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Archaeological Insights into the Angels' Knowledge of Human Corruption on Earth: An Analysis of Qur'an 2:30

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ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

Verse 2:30 of the Qur'an recounts a dialogue between God and the angels regarding the creation of humankind and their appointment as a caliph on Earth, during which the angels express concern about the potential for corruption and bloodshed by humans. This verse has historically been subject to various analyses by Muslim exegetes, who have generally expressed differing perspectives regarding the origin of the angels' knowledge about human corruption and bloodshed on Earth. Among these perspectives are the angels' awareness of the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfūz*), their predictions based on human nature, and their experience with the corruption of the jinn on Earth. This article employs a descriptive-analytical method to critically examine the various interpretations of Q. 2:30 offered by exegetes. After highlighting the weaknesses of each viewpoint, it proposes a hypothesis supported by archaeological evidence. Accordingly, the existence of violence and killing among early hominids (Neanderthals), referred to in Islamic traditions as *Nasnās*, could be the origin of such a notion among the angels. The article also examines the narratives related to this theory in terms of their *sanad* (chain of transmission) and meaning, demonstrating the reliability of the narrators and the relevance of their statements to the proposed claim.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and Archaeology, Angels, Neanderthal, Creation of human, *Nasnās*

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1. Introduction

The Qur'an's narrative of the creation of Adam, the angels prostrating before him, and Iblīs's arrogance towards the divine command_culminating in his expulsion from Heaven_is detailed in verses 30–39 of Surah al-Baqarah. Verse 30 specifically recounts God's announcement to the angels about appointing a *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on Earth, to which the angels respond with a question:

وَ إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً قَالُوْۤا اَنْ تَجْعَلَ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَ یَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَ نَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَ نُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (البقرة/30)

When your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on the earth," they said, "Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it, and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity?" He said, "Indeed I know what you do not know" (Q. 2:30).

The angels' question in this verse implies a prior awareness of the conduct that Adam's descendants would display. This has posed a significant interpretive challenge for Qur'anic exegetes: how could the angels have known, before the creation of humankind, that humans would spread corruption and bloodshed on Earth?

Archaeological evidence from prehistoric sites such as Krapina (Croatia) and Moula-Guercy (France) suggests that Neanderthals engaged in violent conflict, sometimes to the extent of killing and cannibalizing members of their own species (Renfrew & Morley 2009). Given the high degree of biological and behavioral similarity between Neanderthals and modern humans, it is plausible that such violent tendencies could form the basis of the angels' foreknowledge. This view gains further credibility in light of the shortcomings in other traditional interpretations offered by classical commentators.

Accordingly, this study pursues two primary objectives: first, it critically assesses the major exegetical explanations concerning the source of the angels' knowledge in Q. 2:30; second, it advances a new interpretive hypothesis_supported by both narrative and archaeological evidence_linking the documented violence among Neanderthals, often referred to in Islamic traditions as *Nasnās*, to the origins of that angelic knowledge.

2. Literature Review

Among the exegetes of the Qur'an, while Ṭantāwī may not have been the

first to highlight the scientific interpretation of the Qur'an, his *al-Jawāhir fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'an* stands as one of the most significant scientific commentaries of the Qur'an. In the introduction to this work, Ṭanṭāwī (2004) observes that the Qur'an contains approximately 750 verses addressing the marvels of the universe. He argues that divine revelation places greater emphasis on manifesting these cosmic signs than on legal injunctions, positing that future generations will continue to uncover and elucidate these wonders. As Ṭanṭāwī foresaw, modern advancements in the natural sciences have now made it more feasible than ever to analyze Qur'anic teachings in light of scientific discoveries. Consequently, numerous books and articles have explored the connections between the Qur'an and the natural sciences. Many scholars argue that a profound comprehension of certain Qur'anic verses can only be attained when exegetes incorporate contemporary scientific insights allowing interpretations that may have eluded earlier generations to come to light. One of the sciences that can facilitate a better understanding of the verses of the Qur'an is archaeology. As a branch of natural studies, archaeology examines historical artifacts to reconstruct human behavior in antiquity. While the *Encyclopedia Britannica* dates its formal emergence to the 19th century CE (Daniel 2019), some scholars credit Nabonidus, the sixth-century BCE Babylonian king, as the earliest archaeologist (Bahn 2012).

Numerous scholars have drawn upon archaeological research to produce exegetical works analyzing the Qur'an through this lens. A prominent early contribution to this field is Maurice Bucaille's (2003) pioneering work *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, which employs archaeological evidence particularly the discovery of Pharaoh's mummy to interpret Q. 10:92. Furthermore, recent scholarship has produced numerous studies exploring the intersection of Qur'anic texts and archaeological research (Yaseen 2011; Khanmoradi & Tavakoli 2022; Ahmad et al. 2022 Akhavanmoghadam & Bahrami 2023). Each of these works employs archaeological methodologies to examine and analyze Qur'anic narratives. However, Muslim commentaries concerning the angels' knowledge in Q. 2:30 predominantly adopt philosophical and narrative approaches, with insufficient consideration of archaeological evidence that could enhance our understanding of the verse.

3. Exegetical Approaches on Qur'an 2:30

Over the centuries, Qur'anic exegetes have proposed various interpretations to explain how the angels, prior to Adam's creation, knew that humankind would engage in corruption and bloodshed. These

approaches range from divine disclosure and analogy with the jinn's history to deductions based on human nature, each carrying distinct theological and logical implications.

3.1. *Divine Disclosure to the Angels*

Some early Shia and Sunni exegetes proposed that the angels' questioning protest following God's declaration about appointing a *khalīfah* on Earth stemmed from God having revealed to them the future conduct of Adam's descendants (Ibn Qutaybah 1991, 46; al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1:125). Proponents of this position argue that brevity in speech causes ambiguity about the origin of the angels' knowledge, and this understanding of the verse is in fact a kind of *ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretation), because it can only be accepted if one believes in the occurrence of brevity in speech. Accordingly, al-Ṭabarī (1992, 1:162) attributes this interpretative view to those inclined to *ta'wīl*, such as Qatādah and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

The reason for offering this interpretation is stated as follows: if God had not informed the angels of the corruption of the children of Adam, the angels would not have had the knowledge to raise this question. Since bloodshed and corruption represent future actions of Adam's progeny, awareness of these matters would constitute knowledge of the unseen. Consequently, questioning such events would imply access to this hidden knowledge. Given that angels, by their nature, do not possess independent knowledge of the unseen, this understanding necessitates that God, the Knower of the unseen, must have revealed this information to them. This argument finds explicit support in the work of al-Ṭūsī (2010, 1:132). To substantiate this interpretive approach and demonstrate the prevalence of ellipsis in the Arabic language, he cites poetic evidence from classical Arabic literature. Other commentators have suggested that the angels may have acquired this knowledge through God's permission to access the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) (al-Ālūsī 1994, 1:224).

3.1.1. *Critical Examination*

As al-Ṭabarī (1992, 1:132) notes, this interpretation is fundamentally recognized as *ta'wīl*. This is because such a meaning is not inferred from the plain understanding of the text, unless an unstated phrase is taken into account in the discourse. It is well established in exegetical principles that *ta'wīl* is only permissible when understanding the text is confronted with either rational or textual constraints. In other words, this understanding of the verse would hold validity if the angels' knowledge could only be explained through their possession of foreknowledge. This is indeed

consistent with the Qur'anic principle that angels possess no independent knowledge of the unseen: “*We have no knowledge except what You have taught us*” (Q. 2:32). In such a case, this understanding would be sound, as it would require God to have granted them this specific knowledge to enable them to raise such a question. However, if another possibility is also presented that is supported by appropriate evidence and indications, that does not require *ta'wīl*, assuming ellipsis or taking something as unstated would not be accepted, and there would be no justification for *ta'wīl*.

3.2. *The Jinn Precedent Theory*

An alternative interpretive possibility drawn from certain narrations suggests that the angels' questioning stemmed from their prior observation of the jinn's corruption on Earth before Adam's creation. According to this narrative, the jinn originally inhabited Earth but engaged in widespread corruption, prompting divine intervention. In response, God dispatched angels to combat them, leading to extensive bloodshed across Earth. Some traditions emphasize Iblīs' role during this conflict, as he commanded the celestial forces and ultimately subdued the jinn_a military success that subsequently became the foundation for his arrogance. Following this period of jinn-led corruption, God announced His intention to appoint a successor (*khalīfah*) on Earth. The angels, drawing direct parallels from their experience with the jinn, logically presumed this new creation would replicate similar patterns of corruption and bloodshed (al-Ṭabarī 1992, 1:158).

3.2.1. *Critical Examination*

While reliable empirical data about jinn remains inaccessible due to their metaphysical nature, their existence cannot be categorically denied, given explicit Qur'anic attestation. The Qur'an not only affirms the existence of jinn as distinct creatures alongside humans but also delineates their ontological composition. As explicitly stated:

He created man out of dry clay, like the potter's, and created the jinn out of a flame of a fire (Q. 55:14–15).

The radical dissimilarity in their primordial substances (clay versus fire) and corporeal structures suggests that physiological characteristics cannot be transposed between these species. Human biology necessitates blood circulation for survival_a feature intrinsically tied to our terrestrial composition. However, for a creature with fundamentally different ontological foundations, such biological attributes cannot be presupposed.

Consequently, reports in some commentaries describing bloodshed of jinn remain untenable. The aforementioned narratives posit that jinn preceded humans as Earth's sole inhabitants until their corruption triggered an angelic-jinn conflict involving terrestrial bloodshed. This raises critical questions: Can blood be attributed to metaphysical beings like jinn and angels? Given their immaterial nature, such accounts appear biologically implausible.

Moreover, the presumed angelic analogy between the jinn's historical corruption and humanity's potential future constitutes a categorical error. The angels, as pure intellects, would not employ such flawed reasoning. It seems that such a comparison is a kind of Iblīs' analogy, which the angels are free from. It was Iblīs who, with a flawed analogy between himself and Adam, caused himself to be distanced from divine mercy. Therefore, comparing jinn and humans and applying the actions of corrupt jinn to a new creature different from them is an irrelevant analogy.

3.3. Angels' Prediction Based on the Nature of Humanity

The existential nature of humanity and the social nature of human life lead to conflicts of interest among individuals. This particular nature of humankind inherently causes some to be self-seeking, resulting in the oppression of their fellow human beings, corruption, and even bloodshed as a natural consequence of the behavior of some individuals within this species. In some later commentaries, it has been mentioned that the angels, reflecting on the essence of human beings—which is a combination of rational and sensual faculties—predicted that this successor inhabiting the earth would engage in corruption and bloodshed in the future. This is because this creature, due to the sensual faculties within it, desires to achieve its individual desires on the one hand, and on the other hand, is unable to meet its needs without social life. Thus, future human civilization appears destined for corruption and bloodshed (Tabataba'i 1996, 1:115; Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 1:389).

In this interpretation, the angels' question stems from reflection on the human essence, composed of the faculties of anger and lust. The angels observed that such a being must reside in a place that is a realm of competition and conflicting interests. Therefore, this question is not surprising, because the nature of this creature and its place of habitation potentially lead to corruption and bloodshed.

3.3.1. *Critical Examination*

This precise prediction by the angels about the future of a creature with a new nature seems unlikely. According to this interpretive approach, the angels received divine revelation about encountering an entirely novel creature that is a composite of spiritual and physical dimensions—unlike either angels or jinn. Until that time, no human life had yet been taken, nor any blood spilled on Earth. This raises serious questions about how the angels could possibly articulate such specific predictions immediately following God's announcement about creating a successor.

Considering the verse in question, the corrupt nature of the new creature is regarded as certain by the angels, to the extent that it compelled them to inquire of God Almighty about the wisdom of creating such a corrupt successor. The verse in question is such that the angels have taken the occurrence of corruption on Earth as a foregone conclusion. Such definitive knowledge seems inconsistent with their complete lack of prior experience observing this new creature's behavior or its existential capacities. Therefore, the problem with this possibility is that the certainty implicit in the angels' question cannot stem from prediction and conjecture about the future of a being whose behavior they had no experience of.

3.4. *A Preferred Exegetical Approach*

Having critically examined the limitations of existing exegetical approaches regarding the source of the angels' knowledge about human corruption, this study now proposes an alternative interpretation grounded in both textual and archaeological evidence.

3.4.1. *Evidence from Islamic Traditions*

Several narratives and classical commentaries suggest that the human species was not the first creature to inhabit the Earth. Rather, other species of creatures had lived on Earth for many years before them. A particularly revealing narration in al-'Ayyāshī's Tafsīr records that someone asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (PBUH) whether the belief of the people that the age of the world is seven thousand years is correct. The Imam denies this and introduces the age of the Earth as much longer than they think, affirming long periods of the Earth's history. In another narrative, the reason for the angels' surprised question about the appointment of a *khalīfah* on Earth is explained by the occurrence of corruption on Earth by creatures before the creation of Adam (al-'Ayyāshī 1960, 1:29). In this narrative, the observation of corrupt creatures on Earth before the creation of man led to the question

among the angels as to how such a being could hold the position of God's vicegerent on Earth.

The aforementioned evidence suggests the plausible existence of intelligent beings inhabiting Earth prior to the creation of Adam. According to Shia narrations, human-like creatures referred to as *Nasnās* coexisted with jinn on Earth. These accounts describe an extended period during which jinn and *Nasnās* populated the Earth until their widespread corruption and violence prompted divine intervention. At this juncture, God commanded the angels to observe the terrestrial chaos caused by these beings. Witnessing their depravity, the angels beseeched God to eradicate this corrupt civilization. It was in this context that God announced His intention to establish a vicegerent on Earth (Ibn Bābawayh 1965, 1:105).

This narration has an authentic *sanad* (chain of transmission) that includes Ibn al-Walīd, al-Ṣaffār, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, and Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb, who are among the prominent figures of Shia tradition. Under the name ʿAmr ibn Abī al-Miqdām, al-Khoei (1992, 14:82) introduces him as one of the *thiqah* (trustworthy), well-known, and prolific narrators. Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī is also among the narrators whose trustworthiness has been established. Al-Khoei (1992, 4:344) considers him to be among the most eminent *thiqāt* (trustworthy narrators), citing the testimony of great authorities such as ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm and Shaykh al-Mufīd regarding Jābir's reliability. Furthermore, a narration with a *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) chain of transmission from Imam al-Ṣādiq has been reported by al-Kashshī (1983, 2:436), praising him and attesting to his truthfulness. Therefore, this narration, in terms of *sanad* authentication, is classified among the *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) narrations. It explicitly states that after the life of the jinn and *Nasnās* on Earth, God Almighty willed to create Adam. It also affirms that the divine will was related to the extinction of *Nasnās*, the purification of the Earth from them, and the relocation of the jinn to the air and to remote regions of the Earth. According to this narration, corruption and bloodshed on Earth were the result of the actions of the corrupt jinn and *Nasnās*.

3.4.2. Usage of the Term *Nasnās*

An examination of the usages attributed to the word *Nasnās* in religious texts reveals two primary meanings of the term. The first usage, according to a narration attributed to Imam Ḥusayn, understands *Nasnās* as referring to human beings who lacked correct beliefs and genuine human values (al-Rāzī 1999, 32:340; al-Thaʿālibī 2008, 1:156; al-Kulaynī 1987, 8:245–246; al-Kūfī 1990, p. 64). In the second usage, *Nasnās* refers to creatures that lived on Earth before the creation of Adam, becoming extinct prior to the advent of humankind. Al-Majlisī (1983, 11:106), citing al-Jawharī, defines

Nasnās as an animal resembling a human. *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, one of the oldest Arabic dictionaries, describes *Nasnās* as creatures similar in appearance to humans but not descended from the progeny of Adam (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 7:200). This meaning is also reflected in later dictionaries such as *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manzūr 1994, 6:232) and has been adopted by some commentators.

According to a report by ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (1984, 1:37), after the extinction of the *Nasnās* beings physically similar to humans, God Almighty intended to create man and place a caliph on Earth. The same narration, with more detail, has been transmitted by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī (1989, 35), with an authentic chain of transmission that includes Ibn Maḥbūb, Ibn Abī al-Miqdām, and Jābir al-Ju‘fī. This version provides more details about the *Nasnās*. The account begins with a question from Imam ‘Alī regarding the existence of creatures on Earth before Adam. After mentioning angels and jinn as spiritual creatures with the power of flight, the Imam speaks of the creation of a being lower in rank than the jinn, which unlike the previous two was not purely spiritual and did not possess the power of flight. The Imam identifies these creatures as *Nasnās*, describing them as spirit-body hybrids that consumed food and water. Though human-like in appearance, they were a distinct species from humans.

Based on the aforementioned points, it can be argued that contemplating human nature and observing the corrupt history of a similar being, called *Nasnās*, together provide a coherent explanation for the angels’ question. For this reason, although Tabataba’i (2011, 1:119) only mentions the third exegetical approach in interpreting the verse in question, after citing narrations regarding the existence of pre-Adamic creatures on Earth, he clarifies that such narrations do not contradict his proposed interpretation. Moreover, several other Shia commentators, relying on the aforementioned authentic narrations, have briefly mentioned the corruption caused by the jinn and *Nasnās* as the basis for the angels’ question (al-Shubbar 1986, 1:87; al-Burūjirdī 1995, 5:66; al-Balāghī 2007, 1:29).

However, this article does not rely solely on narrative evidence. Archaeological findings provide scientific support for the preferred interpretation. It can be argued that *Nasnās*, as a human-like creature, corresponds to what modern archaeologists and paleoanthropologists refer to as Neanderthals, with extensive archaeological evidence attesting to their existence and social behavior on Earth.

4. *Archaeological Evidence Regarding the Origin of the Angels' Knowledge*

Archaeologists confirm the existence of hominids before modern human. These creatures are referred to as *Nasnās* in Islamic traditions and, in academic circles, are known as Neanderthals. Neanderthals are said to have become extinct thousands of years ago and had many similarities to modern humans. Neanderthals inhabited a vast area of Europe and the regions around the Mediterranean Sea. The reason for naming this species "Neanderthal" is the discovery of their remains in 1856 in a cave located in the Neander Valley in Germany. It seems that Neanderthals, despite their robust skeletal structure, exhibited fully bipedal locomotion and walked completely upright, while possessing manual dexterity comparable to modern humans. They were cave dwellers, used fire, made stone tools and wooden spears for hunting animals, and cared for their sick and injured (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc 2006). Neanderthals typically had short lifespans, with the oldest known specimen reaching approximately 40 years of age (Rice & Pigliucci 2007).

