

**LEGAL REGULATION OF MORALITY NORMS AND
STRENGTHENING IDEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE IN SOCIETY.**

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the necessity of legally regulating morality norms within society and its impact on ideological stability and the development of citizens' ideological (information-cultural) competence. It examines Uzbekistan's current legal framework — the 2023 revised Constitution, the Law “On the Prevention of Offenses,” the Law “On Public Civil Service” (ethical rules), and the Law “On Protecting Children from Information Harmful to Their Health” — which together establish legal protection of moral standards, safeguard public order, and enhance information security in the digital environment. Based on UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Policy and Strategy Guidelines, the paper proposes administrative-legal mechanisms to strengthen “ideological competence.” Practical recommendations include improving monitoring and enforcement of ethical codes, adopting a National MIL Strategy, integrating legal-educational and awareness measures, and strengthening preventive influence through digital platforms.*

Keywords: *morality norms; legal regulation; ideological competence; prevention; Media and Information Literacy (MIL); protection of children; public order; digital security.*

Introduction

In the context of global information flows and the digital environment, preserving moral norms in society requires not only social oversight but also an integrated system of legal regulation, prevention, and legal-educational measures. The 2023 revision of Uzbekistan's Constitution affirms the protection of human dignity, the family, the rights of the child, social solidarity, and public order as state priorities. These constitutional guarantees provide the normative foundation for the legal safeguarding of morality in the public sphere.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework: Law, Morality, and Ideological Competence.

The “Law–Morality” Balance.

Democratic states do not function as “moral police”; however, they do regulate morality in areas where it intersects with public safety, anti-discrimination, child protection, and professional ethics. Classic legal debates — particularly those between H. L. A. Hart and Patrick Devlin (*Law, Liberty and Morality; The Enforcement of Morals*) — demonstrate the tension between legal moralism and liberalism. In practice, an effective balance emerges where prevention, education, and public awareness complement statutory norms.

Understanding “Ideological Competence”.

“Ideological competence” refers to the capacity of citizens to critically assess information while remaining faithful to national and constitutional values, make decisions consistent with legal and ethical standards, and maintain resilience to destructive ideologies and disinformation. This concept aligns with the competencies outlined in UNESCO’s *Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Guidelines*, adapted to the national legal and cultural environment.

Uzbekistan’s Legal Framework for Regulating Morality Norms.

Constitutional Foundations.

The 2023 Constitution guarantees human dignity, morality, the rights of the child, freedom of information, and freedom of expression, while allowing these freedoms to be limited by law in the interests of public order, morality, and the protection of others’ rights. This establishes the constitutional balance between “morality, freedom, and order.”

Prevention of Offenses.

The Law “On the Prevention of Offenses” (2014, with subsequent amendments) provides a framework for preventive influence, including administrative oversight, legal-educational outreach, and special measures for minors. These mechanisms address early manifestations of behavior threatening public security and morality.

Professional Ethics in the Public Service.

The Law “On Public Civil Service” (2022) codifies obligations for civil servants to maintain professional and personal ethical conduct, with disciplinary liability for violations. Supplementary Cabinet of Ministers’ and departmental ethics rules support enforcement and institutionalize ethical governance.

Protecting Children from Harmful Information.

The Law “On Protecting Children from Information Harmful to Their Health” (2017) introduces content age classification, restrictions on harmful materials, and obligations for information distributors. The 2025 law on protecting children from violence further strengthens the legal environment to ensure moral and psychological safety in the digital sphere.

Ideological Threats and Building “Ideological Immunity” in the Digital Era.

Destructive Ideas, Disinformation, and Radicalization.

Preventive legal measures and the active participation of educational institutions, mass media, and civil society are critical in mitigating the risks of radicalization and destructive ideologies. Uzbekistan’s counter-extremism laws have undergone international expert review, focusing on balancing protective measures with freedom of speech.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as the Core of Ideological Competence.

UNESCO's MIL frameworks emphasize citizens' ability to find, evaluate, create, and responsibly share information. In 2024–2025, UNESCO and the European Union supported MIL seminars and training programs in Uzbekistan for public authorities and the general population, enhancing societal resilience to ideological manipulation.

Comparative Analysis and Scholarly Reflections:

Normative basis vs. enforcement gaps: While Uzbekistan has adopted preventive and child-protection laws and codified public service ethics, enforcement and performance measurement needs enhancements. Specifically, in monitoring behavioral standards and institutionalizing cooperation with media platforms.

Harmonization of national values and international standards: Constitutional guarantees of freedom and dignity align with UNESCO's MIL approaches to reinforce public morality and order. The “education–awareness–law” triad emerges as a guiding principle.

Need for civic participation and accountability: Public oversight and accountability mechanisms can complement disciplinary approaches in enforcing ethical standards for civil servants and in public communication.

Practical Recommendations and Policy Proposals.

Adoption of a National MIL Strategy and Roadmap.

Develop and implement a national MIL strategy with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives: integrating MIL into curricula, in-service training for public employees, public campaigns, and digital partnerships.

Strengthening Digital Child Protection Protocols.

Enhance enforcement of the 2017 Law on Harmful Information by introducing clear guidelines for age rating, parental control tools, and transparent accountability mechanisms for digital platforms.

Linking Professional Ethics to Performance Metrics.

Establish an “Ethics Index” for public service, measuring misconduct, conflict-of-interest prevention, and public service culture. Link ethical compliance to career progression and institutional ratings.

Integrating “Education–Awareness–Law” into Prevention.

Embed “ethical case studies” in schools, universities, local communities, and NGOs as part of offense prevention efforts. Promote experiential learning of moral-legal dilemmas.

Conclusion:

Legal regulation of morality norms plays a vital role in preserving a society’s moral cohesion and public order. Uzbekistan’s constitutional guarantees

and preventive laws on public ethics and child protection provide a robust legal basis for ideological stability. The next priority is to deeply integrate MIL-centered ideological competence into state policy, strengthen enforcement and monitoring, and expand civic partnership. This approach will fortify society's immunity to destructive ideologies and disinformation while upholding freedom and dignity.

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