politeness. This shifts paralinguistic behavior from peripheral to central, embedding humility, deference, and restraint in both the social and spiritual dimensions of communication.

4.5. Gaze management

Gaze management refers to the regulation of eye contact, visual attention, and direction of gaze in interaction. In sociolinguistics and interactional pragmatics, gaze is considered a key paralinguistic cue that shapes how meaning and relationships are

negotiated. Kendon (1990) shows that gaze can indicate power, intimacy, attention, or avoidance, while Goffman (1967) emphasizes that visual conduct plays a crucial role in “face-work”, the ongoing effort to maintain dignity and respect in interaction. Within politeness theory, gaze management can be seen as part of relational work (Locher & Watts, 2005): speakers use their eyes not only to communicate but also to signal deference, modesty, or respect. For instance, prolonged gaze may impose on another’s negative face, while lowering or averting the eyes may protect face and indicate humility. Though Brown and Levinson (1987) do not explicitly theorize gaze as a politeness strategy, their concepts of negative politeness (avoidance of imposition) and positive politeness (showing attentiveness and solidarity) can be extended to include visual behavior. Hoffmann et al. (2024) report that both sustaining and receiving mutual eye contact during brief conversations are reliable predictors of subsequent positive evaluations between interlocutors. Importantly, this effect can arise without explicit intention, indicating that extended mutual gaze may inadvertently communicate heightened interpersonal interest or closeness, thereby inviting misinterpretation in contexts where such signaling is unintended. In the Qur’an, gaze management is highlighted in several imperatives that can be perceived as divine advice on how to use the eyes respectfully. By discouraging excessive or envious looking, and by instructing believers to lower their gaze, these verses frame visual restraint as an act of politeness, extending politeness theory beyond spoken language into embodied interaction.

4.5.1. Avoiding excessive gaze toward worldly prestige

52. "وَلَا تَعُدُّ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا" (18:28) – “And do not let your eyes pass beyond them, desiring the adornment of the worldly life.”

53. "وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ*" (15:88 / 17:47 variant) – “And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to some of them.”

The imperatives “Do not let your eyes pass beyond them” (18:28) and “Do not extend your eyes toward what We have given others” (15:88/17:47) are direct commands, yet they target body language and internal emotional regulation rather than spoken utterance. They discipline the gaze and the direction of attention, shaping the psychological stance from which speech emerges. Turning one’s eyes away from the humble faithful toward the affluent is framed as a communicative act, one that signals distance, dismissal, or misplaced valuation.

This interpretation aligns with contemporary

findings in psychology, neuroscience, and linguistic pragmatics, which demonstrate that internal emotional states are primary determinants of speech style. Research—including Barrett (2017)—shows that affect influences tone, lexical choice, sentence structure, politeness levels, and interactional patterns. Thus, regulating emotion is foundational to regulating discourse, which is precisely what these Qur’anic commands accomplish by controlling attention and desire before they manifest as language.

Pragmatically, these imperatives function as ethical attention-management strategies, preventing the roots of impoliteness identified by Culpeper (2011) such as envy, arrogance, and competitive hostility before they surface as harmful speech. By prohibiting the extension of the gaze, the verses block the earliest stages of destructive comparison and instead promote social justice and solidarity with those of lower status.

These verses outline a Qur’anic model of what may be called internal politeness, in which disciplining one’s gaze and emotions becomes a prerequisite for respectful communication. When the eyes and feelings are restrained, the tongue naturally follows producing speech grounded in humility and contentment rather than envy or rivalry.

4.5.2. Lowering the gaze to preserve dignity and respect

54. "قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ" (24:30) – “Say to the believing men to lower their gaze.”

55. "وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ" (24:31) — “and say to the believing women to lower their gaze.”

The Qur’anic command to “lower the gaze” (24:30–31) frames visual restraint as a core marker of modesty and interpersonal respect. In this context, ghadd al-baṣar can reasonably encompass avoiding staring or prolonged, intrusive gaze, behaviors that threaten negative face in sensitive gendered interactions. While gaze has been examined in relation to power and intimacy (Kendon, 1990), it is rarely theorized explicitly as a politeness strategy. The Qur’anic imperative broadens this terrain by elevating gaze-control to a form of paralinguistic politeness, where respect is communicated not only through words but through ethical management of visual behavior. Psychological research supports this interpretation: Heru (2003) demonstrates that inappropriate or prolonged gaze produces emotional discomfort and boundary violation, underscoring its interpersonal significance. Although Leech (2014) does not discuss gaze directly, visual restraint aligns conceptually with the Tact and Modesty Maxims, minimizing imposition and signaling humility.

Within Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, this corresponds to negative politeness through avoidance of intrusion. Thus, Qur'anic gaze-regulation extends politeness theory beyond verbal conduct to embodied etiquette, embedding ethical responsibility into everyday interaction.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Qur'anic imperatives expand the scope of existing politeness frameworks by systematically foregrounding the moral and multimodal dimensions of polite conduct. Although established politeness theories have already addressed face management, relational work, and context-sensitive interaction, the Qur'anic data reveals how these concerns are also articulated through prescriptive norms that regulate speech, tone, gaze, emotional orientation, and bodily comportment. In this sense, politeness remains an interactional and relational phenomenon, but it is also shaped by ethical guidance that precedes and orients social exchange.

The results do not challenge the theoretical foundations of politeness; rather, they recalibrate its analytical scope. Imperatives such as "lower your voice" and "lower your gaze" illustrate how multimodal behaviors function alongside verbal strategies as resources relevant to politeness. These directives do not contradict existing models but instead provide systematic evidence that embodied conduct and sensory regulation can operate as stable, norm-governed components of polite behavior, complementing interaction-focused approaches.

The study also contributes by proposing conceptual extensions aligned with current frameworks. *Internal politeness* refers to the regulation of attention and affects that supports self-restraint and reduces the likelihood of face-threatening conduct before it becomes interactionally salient. *Vertical politeness* addresses Qur'anic instructions that point to layers of deference and their indirect effects on interactional stance, power, and degree of assertiveness. These constructs do not replace existing categories; rather, they clarify how moral accountability and hierarchical orientation can shape politeness orientations already recognized in pragmatic theory.

The analysis of family- and gender-related

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imperatives further shows that politeness can function as a protective and restorative practice, particularly in socially sensitive contexts such as divorce, marriage, and employment. In these cases, authority is framed as ethical responsibility rather than coercive control, extending current discussions of power and politeness by grounding them in notions of justice, restraint, and care.

Methodologically, focusing on the imperative mood provided analytical coherence and highlighted how verbal and non-verbal directives operate as linguistic prescriptions for ethical communication. This approach complements interactional pragmatics by examining how politeness norms are articulated as standards to be upheld, not only as practices negotiated moment by moment in discourse.

In conclusion, Qur'anic imperatives enrich politeness theory by integrating moral accountability, multimodal regulation, and prescriptive orientation into established concerns with face, relational work, and social harmony. In doing so, the study broadens the explanatory reach of politeness theory and invites further cross-cultural and comparative research, particularly with sacred texts and communicative traditions grounded in ethical principles.

Declarations

Competing interests

The author declared no competing interests concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

Availability of data and materials

The manuscript contains all datasets generated and analyzed in the current study.

Acknowledgments

My deepest appreciation goes to Taibah University for its special support in providing access to the Saudi Digital Library and other related academic tools and services, which greatly facilitated the completion of this study.

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