Genomic analyses reveal a 99.5% genetic similarity between Neanderthals and modern humans. The average cranial capacity of Neanderthals was 1600 cc compared to the modern human average of approximately 1400 cc. Male Neanderthals measured approximately 162–168 cm in height, while females ranged between 150–155 cm, exhibiting a more robust physique compared to modern humans. In regard to cultural characteristics, archaeologists believe that Neanderthals had group living patterns and funerary practices that suggest a possible belief in an afterlife, as evidenced by their burial of the dead (Gahlawat 2018). It is generally believed that their extinction occurred approximately 30,000–40,000 years ago (Agustí & Rubio-Campillo 2017).

4.1. *Evidence of Violent Behavior among Neanderthals*

Archaeological discoveries from various prehistoric sites provide compelling evidence that Neanderthal life was not only marked by survival activities such as hunting and tool-making but also by episodes of interpersonal violence. Skeletal remains show clear signs of deliberate injury, intergroup conflict, and in some cases cannibalism. These findings suggest that violence and bloodshed were embedded within Neanderthal social dynamics, offering a plausible historical precedent for the angels' foreknowledge of similar behaviors in humankind.

4.1.1. Homicide

A cave in northern Spain contains remains that can be linked to Neanderthals. Among the bones found in this cave is a skull dating back approximately 430,000 years, representing one of the oldest pieces of evidence of murder in human history. Researchers examining this discovered skull identified two fractures on the forehead, suggesting that someone murdered the individual with two blows to the head, making him the first known murder victim (figure 1). Prior to the discovery of this skull, Shanidar 3 was among the oldest known remains of murdered Neanderthals. This Neanderthal, who lived about 50,000 years ago, had a split in his left ribs, indicating that he was likely killed by a spear (Sala et al. 2015).

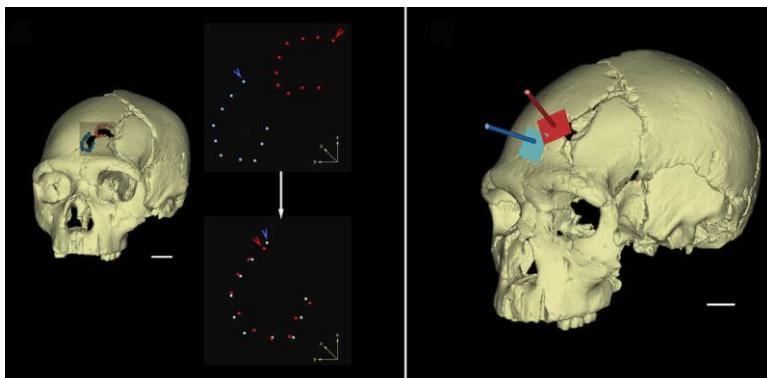


Figure 1. A skull dating back 430,000 years, unearthed in a cave in Spain, shows signs of intentional and fatal blunt force trauma (Sala et al. 2015).

4.1.2 Cannibalism

Krapina, a city in northern Croatia, is where the remains of 20 Neanderthals were discovered (figure 2). On these remains, cuts are visible on the long bones, suggesting that the flesh of these Neanderthals was removed from the bone after death. Furthermore, some of these bones are broken and fragmented, and others show signs of burning, raising the possibility that they were cooked (Renfrew & Morley 2009).

The Moula-Guercy cave in southeastern France was inhabited by Neanderthals around 100,000 years ago. The remains of six Neanderthals (two adults, two adolescents, and two children) have been discovered there, showing evidence of cannibalism (figure 3). Detailed examination of these remains indicates the detachment of cheek muscles from pediatric skulls, severing of tendons, and deliberate fracturing of crania to access brain matter.



Figure 2. Prehistoric site in a collapsed cave by the Krapinica River, revealing Neanderthal remains (Modzzak 2007).

In addition, the thigh muscles were removed, and in at least one case, the person's tongue was cut out. Notably, all the skulls and limb bones were broken, with only the hand and foot bones remaining intact. At the same time, none of the bones show signs of being gnawed by wild animals or burned (Renfrew & Morley 2009). Based on the evidence found, although the existence of cannibalism in Moula-Guercy is considered certain, whether this cannibalism was due to a lack of food resources or motivated by social factors is a question that requires further investigation (Defleur 1999).

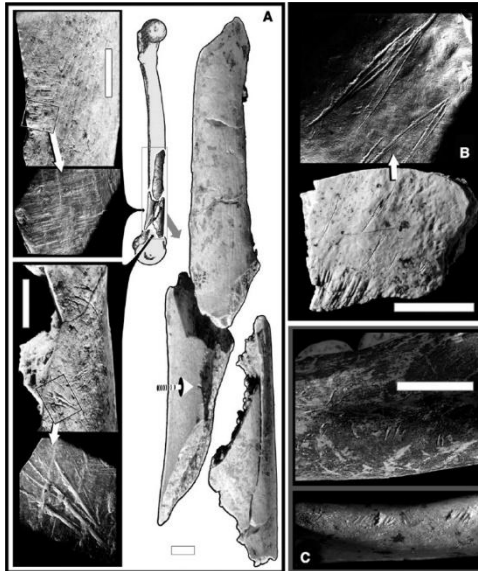


Figure 3. Scratches on the remains discovered from Neanderthals in Moula-Guercy (Defleur 1999).

Cut marks on Neanderthal bones found in Engis (Belgium), Goyet Caves (Belgium) (figure 4), Marillac (France), Combe-Grenal (France), and El Sidrón (Spain) also support the theory that the flesh was removed from the bones (Yustos & Terreros 2015). The presence of incomplete infant remains (especially those found in pits) raises the possibility that these bones belong to parts of Neanderthals' bodies that had previously been defleshed. An example is a skull belonging to an adolescent, referred to as "Engis 2," which shows cut marks from the removal of the scalp (Pettitt 2013).

It should also be noted that although there is evidence of cannibalism among Neanderthals, this behavior cannot be generalized to the entire Neanderthal population (Culotta 1999).

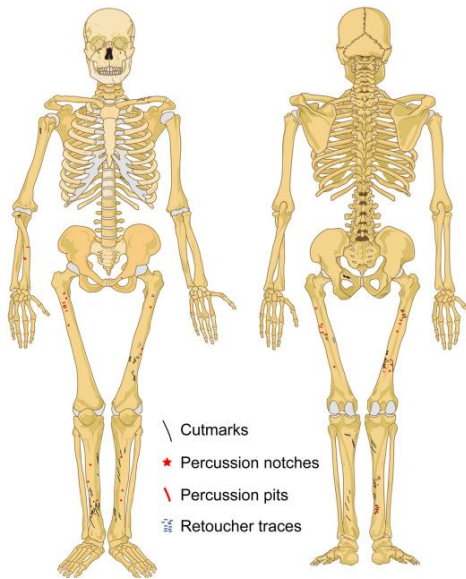


Figure 4. Modifications observed on Neanderthal remains discovered in Goyet Cave III (Belgium) (Rougier et al. 2016).

4.1.3. Motivated Violence: Revenge, Competition, and Resource Disputes

Neanderthals also shared motivations with modern humans for murder and conflict with their own kind. For example, much like the motivation behind the first murder in the lineage of Adam (the murder of Abel by Cain for revenge and to gain power and a better position), researchers believe that such a motivation can also be considered as a cause for the violence among Neanderthals. This implies that the divine angels, by observing and understanding what had occurred among Neanderthals before the creation

of Adam and Eve, were able to foresee corruption and bloodshed among humans. Before Cain, Neanderthals had also engaged in killing one another for revenge and to gain power in disputes over territory and resources. What is observed regarding the El Sidrón massacre can be considered an example of this. According to researchers' observations of the remains of these Neanderthals, the stones from which the weapons were made did not originate from that area, and the closest available source for those stones has been identified several miles away. According to these researchers, the weapons were probably obtained as a result of infiltration into other Neanderthal groups, which led those other groups to attack and massacre the El Sidrón Neanderthals in retaliation (Tattersall 2022).

Therefore, Neanderthals not only killed their own kind for food, but also for other reasons such as competition with their own kind. These were among the motivations behind such violence and bloodshed. Although their behavior was not as complex as that of modern humans, conflict and bloodshed can rightly be considered part of Neanderthal social behavior.

It is important to clarify that these archaeological findings cannot be attributed to modern humans descended from Prophet Adam. This is because, in addition to the anatomical differences between these Neanderthals and modern humans, they existed in distinct temporal periods. According to traditional belief, Prophet Adam and Eve lived around 6000 BCE (Khan 2000), while these archaeological findings date back tens of thousands of years before the time of Adam.

5. Conclusion

The question of how angels possessed foreknowledge of human corruption on Earth in Qur'an 2:30 has long posed an exegetical challenge for Qur'anic commentators. Throughout history, commentators have tried to provide answers to this question by offering various interpretations. Today, archaeological findings show that before the creation of Prophet Adam, Neanderthals, as hominids most similar to modern humans, lived on Earth. Their lives were filled with violence, bloodshed, and corruption. These archaeological findings confirm narratives that mention creatures called *Nasnās* as former inhabitants of the Earth. It seems that the angels, by observing the behavior of Neanderthals, concluded that if humans were to assume the caliphate on Earth, they might resort to corruption and bloodshed like their predecessors. The archaeological record of Neanderthal behavior strengthens this interpretative view and helps commentators provide a documented and evidence-based interpretation of this verse without the need for complex interpretations. This approach not only facilitates a better

understanding of Q. 2:30, but also demonstrates the Qur'an's remarkable consonance with contemporary scientific discoveries.

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The Role of Uplifted Mountains in the Hydrological Cycle: A Linguistic, Exegetical, and Geological Analysis of Qur'an 77:27

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ABSTRACT:

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The Holy Qur'an is a guide for humanity toward felicity in all eras, and at the same time, it contains precise scientific indications intended to guide scholars. This study, using a descriptive-analytical method and drawing upon library-based sources, examines one such scientific indication in verse 27 of Sura al-Mursalāt. This verse addresses the conditions and characteristics of water storage in elevated mountains for the benefit of human populations dwelling in foothills and plains. The data collected for this study were categorized into two groups: Qur'anic and scientific. The Qur'anic data were extracted from both classical and contemporary exegetical sources, while the scientific data were derived from academic articles in the fields of geography and geology. In the first step, five key terms *ja'alnā*, *rawāsī*, *shāmikhāt*, *asqaynākum*, and *furāt* were subjected to etymological and semantic analysis. In the second step, scientific findings were compared with these exegetical insights. The results indicate that the Qur'an in this verse alludes to the hydrological cycle, specifically the movement of water from high elevations on the Earth's surface toward foothills and plains. Scientific findings clarify the significance of God's designation of "uplifted mountains" as the primary source of water for humanity. This significance lies in two main aspects: first, such mountains have a higher capacity than plains for receiving precipitation_ especially in

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the form of snow_which is generally more voluminous and less polluted; second, these mountains are more capable of storing water, enhancing its quality, and conveying it through surface and subterranean channels to consumer ecosystems, including vegetation, wildlife, and human settlements. In the absence of towering mountains, the global water cycle would be deficient and limited primarily to coastal regions. The results also indicated that the phrase *rawāsī shāmikhāt* reflects the Qur'an's explicit reference to a remarkable scientific fact: the gradual growth of mountains. This progressive uplift is today corroborated by findings from geology and geodesy in the major mountain ranges of the world.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and Geology, Scientific interpretation, Mountains in the Qur'an, *Rawāsī Shāmikhāt*.

1. Introduction

In addition to its guiding mission, the Holy Qur'an has a phenomenological perspective on nature. Throughout this book, natural elements such as the sky, earth, wind, rain, trees, and especially mountains are introduced not simply as creatures but as signs of creation and bearers of meaning, wisdom, and signs worthy of contemplation. Mountains have a special place in this conceptual system, and nearly thirty verses refer to them. One of the verses that concisely and rhetorically discusses the role of mountains in the natural and vital system of man is verse Q. 77:27:

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَامِخَاتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ مَاءً فُرَاتًا (المرسلات/27)

And set in it lofty [and] firm mountains, and given you agreeable water to drink (Q. 77:27).

This verse discusses, on the one hand, the geological structure of the mountains, and on the other hand, the quality and method of water supply. It places two essential elements, including high mountains and fresh water, side by side in a rhetorical connection. The syntactic composition of this verse and its conceptual order suggest the possibility that there is a purposeful connection between the creation of mountains and the provision of drinking water for humans. The use of verbs such as *ja'alnā* and *asqaynākum* alongside the two terms *rawāsī shāmikhāt* and *mā'an furātān* shows that the Qur'an in this verse uses language that is used not only to describe phenomena, but also to draw a meaningful mechanism between them.

To date, numerous studies have been conducted at the intersection of Qur'anic exegesis and the natural sciences to elucidate the relationship between Qur'anic statements and contemporary scientific findings. For example, Barati (2022) directly provided a scientific interpretation of the

motion and role of mountains in his reading of verse Q. 27:88, attempting to offer a geoscientific reading of mountainous terminology in the Qur'anic text. In parallel, Shojaie and Mazaheri Tehrani (2022), in a broader study, examined how the Qur'anic account of the creation of the cosmos corresponds with scientific models and demonstrated that interdisciplinary approaches can open new horizons for understanding religious texts. Likewise, the research by Zare et al. (2023) provides an example of using scientific Qur'anic exegesis to reinterpret Qur'anic injunctions and recommendations concerning public-health and environmental issues. Despite the extensive literature on scientific interpretation of the Qur'an, many verses _ such as Q. 77:27 _ have received relatively little detailed scientific and exegetical attention. The present study aims to fill this scholarly gap.

The main question of this research is how the relationship between high mountains and the supply of fresh water is analyzed in verse Q. 77:27, in the light of contemporary scientific data and Qur'anic interpretations. To answer this question, this article examines five key words of the verse using an interdisciplinary and analytical approach: *ja'alnā*, *rawāsī*, *shāmikhāt*, *asqaynākum*, and *furāt*. These words are analyzed from a lexical and exegetical perspective, as well as from a geological, meteorological, and geographical perspective, to show how the Qur'an, with its specific linguistic structure, expresses concepts that are aligned with the natural mechanisms of the creation system _ especially the water cycle in mountains. This research aims to draw an example of the conceptual harmony of the text of revelation with the system of nature, through an interpretive and scientific analysis of the verse, in order to demonstrate the capacity of the language of revelation in reflecting the complex systems of creation.

2. Methodology

The current research method is descriptive-analytic, using library resources. The data for this research were prepared in two categories: Qur'anic and scientific _ the first from thirteen new and old exegetical sources, and the second from scientific sources in geography, climatology, and geology. In the first step, the explanations of the lexicographers and exegetes regarding the five key words of the verse were examined and summarized in tables based on meaning, interpretation, and source. In the second step, an attempt was made to compare the definite findings of geographers, climatologists, and geologists with the meanings of words, phrases, and expressions of the exegetes. For example, some exegetes interpret the verb *ja'ala*, beyond “to put” and “to create,” as “to make

available.” How does this sense relate to the role of mountain heights in the hydrological cycle, from the atmosphere to the ocean? Finally, the study synthesizes linguistic and scientific evidence to propose a coherent interpretation that assesses whether the Qur’anic language plausibly reflects observed geological and hydrological processes.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the words and phrases of the verse will be examined in sequence. Each term will first be analyzed from linguistic and exegetical perspectives, followed by a scientific analysis in the second part of each subsection.

3.1. *Ja ‘alnā*

3.1.1. *Lexical and Interpretive Analysis*

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991) considers *ja ‘ala* to be a general term that is broader than *fa ‘ala* and *ṣana ‘a*, as well as other related synonyms. The first meaning that al-Farāhīdī (1988) mentions for this verb is *ṣana ‘a*, which means “to make.” Muṣṭafawī (1989) states that the sense of making is only realized when it is applied in relation to the effects, concomitants, or properties of creation and those notions close to it _ that is, in senses that are subsequent to notions of “creation” and “origin.” Accordingly, the essential meaning of *ja ‘ala* is proximate to “adjusting to certain measurements” and “rendering something into a particular state after creation and formation. The scientific section will examine what measurable parameters and strategies regarding mountains are recognized today. Bostani Afram (1996) believes that in the word *ja ‘alnā*, the subject of the verb is “God” (*Allāh*), and he mentions the meanings “he took” and “he began.” Qayyim (1981) provides the meaning “to place something within someone’s reach; to place it near them.” Given the apparent relationship between the verb *ja ‘alnā* and mountains, the scientific section will examine whether mountains, according to modern science, make water accessible and available to humans.

3.1.2. *Scientific Analysis*

It appears that in the verse under consideration, the concept of “making available and close” refers not to atmospheric precipitation or water directly, but rather to mountains themselves. In other words, based on current scientific understanding, in most regions of the world, human access to mountains is essential for access to fresh and sustainable water resources. In

this regard, the atmospheric altitude at which raindrops form is several kilometers above sea level and the surface of flat lands and plains (Ahrens 2009). Therefore, as these droplets descend, they frequently coalesce along their path, growing larger; their fall speed also increases. Under these conditions, we envision the concept of “falling” in relation to raindrops over plains. However, in mountainous areas_especially elevated peaks that sometimes reach half or even two-thirds of that atmospheric height_this is not considered “falling.” At such altitudes, droplets and even snowflakes are smaller, descending slowly and actually settling on the slopes of the mountains. Upon penetrating the mountain ranges, this precipitation becomes available to downstream populations in the form of springs, rivers, and even recharged aquifers and wells.

3.2. *Rawāsī*

3.2.1. *Lexical and Interpretive Analysis*

The word *rawāsī* has been interpreted by some scholars as meaning “stable” and “steadfast” as shown in table 1. Others have conveyed the same meaning using analogies such as an anchor for a ship (Qayyim 1981). In other words, the dominant interpretive idea is that *rawāsī* refers to something fixed, whether it be mountains themselves or a mechanism for stabilizing a moving entity_such as an anchor stabilizing a ship.

Table 1. *Lexical and exegetical meaning of the Qur'anic term rawāsī*

Meaning	Reference
<i>Rawāsī</i> derives from the root R-S-W, which denotes firmness and stability.	Ibn Fāris 1984
The verb <i>rasā</i> , <i>yarsū</i> means to be fixed, stable, or firm.	Al-Rāghib 1991; Ibn Manzūr 1994
<i>Mirsāt</i> refers to a ship's anchor that is tied with a rope and keeps the ship immobile in the water.	Al-Farāhīdī 1988; Ibn Manzūr 1994
<i>Rāsīyah</i> means anchored	Qayyim 1981
<i>Rawāsī</i> is applied to firm and stable things, but due to frequent Qur'anic usage, it has become predominantly associated with mountains.	Abū Ḥayyān 1999; Ibn 'Āshūr 1999; al-Mughniyyah 2003
<i>Rawāsī</i> refers to firm and stable mountains.	al-Ṭūsī 2010.; al-Ṭabrisī 1993; Tabataba'i 1996; Abū Ḥayyān 1999; Abū 'Ubaydah 1961; Ibn Ma'rūf n.d.

3.2.2. *Scientific Analysis*

According to geological findings, mountains_especially high mountain ranges_have been forming and moving slowly on the Earth's mantle since

the Earth’s crust cooled atop the molten mantle. The speed of this movement for different mountain ranges varies from a few millimeters to a few centimeters per year (Mohajjal 2012). This speed is influenced by the velocity of the tectonic plates on either side of the mountain range. For example, Scotese (2015) estimates the displacement rate of the Nazca–India plate to be more than 5 mm per year. Therefore, the meaning of “steadfast” for mountains is more accurate than the meaning of “fixed.” If the commentators intend by “fixed” something firm and stable even if it undergoes movement then there is no contradiction with scientific knowledge.

3.3. *Shāmikhāt*

3.3.1. *Lexical and Interpretive Analysis*

Ibn Ma’rūf (n.d.) and al-Ṭūsī (2010) interpret *shāmikhāt* as “high,” and *shamakha* as “lifting,” respectively (see Table 2). Meanwhile, Samarra’i (2016) considers *shāmikhāt* to be related to *rawāsī*, but, in line with other similar expressions in the Qur’an, he proposes a different meaning. The interpretation he offers is worthy of reflection in the field of geological sciences and geodesy as we will see below.

Table 2. *Lexical and exegetical analysis of the Qur’anic term shāmikhāt*

Meaning	Reference
<i>Shāmikh</i> means tall, and <i>shawāmikh</i> is the plural form meaning elevated ones.	Ibn Ma’rūf n.d.
<i>Shamakha</i> means to raise one's nose out of arrogance.	Al-Ṭūsī 2010; Ibn Fāris 1984
<i>Shāmikhāt</i> is the sound plural of <i>shāmikh</i> and may convey a sense of emergence or becoming	Samarra'i 2016
The phrase <i>rawāsī Shāmikhāt</i> conveys meanings of ambiguity, specification, and magnification.	Al-Qummī al-Mashhadī 1745; al-Baydāwī 1292; al-Zamaksharī 1986; al-Ālūsī 1994; al-Mazhari 2004

After examining the terms *rawāsī* and *shāmikhāt* individually, we now turn to the analysis of these two terms in combination. In the use of the phrase *rawāsī shāmikhāt*, important syntactic and morphological points can be seen, which we discuss.

Shāmikhāt is the sound plural of *shāmikh* and an attributive adjective, while *rawāsī* is a broken plural. Samarra’i (2016) observes that the sound plural may convey a sense of emergence or becoming (*hudūth*), whereas the broken plural may evoke a sense of permanence (*thubūt*). Accordingly, the broken plural in the word *rawāsī* appears to indicate that the mountains

possessed the attribute of firmness from the outset of creation (despite scientific findings that they were initially small), whereas *shāmikhāt*, being a sound plural, implies the attribute of height is of later occurrence. In other words, the mountains were not erected at the moment of their creation but gradually acquired an erectness. Another Qur'anic example cited by Samarra'i (2016) is the phrase *wa qudūr rāsīyāt*, meaning fixed cauldrons in Q. 34:13. The sound plural *rāsīyāt* similarly implies that the cauldrons were first manufactured in workshops and afterward fixed in place on the ground _ that is, they were not fixed from the outset. In other words, the phrase *rawāsī shāmikhāt* could have appeared in the following alternative forms, each carrying meanings different from those currently held in geological science:

- *Rawāsī shawāmikh*: mountains that were mountains and were lofty from the very beginning, so that no sense of gradualness applies either to their being mountains or to their height. Geological science does not accept this and regards mountainousness as a property that developed gradually.
- *Rāsīyāt shāmikhāt*: mountains that were initially neither mountains nor lofty, with the properties of being mountains and being tall gradually coming to them. Geological science also rejects this sense, distinguishing mountains (regardless of their height) by their lithologic character (rock) from other surface prominences such as sand dunes. Today, on Iran's Makran coast and along the continuation of the Zagros range, small peaks resembling an infant's canines are observable. In other words, sand dunes do not gradually become mountains, and a sand dune _ even if taller than a mountain _ is not called a mountain.
- *Rāsīyāt shawāmikh*: elevations that were lofty from the outset but gradually became mountains. The implausibility of this meaning is even clearer compared with the two preceding meanings.

Another important point regarding this phrase is whether *rawāsī shāmikhāt* is definite (*ma'rifah*) or indefinite (*nakirah*). It is indefinite which implies several possible meanings:

- Implying obscurity/unknownhood (al-Qummī al-Mashhadī 1989; al-Baydāwī 1997): that is, there are things in these mountains that remain obscure and unknown to us.
- Implying differentiation_ a part of the whole (al-Zamakhsharī 2007): meaning not all the mountains on earth but some particular mountains are uplifted.
- Implying grandeur and elevation (al-Ālūsī 1994; al-Qummī al-

Mashhadī 1989; al-Bayḏāwī 1997). Al-Mazhari (2004) states that it depicts the massiveness and greatness of the mountains. Especially when a non-rational adjective is used in the plural, it tends to convey a sense of emphasis.

3.3.2. Scientific Analysis

We now turn to geological research regarding the uplift of mountains. Scientific studies confirm the concept of gradual elevation. Burbank (1992) describes the synergy between climatic and tectonic forces in mountain uplift, particularly in active zones such as the Himalayas. Global examples include: The uplift of the European Alps at a rate of 1 to 2.5 mm per year (Sternai et al. 2019), and the increasing elevation of the Colorado Plateau along the western edge of the Rocky Mountains in North America (Karlstrom et al. 2012). Iranian examples include: Uplift in the Eastern and Northeastern Alborz (Hollingsworth et al. 2010), especially in the Central Alborz (Ballato et al. 2008) (see Figure 1).

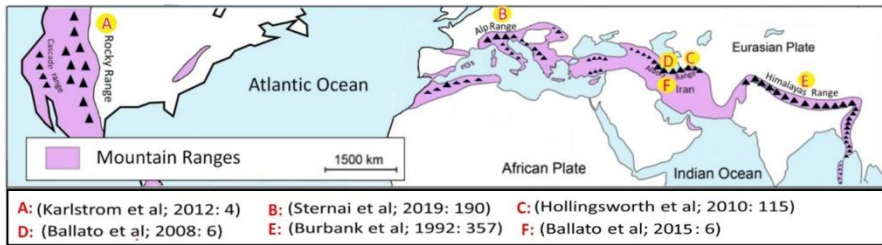


Figure 1. Gradual uplift of mountain ranges in the world

The elevation and loftiness of mountains, in connection with the water flowing from them, becomes significant from several perspectives. High mountain ranges_ especially those situated along the paths of rain-bearing winds_ receive greater amounts of atmospheric precipitation. Essentially, mountains are considered “water towers” in nature (Sadeghi 2002). The lofty Tibetan Plateau, situated between the borders of China and India, has been designated as the “Water Tower of the World” (Daming et al. 2004), with an elevation exceeding 8,000 meters. Many of the world’s great rivers originate from this exalted mountain system. The greater height of mountain ranges enables them to access higher cloud layers that contain crystals and granules of ice and snow. According to the research of Mahmoodi and Maleki (2001), in the high mountains of western Iran_ which are primarily composed of dolomitic limestone, known as karst_ the higher such rocks are situated along the slopes of these mountains, the more precipitation (and storage) they receive. In the research area of their study, namely the Bisotun

and Paraw mountains, numerous karstic depressions exist, each of which constitutes a small watershed. The area of these enclosed depressions is about 80 square kilometers. At these elevations, much of the atmospheric precipitation occurs in the form of snow, with evaporation being nearly negligible. As a result, most precipitation infiltrates into the ground and is stored. In general, precipitation received in highlands is characterized by the following features.

It is colder, and the lower temperature provides the condition for an increase in dissolved oxygen in the precipitation. Physical pollutants such as dust, chemical pollutants such as industrial contaminants, and even microbial pollutants are reduced at higher elevations. However, raindrops in the lower layers of the atmosphere and above certain industrial regions can undergo changes in pH, becoming acidic, with their pH falling below 5 units (Saediyan 2023). Likewise, in certain rocky and wave-battered coasts, raindrops can experience an increase in salinity. At higher elevations, precipitation is mostly in the form of snow, which unlike rain does not flow rapidly. Rather, it melts gradually, allowing more opportunity for infiltration into the mountain body.

3.4. *Asqaynākum*

3.4.1. *Lexical and Exegetical Analysis*

Table (3) presents the meanings provided by lexicographers and exegetes for the term *saqy*. Most of the meanings revolve around the axes of “giving to drink,” “irrigation,” and “providing water.” Among these, and in relation to the findings of modern science, the broader semantic scope of “provision of water” as given by al-Fīrūzābādī (1995) and Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād (1993) is especially notable.

Table 3. *Lexical and exegetical meaning of the Qur'anic Term saqy*

Meaning	Source
To quench thirst; bless (<i>barakah</i>)	Al-Jawāhirī 1984; Ibn Ma‘rūf n.d.
Irrigation and watering	Qayyim 1981
To provide water for someone	Al-Fīrūzābādī 1995
To provide water and to draw water from a well	Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād 1994

Concerning the term *saqy*, some significant point should be taken into account. Ordinarily, *siqāyah* (giving to drink) imply “water coming from

some place toward the drinker.” The Qur’an, in Q. 16:66, also employs the verb *saqā* for the act of making milk drinkable from the bellies of livestock: “[God] gives you to drink pure milk from what is in their bellies, between excrement and blood.” One of the implications of drinking liquids such as water is that the container or reservoir must be positioned higher. In the traditions, drinking water in the manner of animals—that is, by immersing the head into a container or into a pond—has been prohibited; rather, it is recommended to draw water and raise the cup toward the mouth. Furthermore, if the Qur’anic concept of “giving to drink” is taken in the sense of “providing,” the Qur’an repeatedly mentions the provision of water for humans and livestock with the phrase *wa anzalnā min al-samā’* (and We sent down from the sky). The one who performs *siqāyah* must necessarily have placed the water beforehand in a suitable container for storage, which—traditionally associated with the verbal noun *siqāyah*—was usually a waterskin. Related to this sense, al-Farāhīdī (1988) defined *al-siqā’* as a waterskin for [storing] water and milk.

3.4.2. Scientific Analysis

The term *saqy* in relation to elevated mountains can be understood in two dimensions. The first dimension is the descent of atmospheric precipitation from above the sky and onto the mountains, leading to infiltration. This dimension does not mean “to give water,” but rather “to prepare and provide water” for drinking. This interpretation accords with Muṣṭafawī’s (1989) explanation of Q. 28:23. The second dimension is the meaning of “watering and irrigation.” This understanding corresponds with Qayyim’s (1981) interpretation of *saqy*. Watering becomes easy and low-cost for the beneficiary—whether human or plant—when the water reservoir is located at a higher elevation, so that, in accordance with the principle of hydrostatic balance, the water within pipes and channels flows and circulates under sufficient pressure.

In Iran, (mountainous) aquifers within hard carbonate formations of the karstic limestone masses of the Zagros, Alborz, Kopet Dagh, Central Iran, and the coastal region of Fars are of great importance with respect to freshwater reserves. Karstic domains are significant even in southern Iran for their freshwater resources (Eshqi & Servati 2003). Figure (2) illustrates the body of the Moro Mountains in Azerbaijan, Iran. The highest part of this mountain system is its central section. The storage capacity of this catchment-dominant section—depicted in dark blue—has brought about the emergence of numerous springs, generally of the same level, in the lower terraces shown in lighter blue, thereby supplying the villages and farmlands of the foothills. It is as if these blue circles represent the multiple openings

of this lofty mountain which vividly perform the function of *asqaynākum*.

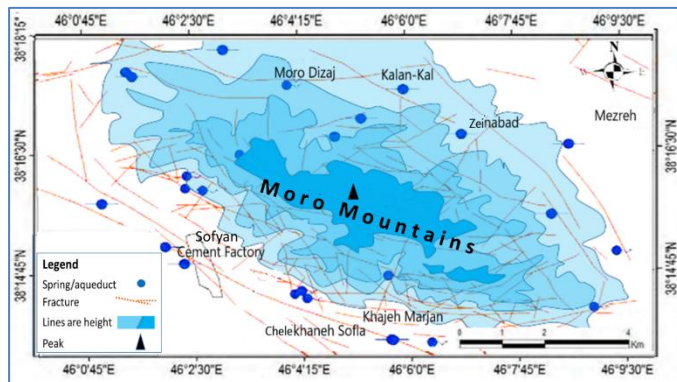


Figure 2. The link between mountain heights, water absorption, and the emergence of springs on the slopes of Moro Mountain in Azerbaijan

The natural rule for potable mountain springs is that their reservoir must be located at a higher elevation. The consequences of this higher location are twofold: The spring water, in any of the four forms gushing, bubbling, cascading, or overflowing persists simultaneously, or at least is replenished after withdrawal. The water becomes easily accessible to drinkers whether plants, animals, or humans who are generally situated downstream. This corresponds closely with the definition given by al-Fīrūzābādī (1995) for *al-isqā'*: “to provide a stream or water for someone.” Šāhib ibn ‘Abbād (1993) defines *al-isqā'* as “provision of water” in contrast with *al-istiqā'*, which denotes “drawing water from a well.”

As noted above, the word *al-siqā'* derived from the same root, originally denotes a waterskin used to store water and then make it available to users. From this perspective, one may say that uplifted mountain ranges (*rawāsī shāmikhāt*), which serve as reservoirs and make water accessible, resemble a waterskin. In every land, rainfall during the wet season descends upon the mountains and is stored in their permeable formations such as sedimentary strata. During the rest of the year, it issues gradually from the mouths of springs like the mouths of a waterskin continuing onward as streams and then rivers. Concerning the feature of permanent access to water, al-Rāghib (1996) explains *al-isqā'* as the provision of water in such a manner that a person can use it whenever they wish. Figure (3) illustrates the extent to which the body of mountain ranges resembles a waterskin along with their aquifers and water-bearing strata.

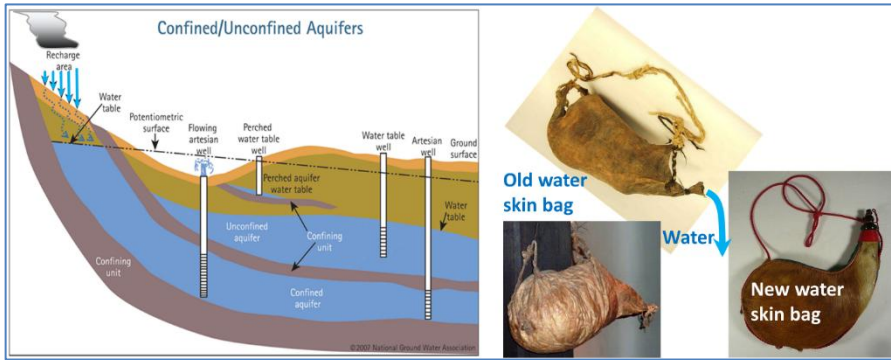


Figure 3. Similarity of the waterskin with the recharge profile of groundwater aquifers on the slopes of mountains from atmospheric precipitation

This similarity can be examined from various perspectives. The water inside a waterskin remains in a state of calm. In other words, the forms of falling, flowing, and torrenting water descending from the sky, running through valleys, penetrating mountain bodies, and settling within sedimentary formations are transformed, according to the slope of the aquifer, into a very slow movement. Through field research and interviews with elderly experiencers regarding the relationship between the quality of water and the environment of the waterskin, it was confirmed that the water inside the waterskin gradually improves in terms of both temperature and even palatability. In a clay jug containing water, mineral substances such as gypsum migrate to the outer surface, forming a white layer that gradually covers the external wall, which must be scrubbed off from time to time. Similarly, the water moving within the aquiferous layers of mountains improves in quality through the slow dissolution of beneficial elements and compounds. It should be noted that stones such as gypsum and salt, which can render water hard and saline, due to their greater solubility compared to other beneficial or neutral compounds, have been washed away from highlands over millions of years and carried into basins and deserts. For example, the accumulation of gypsum and salt deposits in Iran today related to hot and arid climates in the past appears in the form of domes, saline lakes, and deserts in the lowlands of central Iran, such as Lake Namak and Howz-e Soltān, as well as in the Khuzestan plain.

The water inside a waterskin, during its normal period of use, is secure from evaporation; likewise, water infiltrated into the body of mountains is entirely protected from the interference of evaporative processes. For this reason, one of the most significant criticisms leveled today against dam construction in countries with hot and arid climates, such as Iran, is the evaporation capacity of up to 3,000 millimeters per year from the surface of

reservoirs behind dams_ amounting to a loss of three million cubic meters of water annually (Sedaghat 2000). Just as a waterskin has an opening, so too the stored waters within the bodies of mountains emerge through four types of springs_ gushing, boiling up, trickling, and overflowing_ thus providing access for every thirsty creature and every beneficiary.

Moreover, *siqāyah* (the act of offering water to drink) entails prior will and consent. This feature becomes apparent when comparing the condition of “utilizing water from mountain springs and streams” with that of “utilizing water from wells or desalination facilities by the seashore.” It is as though springs and streams are open and expansive tables, inviting every passerby from afar toward themselves. By contrast, wells and similar installations remind one that humankind, through the exertion of labor and expenditure, has excavated them in order to raise water to the surface via various stages of temperature and pressure adjustment, or to render it suitable for use. Accordingly, every applicant for the utilization of such resources must bear costs or, at the very least, obtain permission.

3.5. *Mā'an Furātan*

3.5.1. *Lexical and exegetical analysis*

Mustafawī (1989) considered *furāt* a noun, arguing that in the Qur'an this term appears in contrast to *ujāj*. Most of the lexicons have interpreted this word as the Arabic expression *mā' adhb* which means fresh water (al-Farāhīdī 1988; Ibn Durayd 1988; Ibn Fāris 1984; al-Jawharī 1984; al-Rāghib 1991; Ibn Manzūr 1994; al-Fīrūzābādī 1995; Šāḥib ibn 'Abbād 1993; Qayyim 1981).

3.5.2. *Scientific Analysis*

Slope, elevation, and rock fractures are three influential factors in the formation of springs, such that most springs occur within a distance of less than 300 meters from fracture zones (Vafadar et al. 2015). For example, the Shemshak Formation in the body of Mount Moro, consisting of alternating layers of limestone and sandstone, contains the greatest abundance of springs. The next highest abundance of springs is found in alluvial terraces at the foothills, which are fed by units of hard formations. It should be noted that the variation in spring water is less than that of surface waters (Solaimani et al. 2013), and this may be one of the reasons for their palatability. In this regard, the change in well water_ from fresh to saline, and then from saline to bitter_ occurs with the depletion of fresh water reserves and the reaching of the cone of depression to the saline aquifer at

deeper levels. In mineral springs, various elements are found. For instance, in the Garab Spring (Haji Hashemi et al. 2019), the elements sodium, sulfur, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and silica were present in descending order of abundance.

4. Conclusion

In this study, the exegetical and scientific dimensions of five terms from the verse Q. 77:27 *ja'alnā, rawāsī, shāmikhāt, asqaynākum*, and *furāt* were analyzed and explicated. Based on the most recent findings in the sciences of geography, climatology, and geology, it was demonstrated that the elevation and height of mountains make infiltrated precipitation available to all plant, animal, and human communities downstream; this corresponds to the meaning of “making accessible” inherent in *ja'ala*. Numerous geological studies indicate the gradual uplift of mountains over several million years since their formation. Considering that the sound plural in Arabic can convey a sense of emergence or becoming, in the phrase *rawāsī shamikhāt* the use of the sound plural in the adjective *shamikhāt* for mountains may indicate the Qur'anic reference to the gradual growth of the mountains. The aquiferous layers within mountain bodies regarding their form, capacity, increase of beneficial minerals, and the mechanisms of springs and water-yielding rivers correspond to the semantic dimensions inherent in the root *saqy*. The purity and sweetness of most springs and rivers originating from highlands due to their being free of saline compounds such as salt, heavy elements such as lead, and pollutants of chemical or microbial origin; as well as their possession of dissolved oxygen and generally low temperature give meaning to the Qur'anic expression *mā'an furātan*.

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A Critical Analysis of the Jurisprudential Ruling on Insulting Religious Sanctities Based on Qur'anic Doctrine

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ABSTRACT:

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The Qur'an is the most fundamental and authentic source of the Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) and the primary reference for attaining the principles of Islam among all Muslims. Throughout the history of Islamic civilization, scholars have derived answers to many of their religious questions on diverse issues from the noble verses of the Qur'an. Within this framework, the Qur'anic verses have also served as the primary fountainhead of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), guiding the practical lives of devout Muslims. Nevertheless, it appears that certain opinions expressed in the corpus of *fiqh* literature are not fully aligned with the recommendations and guidance offered in the Qur'an. One such area of tension concerns the Qur'an's proposed model for dealing with those who show disrespect toward religious sanctities, which seems to be inconsistent with the prevailing jurisprudential approach.

In view of the importance of this issue, the present study adopts a problem-oriented approach and employs a descriptive-analytical method. It first elucidates the manner in which the Qur'an addresses this phenomenon and then, based on the Qur'anic model, critically evaluates the Shia jurisprudential opinions in light of these teachings. The findings indicate that the current jurisprudential approach is not capable of withstanding the unequivocal principles (*muhkamāt*) of the Qur'an or the practical conduct (*sīrah 'amalīyyah*) of the Prophet and Shia Imams. At the very least, this approach destabilizes the basis of the prevailing jurisprudential ruling and

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suggests the adoption of a perspective that maximizes the protection of human life and does not permit coercive measures except on the basis of definitive evidence.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Religious sanctities, Islamic law, Shia jurisprudence, Insult, Blasphemy, *sabb al-Nabi*, Human life protection.

1. Introduction

Muslim thinkers in general regardless of their diverse sects and beliefs are united in their agreement concerning the principal sources of legal deduction. The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are the two fundamental sources and pillars in deriving legal rulings. The difference that exists among the Islamic schools of thought in this regard lies in the method of deduction from the Qur'an and in the scope and extent of the *Sunnah*. The Noble Qur'an is not only the most important source of legislation but also the first reference to which one must turn for the deduction of divine rulings. Indeed, the criterion for assessing the authenticity of narratives is that they must not contradict the Qur'anic verses (al-Majlisī 1983, 2: 277; Jannati 1991). God says regarding the elucidative nature of the Qur'an:

We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things and as a guidance and mercy and good news for the Muslims (Q. 16:89).

Despite the fact that these statements are accepted by Muslim scholars in general, there is almost a consensus that the Qur'an, in practice, does not receive the attention it deserves in the process of legal deduction. Indeed, the message understood throughout Islamic history from verse 30 of Sūrah al-Furqān indicates the Prophet's complaint, which will be presented to God on the Day of Resurrection, lamenting the abandonment of this Great Book:

And the Apostle will say, "O my Lord! Indeed my people consigned this Qur'an to oblivion" (Q. 25:30).

Al-Ṭabrisī (1993, 7:293) interprets the abandonment (*mahjūrīyyah*) of the Qur'an as the neglect of referring to it. Tabataba'i (1996, 5: 276) asserts that if one examines the field of Islamic studies carefully, one will see that they have been organized in such a way that, in the process of becoming an expert, there is practically no need to refer to the Qur'an; indeed, one may even reach the rank of *ijtihād* without feeling any need to turn to the Qur'an. Motahhari (2009) expresses a similar concern, observing that even in the most sensitive religious institutions, if a person dedicates their life to the Qur'an, they will face innumerable difficulties. It is due to this neglect of the Qur'an that many scholars lack expertise in Qur'anic exegesis.

Among the prevalent fields of Islamic studies that have a deep

connection with the Qur'an, and whose engagement with the Qur'an has long been a subject of debate, is *fiqh*. It appears undeniable that the Qur'an, through its juridical verses (*āyāt al-aḥkām*), serves as a foundational and constitutive source for the field of *fiqh* (al-Zarkashī 1957, 2:130; Fāḍil al-Miqdād 1994, 1:5). Furthermore, even the scholars of principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) have often referred to the Qur'an to justify the validity of juristic sources such as reason (*‘aql*) and the authority of the narratives of the Prophet and Imams (Irawani 2002, 1:19; Tabataba'i Hakim 1997).

At the same time, as already noted, the idea has always existed that, in the process of legal deduction, the key role of the Qur'an has sometimes been neglected, while the *Sunnah* has been given a more prominent role. Based on this view and in light of the importance of the issue, the present paper examines one topic that has been addressed both in the Qur'an and in the written heritage of *fiqh*. Specifically, the issue of blasphemy is among those subjects for which several verses explain how Muslims should act in response to such behavior. On the other hand, Muslim jurists have also taken positions on this matter based on some narratives.

This study seeks, through the following discussion, after presenting an overview of the opinions of jurists, to evaluate their views in light of the Qur'an and to demonstrate the degree of their conformity or lack thereof with Qur'anic doctrine. Therefore, after defining the concept of religious sanctities (*muqaddasāt*) and clarifying the intended meaning of insult, the paper will first briefly outline the status of the Qur'an and explain its precedence over other evidences in the process of legal deduction. It will then discuss the basic principle concerning blasphemy in terms of the appropriate response to such behavior. Subsequently, the prevailing jurisprudential perspective on this issue will be critically examined in the balance of the Qur'anic verses and the practical conduct (*sīrah ‘amalīyyah*) of the Prophet and Shia Imams. The research methodology employed in this article is descriptive-analytical. It relies on library sources, the narrative heritage, and written Shia jurisprudential sources to identify the issues of discussion precisely and to present them in a systematic and structured manner.

2. Literature Review

Some articles have addressed the issue of blasphemy from jurisprudential and legal perspectives. For instance, Hashemi (2001) studied the crime of insulting religious sanctities within the Islamic legal system and in common law. Similarly, Rahami and Parvizi (2013) examined blasphemy in Iranian

and English law. A group of studies, apart from jurisprudential and legal aspects, has explored other dimensions of the issue. For example, Biazar Shirazi (2010) examined the historical aspect of insulting the beliefs of others and, by mentioning the names of many prominent Shia scholars, presented the etiquette of the Shia elite in relation to others. A third category of articles has examined the issue from the perspective of Qur'anic teachings. In one such study, the author concluded that Islamic law does not tolerate insults to sanctities and has prescribed punishment for such acts (Norouzi 2020). Therefore, as is evident, no independent research has yet been conducted on the topic of the present article; more precisely, the jurisprudential ruling on insulting religious sanctities has not been studied by weighing it against Qur'anic teachings and the practical conduct (*sīrah 'amalīyyah*) of the Prophet and Shia Imams. Thus, the present study is innovative and original in this respect.

3. Concepts and Terminology

3.1. *Ihānah* (Insult)

The term *ihānah* is derived from the root *WHN*, which means weakness, feebleness, and languor (al-Jawharī 1990, 6:2215; al-Farāhīdī 1990, 4:92). In accordance with this meaning, the term *ihānah* has come to mean humiliating, degrading, or despising (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 14:438; al-Ṭurayhī 1995, 6:327). Qur'anic verses also confirm this meaning. For example, God says: “*Whomever Allah humiliates will find no one who may bring him honor*” (Q. 22:18). In its technical sense, the term does not stray far from its linguistic meaning: *ihānah* in terminology refers to the act of belittling, degrading, or humiliating a person or thing through word or deed (Hashemi Shahrudi 2005, 1:760).

3.2. *Muqaddasāt* (Religious Sanctities)

The term *muqaddas* is derived from the root *QDS*. Lexicographers have defined *taqdīs* as purification and blessing (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 6:168; al-Zabīdī 1994, 4:214). Therefore, the word *muqaddas* conveys the meaning of that which is pure, blessed, and holy (al-Jawharī 1990, 3:961). Persian lexicographers have also defined *muqaddas* in a similar way, as “a person worthy of respect” (Dehkhoda 1993, 13: 18826; Mo'in 1983, 4: 4291). Regarding the technical meaning of the term, it has been stated that *muqaddasāt* are matters intrinsically pure and free from all defects and deficiencies, whose sanctity is accepted by all Muslims (Montazeri 2009, 2:

540). Others have described sacred matters as beloved entities for which the faithful show deep respect (Misbah Yazdi 2009). Another scholar, listing examples of sanctities such as “God,” “the Prophet,” “the Imam,” etc., holds that when the term *muqaddasāt* is used, it generally refers to matters respected by all religious adherents (Makarem Shirazi 2006, 3: 593).

3.3. *The Status of the Qur'an in Legal Deduction*

A foundational issue that must be addressed as an epistemic prelude to the discussion is clarifying the position of the Qur'an in the process of legal deduction and its relationship to the *Sunnah*. It appears that, based on both analytical reasoning and reference to a number of narratives, it can be inferred that the criterion for evaluating narratives is the Qur'an itself, and that any narrative that conflicts with the meanings and content of the Qur'an must be deemed invalid and rejected. This is because, unlike the Qur'an, the narratives have not been protected from fabrication and distortion, and given the various motives that historically existed for fabrication, the possibility of alteration in them cannot be ruled out. According to this same logic, in some statements of the Prophet and Shia Imams, it is explicitly stated that the narratives heard from them should be compared with the Qur'an and the authentic *Sunnah*; whatever accords with these sources should be accepted, while that which contradicts them should be discarded. This criterion was repeatedly emphasized by the Prophet and the Shia Imams. For example, one narrative states: “*If a narrative is conveyed to you, and you find corroboration for it in the Book of God or in the words of the Messenger of God, then accept it; otherwise, the one who brought it to you is more entitled to it (i.e., it should be left to him)*” (al-Kulaynī 1986, 1: 69). Another narrative reads: “*Everything is referred back to the Book and the Sunnah, and any narrative that does not conform to the Book of God is mere adornment (i.e., falsehood)*” (al-Kulaynī 1986, 1: 69).

It is noteworthy that in *al-Kāfī*, which is regarded as one of the most authoritative Shi'ite collections of narratives, many narratives emphasize that the standard for distinguishing a sound narrative from an unsound one is its compatibility with the Qur'an (al-Kulaynī 1986, 1: 69).

4. *Jurisprudential Perspective on Sanctity Insults*

The most immediate examples that come to mind regarding the religious sanctities are persons, objects, and places held in respect by Muslims, the desecration of which results in collective offense to the Muslim community. The Essence of God, His Noble Book (the Qur'an), the Sacred House

(*Ka'bah*), as well as the honored presence of the Prophet and the Infallible Imams are all included among these sanctities. Regarding the punishment for someone who desecrates Islamic sanctities, many Shia jurists have stated that insulting Islamic sanctities—if expressed in terms that amount to *sabb* (reviling) or abusive speech toward the Prophet or any of the Infallible Imams—renders the blasphemer liable to the death penalty (al-Mufīd 1992, 473; Āmilī 1992, 4: 454; Najafī 1984, 41: 439). Based on this principle, Article 262 of the Iranian Islamic Penal Code also criminalizes *sabb al-Nabī* (reviling the Prophet), stipulating that abusive speech or defamation against any of the Infallibles carries the punishment of death (Iran's Islamic Penal Code 2013).

5. The Qur'anic Perspective on Sanctity Insults

In the logic of the Qur'an, all forms of harsh speech and abusive language are forbidden. For example, in verse 108 of Sūrah al-An'ām, God declares:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (الانعام/108)

Do not abuse those whom they invoke besides Allah, lest they should abuse Allah out of hostility, without any knowledge (Q. 6:108).

Exegetes have stated, in their commentary on this verse, that one factor that preserves society from insults to recognized values and maintains its moral health is refraining from foul language and abuse, even toward opponents. This is because such behavior provokes retaliation, leading them to respond in kind (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 4: 537; Makarem Shirazi 1993, 20: 26). There is also an independent rational judgment in this regard, such that the Qur'anic guidance in this matter is no more than a directive in accordance with the dictates of reason. The logic of the verse is clear: insults and abusive speech can never enlighten or guide; rather, the deceitful and seditious spirit often found in such obstinate individuals will exploit such actions as a pretext to further undermine and discredit religion. Hence, even when abusive speech targets the superstitious and misguided beliefs of a group—without fabricating lies about them—such behavior still yields this harmful result. Will coercive punishment, such as deprivation of life, not produce the unintended effect of making these individuals appear as victims and thus defeat the very purpose of the Lawgiver?

In any case, with regard to the Qur'anic approach and practical method in confronting mockery and insults to sanctities and religious teachings, it must be said that the Qur'an's logic does not advocate coercive confrontation with those who insult. Rather, the model proposed by the Qur'an is to distance oneself from the polytheists and to leave those places where insults and mockery of religious values are taking place. For example,

God says in verse 68 of Sūrah al-An‘ām:

وَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَ إِمَّا يُنْسِيَتُكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (الانعام/68)

When you see those who gossip impiously about Our signs, avoid them until they engage in some other discourse; but if Satan makes you forget, then, after remembering, do not sit with the wrongdoing lot (Q. 6:68).

Al-Qurṭubī (1985, 7: 12) interprets the term *khawḍ* (vain talk) in this verse as including the denial of the Qur’anic verses and their rejection and mockery. Ibn ‘Ashūr (1999, 6: 150), agreeing with this interpretation, explains that the intended meaning of “turning away” (*i‘rāḍ*) is to cease sitting with such people. Al-Marāghī (n.d., 7: 159) believes that the initial audience of the verse is the Noble Prophet and the believers of his time. Subsequently, however, the verse applies to all believers in every era. He interprets the rationale for turning away from those who insult as an avoidance of argument and conflict with them and sees the wisdom in not sitting with them as being that one’s presence would embolden such people and imply tacit approval and participation in their false discourse. Makarem Shirazi (1993, 5: 288) comments that the divine directive is clear: if believers attend such gatherings, the group that insults will continue their vain speech to offend them; but if they are ignored and left alone, the blasphemers will turn to other matters, since their main objective is to annoy the believers. Another example is verse 140 of Sūrah al-Nisā’, in which God, through a similar directive, calls upon Muslims to exercise self-restraint and to leave the gatherings of those who mock:

وَ قَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ (النساء/140)

Certainly He has sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah’s signs being disbelieved and derided, do not sit with them until they engage in some other discourse (Q. 4:140).

In principle, the Qur’an’s counsel when faced with such insulting behavior is patience and steadfastness:

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ... (ق/39)

So be patient over what they say, and celebrate the praise of your Lord (Q. 50:39).

That is, endure what they say and praise your Lord. For it is through patience and endurance that one can overcome the schemes of the enemies and break their power (Makarem Shirazi 1993, 22: 289). The object of patience in this verse is the slanders, lies, and mockery of the enemies of the Prophet, who ridiculed him with descriptions such as “madman” (al-Ṭūsī 2010, 9: 374; al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 9: 225). It is noteworthy that the Qur’an’s strategy here is absolute patience and steadfastness even though the words and mockery of the disbelievers caused great distress to the Prophet:

وَأَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرَكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ
(الحجر/97-98)

Certainly We know that you become upset because of what they say. So celebrate the praise of your Lord and be among those who prostrate (Q. 15:97–98)

Al-Baḥrānī (1994, 3: 396) quotes Imam al-Ṣādiq as saying that believers should be patient in all their affairs; for the God who appointed Muhammad as a Prophet also commanded him to be patient and gentle, and in this regard, God said:

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (فصلت/34)

Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend (Q. 41:34)

Affirming the logic of patience and steadfastness_ which is reiterated in many other verses (Q. 30:60; 70:5; 40:55; 46:35)_ it becomes evident that, especially in today's context, many forms of coercive confrontation merely strengthen the adversary's front. Paradoxically, they result in the offending words gaining wider attention and, in some cases, conferring a form of legitimacy upon those who utter them. Therefore, the method and model for responding to those who insult must be structured in such a way that the front of truth is not weakened, nor the front of falsehood strengthened. Muslims, accordingly, must take guidance from the Qur'an and respond to insults against Islamic sanctities in a way that does not intensify Islamophobia or shift the climate to favor the camp of falsehood.

Another point worth noting is that reason (*'aql*) appears capable of discerning, to a certain extent, the criteria for rulings that do not pertain to purely devotional matters (*'ibādāt*), but rather to social issues. To explain further, according to Shia teachings_ commonly referred to as the *'Adliyyah* school_ the goodness (*ḥusn*) and badness (*qubḥ*) of actions are intrinsic, and the rulings legislated in Islamic jurisprudence are rooted in the real and objective benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and harms (*maḥāsib*) inherent in these rulings. Of course, it must be acknowledged that such criteria are not always accessible or ascertainable with certainty, especially with respect to the fine details of devotional rulings and some non-devotional issues. Nevertheless, the benefits and harms underlying certain other rulings_ particularly in criminal and social matters_ can be understood by the collective intellect of humankind, especially those acquainted with the mechanisms of legal punishment within the framework of Islamic thought. It is reasonable to assume that many of these rulings do not involve hidden considerations entirely beyond the grasp of human reason. Recognizing this point and accepting the ability of human reason to perceive such criteria explains why many legal sources and narrations mention intelligible and rational causes for divine rulings. For example, with respect to *qiṣāṣ* (retributive justice), it

has been said that: “*There is life for you in retribution*” (Q. 2:179).

Likewise, narratives emphasize that *qiṣāṣ* was prescribed because of the harm and injury inflicted on the victim’s body (al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī 1988, 29: 184). It is important to note that, according to the sound opinion of a number of Shia jurists, such explanations_which are frequently observed in the social and criminal rulings_together with the intuitive understanding that generally accompanies them, must serve as an attached contextual indicator (*al-qarīnah al-muttaṣilah*) in the process of deduction and issuing fatwas. Based on this, the legal proofs and evidences, such as verses and narratives, may be broadened or narrowed accordingly (Montazeri 1989, 4:59; Mar‘ashī 2006, 1: 40).

In light of the above, it must be acknowledged that imposing severe and coercive punishments on those who deliberately insult and mock Islamic sanctities will ultimately serve their objectives and harm the image of Islam. By way of example, following the publication of insulting caricatures by the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, a French teacher shared one of these images in an online class under the theme of freedom of speech. Shortly thereafter, he was killed near the school by a Chechen teenager (Paone 2020). In the aftermath of this event, a series of public reactions ensued, inflaming tensions within the French Muslim community_estimated at around six million, perhaps the largest in Europe. Massive crowds attended the French teacher’s funeral, and the Muslim community in France was left in a deeply distressed state. It may therefore be said that such acts result in defeating their own purpose and ultimately in weakening Islam and its teachings.

6. The Practical Conduct of the Prophet and Imams in Confronting Insults and Mockery

The following section presents several examples illustrating the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad and his family (*Ahl al-Bayt*) in responding to mockery, insults, and verbal abuse from opponents. Numerous such narrations exist, and here only a select few are mentioned.

6.1. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Numerous historical and narrative sources report that the polytheists frequently mocked and ridiculed the Prophet (al-Bayhaqī 1982, 2: 69; Ibn Khaldūn 1984, 1: 369). For example, they called him mad or insane (Q. 7:184). They even went so far as to appoint certain individuals to compose satirical poems aimed at vilifying him (Bilādhārī 1992, 1: 373). However,

the Prophet later forgave such individuals and treated them with clemency (al-Ṭabarī 1996, 3: 62). Among these was a woman named Sārah who, according to some historical accounts, sought the Prophet's protection and was spared (Shams al-Shāmī 1994, 5: 225). Another such individual, Habbār ibn Aswad, also received pardon and compassion, as the Prophet told him: *"I have forgiven you; God has guided you to Islam and granted you guidance"* (al-Wāqidi 1989, 2: 858).

6.2. Imam 'Alī (PBUH)

In *Nahj al-Balāghah*, it is narrated that when a Kharijite insulted Imam 'Alī by saying: *"May God kill this unbeliever, how knowledgeable he is in jurisprudence,"* the Imam's companions wished to kill him. However, the Imam prevented them, saying: *"The response to his action is either a similar response or forgiveness of his fault"* (al-Raḍī 2005).

6.3. Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (PBUH)

It is narrated that one day a man from Syria met Imam al-Ḥasan and hurled curses and insults at him. The Imam remained silent, then smiled and said: *"It seems that you are a stranger in this town. If you have no place to stay, my house is open to you. If you are in debt, I will pay it off for you. If you are in need, I will meet your needs."* Upon hearing these words, the Syrian man wept and declared: *"I testify that you are the Caliph and representative of God on earth. God knows best where to place His message. You and your father were once the most detested of people to me, but now you have become the most beloved"* (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1957, 4: 19).

6.4. Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (PBUH)

It is narrated that a relative of Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn insulted him. The Imam told his companions to accompany him to the man's house so they could witness how he would respond. Along the way, the Imam recited:

Those who restrain their anger and pardon people and God loves the doers of good
(Q. 3:134).

Upon arrival, the Imam said: *"You have spoken against me. If what you said is true, may God forgive me; and if it is false, may God forgive you."* The man kissed the Imam's forehead and repented of his behavior (al-Mufid 1994, 2: 145).

6.5. Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (PBUH)

Ibn Maskān narrated that Imam al-Ṣādiq once said to him: “I think that if someone insulted ‘Alī in your presence, you would strike him on the nose if you could.” He replied: “Yes, this is how I and my family behave.” The Imam said: “Do not act this way. By God, many times ‘Alī was insulted in my presence, yet I neither confronted the insulter nor retaliated. Instead, I passed by and greeted him with peace” (al-Barqī 1951, 1: 259).

6.6. Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (PBUH)

Al-Mufīd (1994, 2: 233) narrates that a certain man repeatedly insulted and harassed Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm, even reviling Imam ‘Alī. When the Imam’s companions sought permission to retaliate, the Imam forbade them. One day, the Imam visited the man’s farm and walked through his crops. The man objected, demanding compensation and shouting at him. The Imam, in response, paid him far more than his claim and offered additional gifts. Upon witnessing this behavior, the man became remorseful. Later, upon seeing the Imam in the mosque, he publicly testified to his truthfulness. The Imam then turned to his companions and said: “Which approach was better: your request for retaliation, or my method? Through my conduct I both guided him and averted his harm.”

7. Discussion

In light of the analysis of the verses concerning how to deal with those who insult or show disrespect, it becomes evident that the Noble Prophet of Islam was commanded to turn away and avoid engagement with such individuals. He was even advised to forgive and pardon them. Some of these verses were revealed in the imperative form, which by default indicates obligation, such as:

وَدَعْ أَدْنَهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (الاحزاب/48)

And disregard their torments, and put your trust in Allah, and Allah suffices as trustee (Q. 33:48).

Thus, one may infer that such behavior was obligatory for the Prophet. Indeed, the inclination of people toward him stemmed from his gentle demeanor, a trait incompatible with harsh and violent conduct or with taking the life of a blasphemer. As the Qur’an states:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ
اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَ شَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ (آل عمران/159)

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and

hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs (Q. 3:159).

Therefore, it may be argued that a harsh and violent response yields nothing but the alienation of people. The nature of the Prophet's exalted character (Q. 68:4) necessitated gentleness, forgiveness, and forbearance regarding the mistakes of human beings, alongside seeking God's pardon for them. Consequently, executing a blasphemer cannot be considered consistent with the Prophet's conduct or the logic of the Qur'an. It seems highly improbable that one characterized by exalted character (*khuluq 'azīm*) would issue a directive to take the life of a blasphemer. Given that, according to Shia thought, Imams (Infallibles) share the same level of infallibility and avoidance of sin as the Noble Prophet, the issuance of such actions by them is likewise unacceptable.

Even if the above arguments do not conclusively prove the claim, since the foundational principle concerning human life is caution and the presumption of immunity, taking a human life requires a valid and certain justification. In the absence of such certainty, one cannot violate the sanctity of human life. Furthermore, as previously discussed, although there are narratives that report the killing of one who insults the Prophet or desecrates sacred matters and even if some among them are considered authentic in chain of transmission (*ṣaḥīḥ al-isnād*) these narrations ultimately do not yield certitude due to the various debates and critical challenges discussed in detail.¹ As such, they fall under the category of solitary narratives (*khābar wāḥid*) and thus cannot serve as a basis for action in weighty matters. To elaborate, many Shia scholars have explicitly stated that issuing legal opinions (*fatāwā*) on grave and consequential matters (such as the taking of life) based on solitary narratives is contrary to the dictates of caution. For example, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (1987, 4: 114) asserts that one may not take a human life based on a solitary narrative. Qumī (1994, 5: 190) likewise holds that, given the critical nature of the issue of human life in Islam,

1. It is worth noting that there are narrations, which may be understood as permitting private justice—allowing ordinary individuals to kill someone who insults the sacred, without the need for the crime to be established in a court of law (al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī 1988, 28: 213). Upon closer examination of these reports, however, it becomes evident that they are not uniform: some consider the killing of an blasphemer as merely permissible, others describe it as obligatory, and yet others strictly prohibit killing without the explicit permission of the Imam. As a result, the opinions of jurists have likewise varied on this basis (Nobahar 2010). Moreover, even in cases where the action of ordinary individuals is regarded as permissible, its legitimacy is conditional upon it not entailing harm to the life of the avenger. Indeed, some jurists have gone further and held that the likelihood of financial harm is sufficient to negate the permissibility of such an act—let alone when such actions might lead to serious harm, hardship, public disorder, or cause accusations against Islam and the Prophet of Mercy, or create an opportunity for opportunists to exploit the situation (Nobahar 2013).

relying on certain *ḥadīths* that permit killing is contrary to prudence. Many jurists also emphasize that the principle of caution is paramount in matters involving bloodshed, affirming the indisputable principle that life may not be taken except with decisive evidence (Āmulī 1960, 7: 427; Mūsawī 'Āmilī 1990, 6: 116).

It should be noted that this approach rests upon a solid and rational foundation. The credibility of solitary narratives, as research indicates, stems mainly from the practice of rational people (*binā' al-ūqalā'*) (Muzaffar 1996, 2: 92). However, rational individuals tend to exercise extreme caution in critical matters such as shedding human blood and generally do not act based on solitary narratives in such cases.

One final point is that even if one does not fully accept the above reasoning and evidence, it can still be asserted that the aforementioned arguments raise a degree of doubt (*shubḥah*) concerning the issue. According to legal principles, in cases where a legitimate doubt arises, the principle of *dar'* (avoidance) applies. The general meaning of the principle of *dar'* is that in cases where entitlement to a particular punishment is subject to doubt or uncertainty, the punishment must be waived (Mohaghegh Damad 1985, 4: 43). This principle aligns with the broader notion that, particularly in matters of life and death, one must adhere strictly to caution, and no legal punishment may be carried out unless there is certainty regarding its necessity. In matters involving bloodshed, the sum of numerous traditions indicates that adhering to the requirement of caution is necessary and obligatory (Bujnūrdī 1980, 1: 184).

8. Conclusion

As discussed, the issue of insulting or showing contempt for religious values and beliefs is addressed in various Qur'anic verses that explain how Muslims are to respond to such acts. Muslim jurists, drawing upon certain narrations, have also taken positions on this matter. This study, based on the well-established premise that juristic views must conform to Qur'anic teachings and that the standard by which traditions are assessed is their agreement with the Qur'an, examined the extent to which existing jurisprudential rulings align with the Qur'anic perspective and the practical conduct of the Prophet and Imams. It concluded that regarding the approach of the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet and Imams concerning mockery and insults directed at sacred matters, the logic of these sources does not advocate a confrontational or aggressive response toward the blasphemers. Rather, the Qur'anic model proposes distancing (*i'rād*) oneself from the disbelievers and avoiding places where insults and mockery of

religious values occur; although believers find the insults deeply painful and offensive.

The findings of this research demonstrated that such an approach is fully consistent with the behavior of the Noble Prophet and his Household, who adopted a strategy of patience and guidance rather than coercion or violence in the face of such offenses. Accordingly, although there are narrations that suggest the permissibility of executing the one who insults the Prophet or sacred values_ and some may even be considered authentic in terms of chain of transmission_ their lack of certainty, along with the various critical issues surrounding them, ultimately classifies them as solitary narratives. These are insufficient grounds for action in such a serious matter. When seeking a preferable position, the Qur'anic logic and the approach derived from the Prophetic conduct_ which are both consistent with rational assessment and the higher objectives of the *Sharī'ah*_ must be prioritized.

Moreover, even if the presented arguments and evidence fail to provide definitive proof, the foundational principle regarding human life remains caution and presumption of immunity. Hence, absent conclusive proof, one may not justifiably take a life. At the very least, it can be said that the arguments advanced here introduce sufficient doubt into the matter, and once such doubt exists, the principle of *dar'* is triggered in legal reasoning. Therefore, it becomes untenable to align with a view that permits the execution of those who commit such offenses.

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*A Semantic-Psychological Analysis of the Expression *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* in the Qur'an and Its Educational-Social Applications*

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ABSTRACT:

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One of the concepts in the Qur'an related to the human psyche is the expression *Ḍayq al-ṣadr*, which describes the tightness of the chest experienced by the Prophet (PBUH) when faced with psychological and social pressures. The verse “*And We certainly know that your chest becomes constrained by what they say*” (Q. 15:97) not only reflects the challenges of the era of revelation but can also serve as a profound approach to emotion regulation in contemporary life. Previous research has mostly examined this concept in the context of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) of the verse, leaving a systematic psychological and pedagogical analysis largely unexplored. This study employs a descriptive-analytical method, using exegetical and psychological sources. The findings indicate that *Ḍayq al-ṣadr*, as an emotional-physiological phenomenon, is comparable to situational stress constructs. Qur'anic strategies for addressing this condition such as *tasbīḥ* (glorification of God), patience, and cognitive reappraisal of the prophetic mission align with psychological findings on mindfulness, emotion regulation, resilience, and conflict management. The analysis further highlights four main interpretive perspectives: divine consolation of the Prophet's heart, recognition of the human limits of prophets, emphasis on the continuity of the prophetic mission, and provision

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of practical strategies for coping with distress. the paper demonstrates conceptual overlaps between Qur'anic guidance and modern psychology, suggesting directions for educational and counseling applications.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and Psychology, *dayq al-ṣadr*, *sharḥ al-ṣadr* Situational stress, Emotion regulation, Resilience.

1. Introduction

The Qur'an, as a comprehensive source of guidance, addresses not only matters of belief and law but also the psychological and emotional states of human beings. Concepts such as patience, stress, anxiety, and tightness of the chest are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'anic discourse, reflecting the divine attention to inner human experiences. One of the significant Qur'anic expressions in this regard is *dayq al-ṣadr* (tightness of the chest) in Q. 15:97, revealed in the context of the Prophet's confrontation with denial and mockery:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ (الحجر/97)

And We know that you, your chest (innermost) narrows/tightens because of what they say (Q. 15:97).

This verse acknowledges the Prophet's emotional distress caused by the hostile words of his opponents and, at the same time, serves as a divine recognition of human vulnerability to verbal and social pressures. Classical exegetes have generally interpreted *dayq al-ṣadr* here as an emotional reaction of grief, sadness, or anxiety resulting from persistent rejection. Such an interpretation highlights the Qur'an's sensitivity to psychological experiences, especially in contexts of stress and confrontation. The present study aims to conduct a semantic and psychological analysis of the expression *dayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an and examine its educational and social applications. Previous studies have primarily addressed the meaning of *dayq al-ṣadr* in terms of its occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), but a comprehensive analysis from psychological and educational perspectives has received less attention.

The present study focuses on Qur'anic verses that refer to *dayq al-ṣadr* and its derivatives, examining them through a psychological lens with reference to theories such as Lazarus's Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (Gross, 1998). The significance of this inquiry lies in addressing a gap in interdisciplinary research between Qur'anic studies and psychology by highlighting indigenous strategies of emotion regulation and encouraging dialogue between modern psychological sciences and Qur'anic teachings. The

objectives of the research are threefold: first, to explicate the semantic dimensions of *dayq al-ṣadr*; second, to analyze the Qur'anic coping strategies related to this condition; and third, to explore their compatibility with contemporary stress-management techniques. Accordingly, the central research question asks: How can the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* and the Qur'anic coping strategies associated with it be interpreted within the framework of modern psychology? Subsidiary questions concern the semantic components of the term, its psychological interpretation, and the extent to which Qur'anic strategies may be compared with established psychotherapeutic models. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive–analytical approach, drawing on exegetical literature and psychological scholarship. The research proceeds in several stages: a semantic examination of the key term, the identification and analysis of relevant verses, and finally, a comparison of Qur'anic strategies with selected psychological theories. By following this approach, the paper aims to clarify the relevance of Qur'anic insights to contemporary discussions of emotional regulation and stress management.

2. Literature Review

Although the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* (Chest tightness) in the Qur'an has received attention in classical exegesis, it has been less extensively explored from psychological and educational perspectives in contemporary studies. Examination of existing sources reveals three main streams of research: First, traditional exegetical studies have primarily focused on the historical and lexical aspects of this concept (al-Ṭabrisī 1993; Tabataba'i 1973). While these studies are valuable for explaining the primary meaning of the verse, they have given limited attention to its psycho-social implications in contemporary life. Second, Studies on the opposite concept, *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest), have considered psychological aspects to some degree (Haji Abdolbaqi & Haji Alibeigi 2018; Shirzad & Khatib 2021). However, they have not succeeded in systematically linking these two Qur'anic concepts with the emotional challenges of modern humans. Third, an emerging body of comparative research has examined Qur'anic concepts in relation to psychological theory (Sanatnegar 2021). While these studies are valuable, they often approach the subject in a fragmented manner and have yet to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework. A review of the literature thus indicates insufficient attention to the psychological dimensions of *dayq al-ṣadr* within the context of established theories such as Lazarus's Stress Theory (1984) and Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to contribute to Qur'anic scholarship by adopting an interdisciplinary perspective that combines

exegetical analysis with insights from psychology.

3. *Concepts and Terminology*

This section presents a semantic analysis of the expression *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* in order to clarify its lexical, exegetical, and psychological dimensions. Examining the lexical roots of *Ḍayq* (tightness) and *al-ṣadr* (chest) and their relation to contemporary concepts provides a framework for understanding this Qur'anic expression.

3.1. *Ḍayq*

The term *Ḍayq* denotes narrowness, tightness, and difficulty, as opposed to *wusa'* (expanse) (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 10: 208; Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 513; al-Muṣṭafawī 1981, 7: 57). Ibn Fāris (1984, 3: 383) defines *Ḍayq* as poverty and hardship. Al-Zabīdī (1994, 13: 280) also records a figurative meaning, noting that *Ḍayq* can denote doubt in the heart, in a figurative sense. Derivatives of the root *Ḍayq* appear in twelve verses across ten Suras in the Qur'an, expressing diverse meanings. In two instances (Q. 9:25, 118), the expression refers to “the earth becoming constrained,” which, from a social psychology perspective, may be compared to collective crises and environmental pressures. In three verses (Q. 15:97; 11:12; 26:13), the tightness of the chest of prophets is described—an evident example of psychological pressure resulting from challenging social interactions. These cases align with psychological findings on the effects of interpersonal stress on mental health (Kiecolt-Glaser et al. 2002). Furthermore, in Q. 65:6, the term is used in the context of “not imposing hardship on divorced women,” suggesting that *Ḍayq* can also apply to behaviors stemming from emotional pressures, such as aggression or rigidity. The diversity of these usages confirms that the Qur'an attends to the roots of negative emotions at individual, interpersonal, and societal levels.

3.2. *Al-Ṣadr*

The term *al-ṣadr* literally means “chest” as a physical organ, with the plural *ṣudūr*. It has also been used metaphorically to denote the foremost or leading part of something, e.g., *ṣadr al-qanāh* (tip of the spear) (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 379). It is defined as the uppermost and foremost part of anything, including expressions such as *ṣadr al-nahār wa al-layl* (beginning of the day and night) and *ṣadr al-shitā' wa al-ṣayf* (beginning of winter and summer) (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 4: 445; al-Zabīdī 1994, 7: 80). Ibn Fāris (1984,

3: 337) offers two meanings: opposite of arrival and the human chest. In the aforementioned Qur'anic verse, the intended meaning is clearly the latter. In psychology, the chest may serve as a symbolic locus of emotions and feelings. The Qur'anic notion of *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest) corresponds with constructs in positive psychology such as resilience and psychological well-being (Davidson et al. 2000).

The concept of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* (Chest tightness) contrasted with *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest) that have been extensively addressed in Islamic narrations. Imam 'Alī (PBUH), in eloquent language, examined *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, describing it as an instrument of leadership: “Forbearance and the endurance of hardship are the tools of leadership” (al-Raḍī 1995). This statement underscores the importance of *sharḥ al-ṣadr* in governance and leadership, indicating a direct relationship between psychological well-being and social effectiveness. As is evident from the history of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad exemplifies remarkable forbearance in the face of hardship and the ill-treatment of others. The persecutions and abuses directed at the Prophet were unprecedented in the history of the prophets: “No prophet was ever harmed as I have been harmed” (al-Majlisī 1983, 39: 56). The polytheists relentlessly engaged in blaming, harassing, threatening, and humiliating him. They accused him of various falsehoods, and encouraged others (including children and slaves) to insult him (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2003, 1: 594; Davani 2011).

4. Exegetical Approach to *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* with Psychological Reading

Sura al-Ḥijr, centered on monotheism and prophet hood, addresses the Prophet's emotional challenges in facing the denial and mockery of the polytheists. Verses 85–99, especially verse 97, which refers to the state of *ḍayq al-ṣadr*, present what could be called a “clinical case” of dealing with social stress. Historical evidence indicates that these verses were revealed at a time when the Prophet, after the passing of Lady Khadijah and Abū Ṭālib, faced escalating psychological pressure from the polytheists (Tabataba'i 1973, 12: 138). From the perspective of social psychology, this situation is a clear example of “chronic stress resulting from social rejection” (Cacioppo et al. 2011), accompanied by symptoms such as a sensation of pressure in the chest (described in the verse as *ḍayq al-ṣadr*). The concept of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in Q. 15:97 has been examined from multiple perspectives by classical Qur'anic exegetes and contemporary psychologists. Although these perspectives appear different at first glance, they all emphasize the practical dimensions of this Qur'anic notion in managing emotions and addressing

psycho-social challenges. Below is a synthesis of the main approaches, integrating exegetical findings with psychological insights.

4.1. *Elucidation of the Prophet's Ḍayq al-Ṣadr in Facing Social Harassment*

Exegetes maintain that the verse, “*And We certainly know that your chest is constrained by what they say*” (Q. 15:97), constitutes a divine response to the psychological pressures the Prophet endured at the hands of the polytheists. Such harassment included false accusations, intense mockery, and even physical attacks, such as placing the entrails of animals on him while he was in prostration (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2003, 1: 594; al-Majlisī 1983, 39: 56). From a psychological standpoint, this verse aligns with the concepts of stress resulting from social humiliation (Lazarus & Folkman 1984) and emotional vulnerability (Barlow 2002). By acknowledging the Prophet’s negative emotions (*na‘lamu*), the Qur’an employs an emotional validation technique, also used in modern psychotherapy approaches such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan 1993). This approach involves three key mechanisms: Cognitive restructuring with emphasis on divine knowledge; Emotion regulation through glorification (*tasbīḥ*), which has been shown to reduce amygdala activity (Newberg et al. 2010); Resilience building by reminding of the prophetic mission (Q. 15:94).

The Qur’anic recommendation of *tasbīḥ* functions similarly to mindfulness practices. Research indicates that religious recitation activates the prefrontal cortex, reducing anxiety (Newberg & Waldman 2010). This perspective is supported by the saying of Imam al-Ḥusayn: “Awareness of divine surveillance makes enduring suffering easier” (al-Majlisī 1983, 45: 46). Overall, these verses present a comprehensive model for managing negative emotions, addressing both the affective domain and offering practical strategies for coping with social stressors. Exegetes such as al-Ṭabrisī and Tabataba’i interpret this as a form of divine support that is both consolatory and therapeutic (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 6: 534; Tabataba’i 1973, 12: 287; al-Mudarrisī 1998, 5: 493).

4.2. *Humanity of Prophets*

In this view, exegetes stress the human nature of the Prophet and the inherent limitations of human beings. Emotional reactions such as *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* are considered part of human nature, and the Prophet was no exception (al-Mughnīyyah 2003, 4: 492; al-Marāghī n.d., 14: 48). This interpretation corresponds with psychological theories on the limited capacity of humans

to endure emotional stress (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Scientifically, research shows that prolonged exposure to social stress can lead to symptoms such as shortness of breath and a feeling of chest tightness (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; McEwen 1998; Barlow 2002), which parallels the Qur'anic depiction of *ḍayq al-ṣadr*. This condition is due to the activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis and the limbic system, producing physiological symptoms similar to Qur'anic descriptions. Notably, the Qur'an's use of the present tense verb *na'lamu* signifies God's simultaneous awareness of the Prophet's emotions at the moment of occurrence (al-Khaṭīb 2003, 7: 265; al-Qāsimī 1998, 6: 347). This aligns with modern theories regarding individual differences in stress tolerance (Bonanno 2004) and emotional intelligence (Goleman 2005). Faḍlallāh (2018, 10: 195) considers the affective element central to these reactions, while Qara'ati (2009, 4: 484) regards it as evidence for the importance of emotional self-regulation within a religious framework. This view posits that *ḍayq al-ṣadr* is not a sign of weakness, but part of the intelligent design of the human psycho-physiological system. Research shows that even resilient individuals experience burnout under chronic stress (Southwick & Charney 2012), underscoring the naturalness of the Prophet's reactions. This perspective bridges religious concepts with health psychology findings.

4.3. *Managing the Pressures of Religious Mission*

According to this view, exegetes hold that the verse in Sura al-Hijr, by emphasizing the continuity of the Prophet's mission despite the polytheists' harassment, offers a comprehensive approach to managing psychological pressures. In other words, God strengthens the Prophet's spirit by reminding him of his duty to proclaim the faith, stressing that tightness of the chest should not hinder the fulfillment of the mission (Ṭayyib 1999, 8: 75; al-Zuhaylī 1987, 14: 74; Javadi Amoli 2017, 45: 301). This view corresponds with motivational models such as self-determination theory (Davidson et al. 2000), which suggest that focusing on meaningful goals enhances resistance to obstacles. From the perspective of emotion psychology, the divine command to be patient and continue the mission functions similarly to cognitive restructuring techniques used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Beck 2011). This reframing from “these harassments are distressing” to “this is a test for the mission” reduces cortisol levels (Pargament et al. 2001). Furthermore, the divine promise, “*Indeed, We are sufficient for you against the mockers*” (Q 15:95), operates as a mechanism of social support, mitigating the effects of stress (Cohen & Wills 1985). Neuroscientific findings corroborate this: activity in the brain's prefrontal cortex linked to decision-making and motivation increases in individuals with meaningful

goals (Davidson et al. 2003). This convergence between exegetical perspectives and psychological research demonstrates that the Qur'anic emphasis on mission continuity is not merely a religious exhortation but a scientifically grounded strategy for emotional management and maintaining performance under difficult conditions.

4.4. *Qur'anic Strategies in Facing Emotional Pressures*

Exegetes of the Qur'an have examined the practical strategies presented in its verses for coping with psychological pressures. In various passages, the Qur'an presents the behavioral patterns of the Prophet in facing harassment by disbelievers and polytheists. These include:

- Turning away (*i' rād*): *So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists (Q. 15:94);*
- Reliance on God (*tawakkul*): *Lord of the east and the west, there is no god except Him, so take Him for your trustee (Q. 73:9);*
- Remembrance (*dhikr*) and glorification (*tasbīh*): *So be patient with what they say, and celebrate the praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before the sunset, and glorify Him in watches of the night and at the day's ends, that you may be pleased (Q. 20:130);*
- Patience (*ṣabr*): *We certainly know that what they say grieves you... Apostles were certainly denied before you, yet they patiently bore being denied and tormented until Our help came to them (Q. 6:33–34).*

Some scholars maintain that God, by providing instructions such as *dhikr* and *tasbīh*, offered the Prophet a way to overcome grief and anxiety (Makarem Shirazi 1995, 11: 142; Quṭb 1991, 4: 2155). These strategies not only remove the negative effects of hurtful words but also strengthen morale and enhance resilience. From a psychological perspective, the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* is comparable to the constructs of stress (Lazarus & Folkman 1984) and anxiety (Barlow 2002). In both cases, environmental stimuli lead to similar physiological symptoms, such as shortness of breath and a sensation of pressure in the chest. The key difference lies in the coping strategies: whereas modern psychology emphasizes techniques such as cognitive restructuring (Beck 2011), the Qur'an recommends *tasbīh* (glorification) and *ḥamd* (praise) of the Lord in the first place. Narratives indicating that the Prophet would resort to prayer in times of sorrow (al-Majlisī 1983) confirm the use of "religious–spiritual coping strategies" (Pargament 2011) in stress management. Furthermore, the Sura's emphasis on patience (*wa-ṣbir* Q. 15:85) and turning away from the polytheists (*wa-a'rid 'ani al-mushrikīn* Q. 15:94) provides an operational model for dealing

with social stressors, one also validated in modern “conflict management” models (De Dreu 2007).

Recent research has shown that spiritual practices such as *dhikr*-recitation (Newberg & Waldman 2010) and mindfulness-based techniques (Kabat-Zinn 2003) can, by activating emotion-regulation areas in the brain and lowering cortisol levels, produce effects comparable to psychotherapeutic interventions. These findings are in notable harmony with the Qur’anic recommendation of *tasbīh* (Q. 15:98). Furthermore, some exegetes believe that these divine instructions transform *ḍayq al-ṣadr* from a passive reaction into an opportunity for spiritual growth (al-Ḥijāzī 1992, 2: 294). This perspective aligns with the psychological concept of finding meaning in suffering (Seligman 2011). Table 1 summarizes the correlations between exegetical approaches and psychological concepts concerning *ḍayq al-ṣadr*.

Table 1. Correlations between Exegetical Approaches and Psychological Concepts/Theories on *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur’an

Exegetical Perspective	Key Components	Corresponding Psychological Concepts	Empirical/Theoretical Evidence
First Approach: Consolation of the Prophet’s heart	Divine validation of emotions (<i>na’lamu</i>)	Emotional validation	Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan 1993)
	Provision of coping strategy (<i>tasbīh</i>)	Spirituality-based mindfulness	Reduced amygdala activity through spiritual practices (Newberg & Waldman 2010)
	Emphasis on divine support	Secure attachment theory	Role of social support in reducing stress (Cohen & Wills 1985)
Second Approach: Humanity of the Prophets	Naturalness of <i>ḍayq al-ṣadr</i>	Lazarus’s stress theory	HPA axis activation in chronic stress (McEwen 1998)
	Physiological limitations	Emotional exhaustion	
	Not a sign of weakness	Individual differences in stress tolerance (Bonanno 2004)	
Third Approach: Emphasis on the Prophetic Mission	Cognitive reframing	Cognitive restructuring (CBT)	Increased prefrontal cortex activity in meaningful goal pursuit (Davidson et al. 2003)
		Self-Determination Theory (Davidson et al. 2003)	
	Perseverance in mission despite pressures	Meaning-based resilience (Seligman 2011)	
Fourth Approach: Practical strategies	<i>Tasbīh</i>	Mindfulness	Reduced cortisol through spiritual practices (Razali et al. 2002)
	<i>Ṣabr</i> (patience)	Distress tolerance	
	Turning away from polytheists	Conflict management (De Dreu 2007)	

The educational-social applications of *dayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an have high potential for the design of psychological interventions and educational programs. Empirical studies confirm that spiritual practices similar to *dhikr*, by lowering cortisol levels and activating the prefrontal cortex, enhance resilience in the face of interpersonal challenges (Newberg et al. 2010; Razali et al. 2002). In family counseling, reinterpreting *dayq al-ṣadr* as a natural phenomenon (Q. 16:127) can help couples reframe the emotional pressures arising from conflict as part of the relational growth process. This view aligns with family psychology theories such as the "relational resilience" model (Walsh 2006), while adding a spiritual dimension that provides a more comprehensive framework. At the societal level, the Qur'anic emphasis on "turning away from the polytheists" (Q. 15:94) offers a model for conflict management that preserves human dignity while preventing the escalation of tensions (De Dreu 2007). Overall, the Qur'an, by anticipating the psychological mechanisms of *dayq al-ṣadr*, offers strategies applicable both in the era of revelation and in contemporary times. This integrated approach addresses emotional dimensions while emphasizing spirituality, thus providing a comprehensive framework for managing psychological pressures.

5. *Associated Concepts and Verses*

With regard to the interpretation of the verse under discussion, it should be noted that there are other verses in the Qur'an that, in some way, align with the intended concept particularly with honoring, affirming, and providing special support for the Prophet.

5.1. *Divine Appreciation for the Prophet's Exceptional Compassion*

The Qur'an frequently acknowledges the Prophet's profound compassion and sensitivity toward his people, even when they rejected faith. His grief over their denial reflects the intensity of his mission and his selfless concern for their salvation. In this regard, several verses highlight the depth of the Prophet's emotional burden and God's consoling response.

You are liable to imperil your life for their sake, if they should not believe this discourse, out of grief (Q. 18:6).

According to Tabataba'i (1973, 13: 240), this verse and the following two verses aim to console and comfort the Messenger of God.

Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides whomever He wishes. So do not fret yourself to death regretting for them. Indeed Allah knows best what they

do (Q 35:8).

The term *ḥasarāt* is the plural of *ḥasrah*, meaning sorrow over something lost and regret for it. The expression “do not fret yourself to death regretting for them” means “do not destroy yourself out of grief over their refusal to believe” (Tabataba’i 1973, 17: 19).

5.2. Bestowal of Divine Tranquility (*Sakīnah*)

During moments of trial and collective hardship, the Qur’an emphasizes that divine tranquility (*sakīnah*) was bestowed upon the Prophet and the believers. This spiritual composure served as a stabilizing force, enabling them to persevere with strength and serenity. The concept of *sakīnah* thus reflects God’s direct intervention in calming troubled hearts.

Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Apostle and upon the faithful, and He sent down hosts you did not see, and He punished the faithless, and that is the requital of the faithless (Q. 9:26)

If you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as one of two [refugees], when the two of them were in the cave... Then Allah sent down His composure upon him ... (Q. 9:40).

According to Tabataba’i (1973, 9: 227), *sakīnah* is a mental state that brings calm to the soul and firmness to the heart, and, as inferred from the verses, it is accompanied by an increase in faith and is associated with *taqwā*, which inclines the heart toward avoiding what God has prohibited.

5.3. Granting of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr* (Expansion in the Chest)

The Qur’an also portrays the Prophet as the recipient of divine *sharḥ al-ṣadr*—the expansion and illumination of the chest. This gift symbolizes spiritual openness, inner light, and resilience, equipping the Messenger with the capacity to bear the heavy responsibility of revelation and guidance.

Did We not open your chest for you and relieve you of your burden? (Q. 94:1–2).

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991, 449) explains that the term *sharḥ* originally means “to open flesh and the like,” and one of its figurative uses is *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, which means the expansion and illumination of the chest through divine light, tranquility from God, and a spirit from Him (Tabataba’i 1973, 20: 314). Table 2 presents the alignment of Qur’anic concepts (*ḍayq al-ṣadr*, *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, *dhikr* and *tasbīḥ*) with psychological concepts/theories.

Table 2. Alignment of Qur’anic concepts related to emotion regulation with psychological concepts and theories

Qur'anic Concept	Psychological Equivalent	Key Commonalities	Evidence/Theories
<i>Dayq al-Şadr</i>	Psychological pressure; Situational stress; social anxiety	Sensation of constriction and psychosomatic tension when facing stress; Limited coping resources	Lazarus's Stress Theory (1984); Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998); HPA axis activation (McEwen 1998)
<i>Dhikr and Tasbīh</i>	Mindfulness; Cognitive reappraisal	Reduced amygdala activity; Enhanced psychological calmness and concentration	Neuroscientific studies (Newberg et al. 2010); Mindfulness interventions (Kabat-Zinn 2003)
<i>Sharḥ al-Şadr</i>	Resilience; Psychological flexibility	Greater capacity for enduring pressure and psychological recovery	Positive Psychology (Seligman 2011); Prefrontal cortex activity in meaningful goal pursuit (Davidson 2003)

5.4. God's Awareness of the Prophet's Sorrow

The repeated rejection and ridicule of the disbelievers caused the Prophet grief and emotional strain. Yet the Qur'an assures him that God is fully aware of both his sorrow and the hidden intentions of his opponents. These verses serve as both comfort and a reminder of divine support in the face of hostility.

So be patient, and you cannot be patient except with Allah [s help]. And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their guile (Q. 16:127);

So do not let their remarks grieve you. We indeed know whatever they hide and whatever they disclose (Q. 36:76);

Do not grieve at their remarks; indeed all might belong to Allah; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing (Q. 10:65).

The Almighty, in Q. 16:127, commands His Messenger to be patient, assuring him that the ability to endure such bitterness for God's sake is from Him. The statement "do not be in distress" apparently means "do not lose patience due to their plots" (Tabataba'i 1973, 12: 374).

5.5. Not Abandoning the Prophet and Divine Care

Opponents of the Prophet mocked him, suggesting that he had been forsaken when revelation was delayed. The Qur'an firmly rejects this accusation, affirming instead that God's care and protection never waver.

Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor is He displeased with you, and the Hereafter shall be better for you than the world (Q. 93:3-4).

This expression is a reassurance and consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him), indicating that if the revelation is occasionally

delayed, it is due to considerations known to God. It should never be taken as evidence despite the assertions of His enemies that God is displeased with him or intends to abandon him. He remains continually the recipient of God's special grace and care, and is always encompassed by His particular protection. Moreover the verse affirms that the worldly life of the Prophet, despite its honor and divine attention, is nothing compared to his afterlife, which is better than his worldly existence (Tabataba'i 1973, 20: 310; Makarem Shirazi 1995, 27:97).

6. Discussion

An examination of the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* within the frameworks of other religions and philosophical systems indicates that this emotional phenomenon is reflected in different forms across numerous spiritual traditions. In Christianity, the concept of "sorrow of the spirit," mentioned in the epistles of Saint Paul (Romans 8:26), bears similarities to *dayq al-ṣadr*: both encompass inner tensions arising from encounters with spiritual crises. However, in the Qur'anic model, emphasis is placed on the activating role of *tasbīḥ* and *ṣabr*, whereas in Christianity, the acceptance of suffering is regarded as participation in the sufferings of Christ (Pargament 2011).

In Buddhism, the concept of *dukkha* existential suffering highlights the non-material dimensions of psychological pain. Yet, unlike the Qur'an, which provides practical measures such as *tasbīḥ*, the path to liberation from *dukkha* is predominantly sought through meditation and release (Rahula 1974). These differences reveal that while the core emotional experience may be common, Qur'anic coping strategies are distinctive in their practicality and integration of spirituality into daily life.

Furthermore, a comparison of the Qur'anic model with Western psychological theories, such as Lazarus's stress model (1984) or Gross's emotion regulation theory (1998), exposes notable limitations in these frameworks. While Lazarus's model focuses on the cognitive appraisal of stress-inducing stimuli, the Qur'an introduces *tasbīḥ* as a metacognitive strategy that enables individuals to transcend mere interpretation of stimuli by altering their state of awareness, thus breaking the cycle of negative emotions. This perspective aligns with neuroscientific research indicating that spiritual practices such as *dhikr* can directly modulate amygdala activity (Newberg et al. 2010). Similarly, although Gross's theory emphasizes the reappraisal of emotions, it overlooks the role of spirituality as a mechanism for emotion regulation; the Qur'an, by transforming *dayq al-ṣadr* into an opportunity for divine closeness (Q. 15:98), imbues emotional states with

meaning. This approach resonates with findings in positive psychology regarding the connection between meaning and resilience (Seligman 2011). These comparisons demonstrate that the Qur'anic model is not only theoretically richer but also supported by empirical evidence, making it a complementary framework to prevailing psychological theories.

7. Conclusion

The analysis and conclusions of the present study indicate that the concept of *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* in the Qur'an holds significance from multiple perspectives. Semantically, it denotes a state of emotional pressure and constriction of the chest resulting from confronting social stressors, as manifested in the life of the Prophet. A comparative examination with contemporary psychological theories reveals that *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* parallels constructs such as situational stress and generalized anxiety, yet it possesses a crucial distinction: the Qur'an's emphasis on the spiritual and divine dimensions of the phenomenon, which transforms it into an opportunity for character growth and enhanced resilience.

From a psychological standpoint, the Qur'anic prescription of *dhikr* and *tasbīḥ* is considered a mechanism for emotional regulation. Neuroscientific findings support this view, showing that such spiritual practices can lower cortisol levels and activate brain regions involved in emotional regulation, producing effects comparable to modern mindfulness techniques. This overlap between religious teachings and scientific findings creates a high potential for developing psychological interventions grounded in Qur'anic concepts. From an educational perspective, the Qur'an's three-stage approach to confronting *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr*—acceptance of negative emotions, cognitive reappraisal, and meaningful action—aligns with the latest models of emotional education. This approach is applicable not only at the individual level but also in social interactions, serving as a framework for improving the quality of interpersonal communication.

Exegetical perspectives on *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* are generally concentrated on four main themes: its supportive and consolatory aspects, its naturalness as a human reaction, its connection to prophetic responsibilities, and the provision of practical strategies for its management. This diversity of perspectives reflects the conceptual richness of *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* and allows for its application in various fields of psychology and education. Based on the context of the verses—which convey the great divine blessing of the Qur'an and present the Prophet as a warner—it appears that the intent is to remind the Prophet that such extensive disparagement is natural and predictable in light of the magnitude of his mission. Therefore, he should, with

magnanimity, turn away from such ungodly and inhumane behaviors and immerse himself more deeply in spirituality and divine *tasbīh*. This is precisely the social and educational perspective that can illuminate the path for all who continue the mission of the Prophet. This approach demonstrates that *ḍayq al-ṣadr* is not a weakness but an integral part of the prophetic mission, and that Qur'anic strategies such as *tasbīh* constitute a divine mechanism for transforming this constriction into an opportunity for growth. It thus offers a practical model for confronting social challenges in all eras.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that a reinterpretation of Qur'anic concepts such as *ḍayq al-ṣadr* through an interdisciplinary lens can lead to the development of strategies in psychology and educational sciences. Such concepts not only possess religious and historical value but also, due to their alignment with contemporary scientific findings, have the potential to be transformed into practical strategies for counseling, education, and stress management. This research paves the way for future studies on integrating religious concepts with modern psychology, emphasizing the need for greater attention to these underexplored capacities.

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Linguistic Differentiation in the Science–Religion Debate: A Comparative Study of Contemporary Shi'i Thought and Modern Philosophy of Language

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ABSTRACT:

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One of the common responses to the conflict between science and religion is the strategy of *linguistic differentiation*. This strategy_which holds that the language of science and the language of religion differ in purpose, method, and worldview_is so broad that it encompasses theories ranging from the philosophical interpretation of Allameh Tabataba'i and Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, to the symbolic language theory of Shahid Motahhari, the metaphorical language theory of Mojtabeh Shabestari, the interactive interpretation between science and religion proposed by Albert Einstein, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's complete separation of the domains of science and religion. This breadth has led some scholars in Islamic studies to assign a significant place to the linguistic differentiation strategy in discussions of the science-religion conflict. However, it must be noted that, although the broad semantic scope of linguistic differentiation includes these theories, they are so distinct that each may be interpreted as an independent strategy for resolving the science-religion conflict. This study briefly examines the meaning of linguistic differentiation in its philosophical origins and analyzes selected Islamic–Shi'i theories that align with this strategy, highlighting their differences from modern philosophy of language. Special emphasis is placed on theories rooted in the works of Tabataba'i, particularly his exegesis. The findings show that although many Islamic theories may be subsumed under the general concept of linguistic differentiation, enduring

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principles of Shi'i theology produce fundamental differences in their premises and interpretations compared with Western traditions.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and science, science-religion conflict, linguistic demarcation, religious language, symbolic language, scientific language.

1. Introduction

Among the proposed solutions to the science-religion conflict is the strategy of “linguistic differentiation.” In general terms, this strategy posits that each linguistic domain serves distinct purposes, functions, and objectives, and therefore leads to different meanings and outcomes. According to this view, the truth or falsity of a statement cannot be determined independently of whether it fulfills the purposes and functions specific to its linguistic domain. Proponents of linguistic differentiation argue that due to the diversity of linguistic functions and uses, language cannot be interpreted monolithically. The truth value of a proposition depends on its intended purpose, usage, and linguistic role (Khosropanah & Ghomi 2021). For example, in didactic stories, the focus is not on the literal veracity of the narrative but rather on its motivational value and its capacity to reform human behavior; in contrast, scientific statements are assessed by their utility.

Linguistic differentiation within the philosophy of language led to the complete separation of different linguistic domains, including religious and scientific language. Over time, this notion entered the discourse surrounding the conflict between religious texts and science. Some religious scholars, fearing that science might undermine religion, adopted the linguistic differentiation approach and relinquished scientific references in religious texts. Ian Barbour states that theologians ought to be grateful to linguistic analysts. Religion has once again become a topic worthy of philosophical discussion (Barbour 1966). This religious response to the science-religion conflict also found its way into Muslim theological and philosophical discourse, particularly regarding the relationship between the Qur'an and science. Various perspectives on the differentiation of Qur'anic and scientific language have been proposed. For example, Motahhari (1997), Makino (1970), Kalantari (2008), Darzi (2022) and Faramarz Qaramaleki (1994) all consider linguistic differentiation to be a viable solution to the conflict between science and religion.

Muslim exegetes and theologians, especially Shi'i scholars, have historically engaged in extensive debates concerning divine speech, debates that are rooted in Islamic and Shi'i beliefs. Among these discussions, some

pertain directly to the Qur'an as divine speech, such as the Qur'an's being the word of God, the existence of inner layers (*batn*) within its verses, and the conventional (*'urfī*) nature of Qur'anic language. Other debates concern divine speech in relation to its Speaker, such as whether the speech of God is eternal (*qadīm*) or created (*ḥādīth*).

In the contemporary period, following the emergence of the great Shi'i philosopher and exegete, Allameh Tabataba'i, philosophical-theological discussions related to the Qur'an gained new vitality and were presented in new and diverse forms. Tabataba'i (2014, 2:325; 7:120) maintained that the divine speech in the Qur'an fundamentally differs from the speech of created beings and that one must conceive of a reality beyond sensory reality for it. The very distinction that Tabataba'i draws between the language of God and that of other creatures has led to his being regarded as among the first to articulate a position akin to those who advocate for linguistic differentiation between religion and other linguistic domains in the philosophy of religion. After him, his student, Shahid Motahhari, also expressed propositions concerning the differentiation between the languages of religion and science in his writings and lectures. The intellectual and philosophical divergences between the views of Tabataba'i and Motahhari indicate that Motahhari, too, presented a distinct theory regarding linguistic differentiation. His perspective was closer to contemporary discussions of linguistic differentiation, as he argued that the aim and purpose of speech play a determining role in what we are to derive from it (Motahhari 1997, 1: 515). If a discourse has been revealed for our guidance, what we must derive from it is precisely its guiding function. This approach of Motahhari can be regarded as an "Islamicized" form of linguistic differentiation, one that influenced many scholars after him to adopt this line of thought.

The aim of the present study is to precisely identify and analyze the similarities and differences between these two approaches. Employing a descriptive-analytical method and based on library sources, this research clarifies the concept of linguistic differentiation and undertakes a comparative examination of it in both Western and Islamic—particularly Shi'i—thought. For this purpose, the first part briefly reviews the views of some Western philosophers and theologians, such as Wittgenstein and Barbour, as the intellectual background of the concept of "linguistic differentiation." The second part then focuses on the theory of linguistic differentiation in Shi'i exegetical and theological thought, particularly in the works of Tabataba'i and subsequent scholars, and offers a comparative analysis of these perspectives with Western theories. Finally, a comparative study identifies and analyses the similarities and differences between Western and Shi'i approaches.

2. Literature Review

The concept of linguistic differentiation developed within the context of analytic philosophy and modern linguistics, influenced by fundamental critiques of logical positivism and of the univocal conception of language. The turning point of this development can be traced in the later works of Wittgenstein (1953), especially his *Philosophical Investigations*. By introducing the concept of “language games,” Wittgenstein, as one of the founders of this shift, demonstrated that meaning in language depends on contextual use and internal linguistic rules. From this perspective, religious language is not an instrument for scientific reporting but rather a dimension of the believer’s mode of existence. This perspective was quickly welcomed in Christian theology and led to the emergence of trends such as the functionalist theory of religious language, symbolic language, and the view of religion as a distinct language game.

Ian Barbour (1966), in his book *Issues in Science and Religion*, analyzed the history of the relationship between science and religion from the medieval period to the modern era. He examined different theoretical strategies for resolving the conflicts between the two domains and considered the linguistic differentiation approach one of the most effective in reducing this tension. Barbour commended linguistic analysts who, by emphasizing the linguistic and functional distinction between science and religion, revived the possibility of dialogue and coexistence between the two and restored the place of religion. Other theories influenced by linguistic differentiation include the “independence of domains” theory, advanced by Stephen J. Gould (2002), which seeks to prevent conflict between science and religion by distinguishing their explanatory realms. William P. Alston (2014), by extending the notion of linguistic differentiation to the domain of experience, argued that experience, too, in its various kinds—such as sensory experience and religious experience—possesses its own structures and criteria of evaluation and interpretation. Therefore, one cannot impose the standards of one type of experience universally on another. In the same context, John H. Hick (1995) carried this differentiation so far as to affirm the truth of all religious propositions, thereby presenting the theory of religious pluralism.

Even some scholars such as Albert Einstein (1954), although they did not produce systematic philosophical analyses, nevertheless emphasized in their epistemic reflections a kind of functional and linguistic distinction between science and religion. They considered the two not as conflicting, but rather as complementary and mutually necessary in providing a comprehensive account of existence. Thus, within the domain of Western thought, the

theory of linguistic differentiation drawing upon the foundations of philosophical linguistics came to be regarded as one of the serious solutions to the problem of conflict between science and religion, giving rise to a wide spectrum of theorizing in the fields of philosophical theology and religious epistemology.

Among Shi'i Muslim thinkers, Allameh Tabataba'i is one of the prominent figures who, in three instances within his exegetical and philosophical works, refers to certain linguistic distinctions which, at first glance, appear comparable to the theory of linguistic differentiation in the Western philosophical tradition. However, a closer analysis reveals that these distinctions not only do not follow from those theoretical foundations, but at times stand in direct opposition to them. First, in the introduction to *al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, he explicitly states that the language of the Qur'an differs from the language of the theologians, philosophers, or empiricists, and that the Qur'an was revealed in the ordinary language of the people. Yet his intention is not to negate philosophical or scientific language, but to emphasize the necessity of suspending preconceived notions when engaging with the revealed text and of fully receiving its content on the basis of the Qur'an's own self-expression. This, however, is not compatible with the presuppositions of the theory of linguistic differentiation, which essentially restricts understanding to linguistic structures. Second, in his exegesis of certain verses, such as Q. 2:261 or al-Q. 18:45, Tabataba'i emphasizes the figurative (*tamthīlī*) function of Qur'anic language, regarding *tamthīl* as a rhetorical device of Arabic employed to communicate elevated meanings to a general audience. This interpretation is grounded in classical rhetoric and in Islamic rationalism, rather than in linguistic theories that treat meaning merely as a product of intra-linguistic functions. Third, he posits an essential distinction between the speech of the Creator (*kalām al-khāliq*) and the speech of the creature (*kalām al-makhlūq*), which arises from the ontological difference between Creator and creature. On this account, the language of revelation transcends the capacity of human language and contains levels of meaning far beyond the limits of human linguistic function (Tabataba'i 2014, 5: 381).

Motahhari likewise, in some of his Qur'anic writings, referring to the ethical and pedagogical aspects of Qur'anic narratives, argues that the Qur'an's purpose in narrating stories such as the creation of Adam is to convey moral and educational messages rather than to provide a scientific account of natural phenomena. At the same time, he stresses that these stories are grounded in objective reality, and that their figurative character does not negate the truth-claim of the Qur'an (Motahhari 1997, 16: 100). Therefore, although his reading may bear superficial resemblance to

figurative approaches in theories of religious language, it remains fundamentally distinct and is analyzed within a theological and doctrinal framework. By contrast, certain religious reformists such as Muhammad Mojtabeh Shabestari, drawing upon hermeneutical methodologies and a particular interpretation of linguistic differentiation, have undertaken a rereading of religion and the Qur'an which, in the view of many critics, is incompatible with the doctrinal foundations of Shi'i theology. Shabestari, moving beyond the doctrine of the descent of revelation (*nuzūl al-wahy*), reduces the concept of "God speaking" to the realm of human interpretations of religious experience, thereby ultimately weakening the intimate connection of the Qur'an with transcendent reality.

In recent years, some scholars have sought to retrieve and reinterpret concepts related to the theory of linguistic differentiation within the works of major Shi'i thinkers, especially Tabataba'i and Motahhari (Parsa et al. 2020). Nonetheless, it seems that the explicit evidence in their writings, particularly in *al-Mīzān* regarding the issue of "similitude," bears little relation to the functionalist and linguistic approaches of the West, and remains situated within the framework of Islamic rationalism and realist ontology. In a critical analysis of Shabestari's interpretive stance, Khosropanah & Ghomi (2021) have enumerated epistemological shortcomings and theoretical incompatibilities of linguistic differentiation when confronted with the revealed text, emphasizing its inconsistency with Islamic theological principles_ especially within the Shi'i tradition.

In sum, although such studies have taken steps toward analyzing aspects of the relation between theories of linguistic differentiation and religious exegesis, no comprehensive research has yet been conducted with a comparative approach that simultaneously examines these theories in Western philosophy and theology and in Shi'i Islamic interpretations. The present article seeks to address this gap by offering an analytical and comparative framework.

3. The Modern View on Linguistic Differentiation

In contemporary debates on science and religion, some Christian theologians have played a significant role in promoting the strategy of linguistic differentiation. Within certain theological strands of Christianity that affirm verbal inspiration, however, linguistic differentiation has been difficult to accept. The belief that both the meaning and wording of the sacred scripture were directly revealed by Almighty God presented a serious challenge to the presuppositions of linguistic differentiation, including the influence of context on language, the presuppositional nature of language,

or the existence of distinct linguistic domains. On this issue, Ian Barbour, quoting a Christian theologian, writes that the scientific concepts which the author of Genesis may have held could be wrong, that is, they may have been derived in the usual way from the science of his time. But that was not what he meant, either explicitly or implicitly. The intention of the Bible is not to teach us cosmology (Barbour 1966).

Many Christian theologians believe that linguistic differentiation allowed them to preserve their religious convictions while also accepting scientific findings, thus preventing conflict between the two domains. In fact, the method of linguistic differentiation, instead of seeking a single, definitive truth as a response to questions common to all domains, aims to preserve the knowledge of each domain separately. This approach has been particularly evident in Christian theological engagement with issues such as creation and human evolution.

3.1. Wittgenstein and Language Games

Earlier, positivists and empiricists had also examined the nature of language, its various domains, and its limitations. They especially emphasized the empirical aspects of language and often regarded religious language as unverifiable by experience and lacking epistemic value. Although these views did not explicitly employ the term “linguistic differentiation,” they nevertheless contained indications of the same notion—that different languages possess distinct functions and rules.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953), the Austrian philosopher, is one of the most influential figures in the systematic study of language use and linguistic diversity, particularly through his later work on language games. He maintained that language is a multifaceted instrument; just as different games are governed by different rules, so too in diverse domains language functions according to distinct rules and uses. This view laid the foundation for the theory of linguistic differentiation. He conceives of language as a diverse set of practices situated in different contexts, distancing himself from the traditional view that regards language as a fixed and uniform instrument for describing reality. In other words, the meaning of words and expressions is determined by their use in these contexts, not by a fixed, pre-determined definition. He argues that one of the key principles of the theory of language games is the emphasis on the diversity and relativity of language. Each language game possesses its own unique rules and structures, which depend on the form of life, culture, and social settings in which it is used. Consequently, the meaning of a word in one language game may differ from its meaning in another. Wittgenstein also underscores that

language cannot express everything; certain concepts and experiences_ such as personal emotions_ lie beyond the capacities of language. Moreover, he emphasizes the role of life context in shaping language: beliefs, values, and social institutions are fundamental in forming language games, and language reflects the form of life of a community.

According to Wittgenstein, the meaningfulness of asking about a name depends on one's understanding of its role within a shared language game; without the relevant know-how, questions about meaning may not be sensible. This implies that meaning arises within a shared context between speaker and hearer, and without such a shared context, communication is impossible. He addresses one of the fundamental issues in the philosophy of language_ namely, the relation between word and meaning_ thereby underscoring the central premise of linguistic differentiation: that words carry different meanings in different uses. Therefore, the key ideas of linguistic differentiation consist of the limitation of language in conveying meanings, the influence of life-context on the transmission of meanings, and the plurality of meanings inherent in language.

3.2. Ian Barbour and the Selective Character of Science and Religion

Ian Barbour (1966), a Christian theologian, in his well-known book *Issues in Science and Religion*, examined the complex relationship between science and religion. One of the key concepts Barbour employs in addressing this issue is the notion of *linguistic differentiation*. Although he may not always use this exact term, he draws upon this concept in various sections of his work. Barbour argues that science and religion employ different languages and cognitive methods. In other words, each of these domains poses its own distinctive questions and seeks answers within the framework of its own assumptions and epistemic methods. This difference in language and method can help resolve the apparent conflicts between science and religion. In the conclusion of his discussion on the methods of science and religion, Barbour emphasizes the selective character of both. Even among the sciences, theories may be autonomous and separate, since each field has selective interests, although the sciences as a whole reveal similar interests. Between science and religion, however, there are fundamentally different and divergent kinds of interests, which arise from dissimilar realms of experience, each reflecting another aspect of the truth of reality.

In short, by emphasizing linguistic differentiation and the selective

nature of science and religion, Barbour offers a strategy for reducing the conflict between the two domains. He maintains that by recognizing the essential differences between science and religion, one can refrain from seeking a single, definitive answer to all questions, and instead aim for a deeper understanding of each field independently. It is clear from Barbour's writings that he also endorsed a form of the linguistic differentiation approach in resolving the problem of the conflict between science and religion, though not exactly in Wittgenstein's sense.

3.3. Einstein and the Complementarity of Science and Religion

Albert Einstein (1954), a contemporary of Wittgenstein, in addition to his outstanding achievements in physics, also engaged deeply with philosophy and, in particular, with the relationship between science and religion. He consistently emphasized the complementarity of these two domains. Einstein held that although science and religion pose different questions and speak in different languages, they can coexist and even assist one another. In a 1940 interview, Einstein famously remarked that Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind. This statement aptly illustrates his view of the relationship between science and religion. For Einstein, science equips humanity with tools to understand and master the natural world, while religion provides values, ethics, and meaning to life. He believed that both aspects are indispensable for a complete and flourishing human existence.

From the fact that Einstein regarded science and religion as belonging to distinct domains, it may be said that he too recognized a kind of linguistic differentiation. Yet his approach was considerably more balanced than that of Wittgenstein. While Wittgenstein considered the languages of science and religion to be entirely separate, without the possibility of translation or dialogue between them, Einstein maintained that these two languages could complement one another and jointly assist humanity in attaining a deeper understanding of the world.

In general, many theologians relied on Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic differentiation and spoke as though every believer ought to be indebted to Wittgenstein for restoring meaning to religious propositions. This approach emerged as a natural response to the dominant trend of logical positivism at the time, which dismissed as meaningless anything beyond sensory experience and logical analysis. By differentiating the language of religion from the language of science, believers were able once again to ascribe meaning and validity to religious propositions and to regard religious

language as an independent discourse with its own rules and logic. Among Muslim theologians, particularly within Shi'a, however, this theory developed in an altogether different manner.

4. *Shi'i Perspective on Linguistic Differentiation*

The theory of linguistic differentiation encountered more serious challenges among Shi'i thinkers. The Qur'an is not merely a sacred book but the very speech of God (*kalām Allāh*), containing definitive and real concepts. This position stands in essential contrast with the Christian perspective, in which the Bible is more often regarded as an inspired text and guide. Consequently, the separation of the language of religion from the language of science faced substantial limitations in Shi'i thought and theology. The distinction between the language of God and the language of creatures, whose intellectual roots can be traced back to the medieval Islamic period, is grounded in an ontological difference between the language of revelation and human language. This distinction is primarily attributed to the specific features of the language of revelation, such as its pre-eternal character, its esoteric dimensions, and its conventional aspects.

Some Shi'i scholars, such as Tabataba'i (2014, 2: 385; 13: 318), have made remarks in their works that can be interpreted within a framework resembling linguistic differentiation. These exegetes, by emphasizing the essential difference between the language of God and that of creatures, in fact recognize a certain type of separation between the language of religion and other languages. Tabataba'i maintained that the meaning of Qur'anic language possesses a reality beyond the meaning of human language (beyond empirical reality).

Strategies similar to linguistic differentiation also appeared after Tabataba'i. Motahhari, while adhering to the real meaningfulness of Qur'anic texts in accordance with fundamental principles of Shi'i theology, emphasized albeit in limited cases the significance of purpose and intention as factors in conferring meaning upon Qur'anic language (Motahhari 1997, 1: 515). He held that in deriving meaning from the words and sentences of the Qur'an, the divine purpose in employing them must be considered. Furthermore, a group of intellectuals among Shi'i thinkers such as Muhammad Mojtahed Shabestari advanced a theory that effectively severed the words of the Qur'an from the Creator encompassing reality, and consequently from reality itself. This theory, more than the two earlier ones, bears resemblance to the Christian theory of linguistic differentiation, insofar as it largely denies the connection between the text of revelation and reality.

Nevertheless, it can readily be emphasized that linguistic differentiation in Shi'i thought differs essentially from its Christian counterpart. In Islamic-Shi'i thought, this distinction is founded upon the ontological difference between Creator and creature, whereas in Christian thought, the differentiation pertains more to the distinct domains of language and their effects. The exclusive aim of this article is to analyze the similarities and differences of the three aforementioned theories and to compare them with the theory of linguistic differentiation in Western thought. This focus is justified because all prominent Shi'i views on linguistic differentiation ultimately return in some way to these three theories. Thus, their examination and comparison carry particular significance. By exploring the complexities of each of these theories, this study correlates their principles and foundations with those of analogous theories of linguistic differentiation in Western scholarship.

4.1. Tabataba'i and the Language of Revelation

The thought of Tabataba'i in his *al-Mizān* commentary presents a transcendent epistemological system regarding the Qur'anic text (*lisān al-wahy*) that may be examined from philosophical, theological, and exegetical perspectives. Among his key ideas are notions that overlap, at least in part, with discussions of linguistic differentiation in contemporary philosophy. These can be analyzed under three main axes:

4.1.1. Use of Allegory in the Qur'an

In *al-Mizān*, Tabataba'i regards *tamthīl* (allegory/similitude) as a means for conveying concepts to the audience more fully and effectively. He discusses the function of allegory in connection with verses such as those about the Throne (*al-'arsh*) "then He established Himself upon the Throne" (Q. 7:54), the description of the polytheists at the time of death and God's sovereignty (Q. 34:5), the story of two disputants seeking judgment from David and its allegorical representation (Q. 41:21–25), God's command to heaven and earth (Q. 41:11), the story of Jonah (Q. 37: 139-148), or the narrative of the creation of Adam and Eve, the angels' prostration, and Iblīs's rebellion (Q. 2:30-39) (Parsa et al. 2020). He (2014, 13: 318) also sets out a general discussion of allegory in connection with verses such as Q. 18:45. Tabataba'i (2014, 3: 79) states that the purpose of these allegories is to facilitate comprehension, just as in literary allegory. He (2014, 2: 385–386) applies the principles of literary allegory to Qur'anic allegories. He insists that adequate contextual evidence is necessary to establish the presence of allegory in the Qur'an (2014, 2: 386; Parsa et al. 2020). He

further explains that even if an allegory were imaginative, no objection could be raised against the Qur’anic verses (2014, 2: 387). Accordingly, the claim that Tabataba’i regarded narratives such as the story of Adam or other historical accounts as merely allegorical lacks foundation. The philosophical notion of the “symbolic/allegorical language of religion” in linguistic differentiation debates is essentially distinct. Such a language neither seeks to explain nor to describe reality, and more precisely, it remains silent regarding external reality. By contrast, the allegory of which Tabataba’i speaks is a tool for expressing real concepts in simpler, more comprehensible terms for the audience.

Thus, there exists a fundamental distinction between allegory in Tabataba’i’s perspective and the philosophical concept of “symbolic language.” The allegory employed in the Qur’an, as understood by him, cannot provide a basis for claiming that Qur’anic language is “symbolic” in the philosophical sense. Symbolic language is not concerned with material reality and is not intended to convey it. By contrast, the allegory referenced by Tabataba’i serves an entirely different purpose: it is a device chosen by God to render real truths simpler and more intelligible. This kind of allegory, common in Arabic literary practice, is far removed from the symbolic language concept within linguistic differentiation. Therefore, the inference that Tabataba’i denied the external reality of Qur’anic stories and reduced the Qur’anic language to symbolic language (in its philosophical sense) is entirely unfounded.

4.1.2. The Necessity of Avoiding Subjective Presuppositions in Qur’anic Exegesis

In the introduction to *al-Mizān*, Tabataba’i (2014, 1: 6–9) critiques exegetical methods that employ philosophical, theological, or scientific concepts in interpreting the Qur’an. He argues that such approaches often impose the interpreter’s subjective presuppositions upon the Qur’anic verses. In his view, the Qur’anic text is independent and should not be interpreted within the restricted frameworks of the sciences, theology, or philosophy. Although Tabataba’i’s words at this stage suggest a certain distinction between the language of religion and the language of science, this differentiation does not imply the separation of the two, as proposed in the linguistic differentiation approach. In fact, Tabataba’i emphasizes that interpreters must approach the Qur’an with a mind free of such presuppositions and accept what the Qur’an states, regardless of the epistemological domain to which it belongs.

Therefore, contrary to the intent of the linguistic differentiation strategy,

the conclusion drawn from Tabataba'i's perspective is that, although the languages of religion and science are different, the realities presented by other sciences must ultimately be measured against the realities expressed in the Qur'an.

4.1.3. The Essential Difference between the Language of the Creator and the Creature

One of the key principles in Tabataba'i's (2014, 2: 325) thought is the essential difference between the language of the Creator and that of the creature. While he regards the essence of speech (*kalām*)_the transmission of meaning_as common to both divine and human discourse, he nevertheless posits a profound difference between them. This distinction does not lie in the use of words, the arrangement of sentences, or the employment of literary techniques and rhetorical devices. Rather, the difference pertains to the referent and denotation of the general concepts conveyed by speech (Tabataba'i 2014, 3: 79). Human beings are deficient creatures with limited cognition, whereas God is Wise and His knowledge is complete. Consequently, the use of language by these two beings is fundamentally different, and their discourse diverges drastically (Tabataba'i 2014, 5: 381–383).

In applying speech to God, Tabataba'i (2014, 14: 247–250) envisions two possibilities: either the Qur'an consists of letters and sounds, uttered in sequence indicating certain meanings, or it refers to meanings and cognitions of which these letters and sounds are merely conveyors, with their origin in the divine knowledge of God. In this second conception, Tabataba'i makes it clear that the Qur'an not only possesses an independent meaning and reality but also that this meaning and reality are grounded in God's attribute of knowledge and derive from it. Thus, the language of revelation, unlike human language, is not merely an instrument of conveying concepts but is a manifestation of Absolute Truth that has appeared in the form of human words. The acts and speech of God, the Exalted, do not merely conform to truth; they are truth itself (Tabataba'i 2014, 7: 118–121). At this juncture, Tabataba'i establishes a real and essential difference between divine language and human language, particularly in the transmission of meaning and the clarification of its referents_something closely akin to what the linguistic differentiation approach asserts. However, by examining Tabataba'i's exegetical practice, one may readily argue that despite affirming this difference, he does not accept the view that the physical, material, and empirical meanings derived from the so-called "scientific verses" of the Qur'an are meaningless or merely symbolic.

4.1.4. An Example of Exegesis: The Creation of Humanity

In discussing human creation, Tabataba'i maintains that the near-explicit meaning of the Qur'anic verses indicates that contemporary humanity traces its lineage, through reproduction, to a specific man and woman, the man being identified in the Qur'an as Adam. These first human beings were not born of any parents (Tabataba'i 2014, 16: 169–170).

Tabataba'i further argues that although the theory of evolution may attain credibility within the empirical sciences, the creation of humankind is an exception, described in the Qur'an as an extraordinary, miraculous phenomenon (Tabataba'i 2014, 8: 23; 16: 169). This exegesis demonstrates clearly that Tabataba'i considers the Qur'anic verses to have meanings that correspond to reality, and he does not regard them as silent or meaningless in relation to various sciences—even empirical sciences such as biology. Rather, he uses them as arguments. Several of Tabataba'i's students such as Javadi Amoli (2024) and Sobhani (1985) have also adopted this interpretation of the verses concerning human creation.

4.1.5. Comparative Examination with the View of Linguistic Differentiation

Tabataba'i's perspective and Wittgenstein's philosophy both emphasize that the languages of religion and science each possess their own rules and logic, making a comprehensive comparison between them impossible. Nonetheless, significant differences exist between these two views, rooted in their distinct philosophical and theological foundations. Whereas Wittgenstein stresses the limitations of language in expressing the truths of the world, Tabataba'i affirms the existence of a reality beyond sense perception, accessible only through religious knowledge. In other words, Tabataba'i holds that the realities expounded in divine discourse transcend the boundaries of human sensory experience, which cannot apprehend them empirically. Wittgenstein, by focusing on language games and the conventional nature of language, seeks to analyze its limitations. Tabataba'i, in contrast, endeavors to uncover Absolute Truth through the language of revelation. Indeed, the distinction between divine and human language in Tabataba'i's thought stems from his belief in the existence of a reality beyond matter, which God, the Exalted, has expressed for us in the words and language of the Qur'an. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, regarded religious language as incapable of expressing the truth and reality for which science is responsible.

4.2. *Motahhari and the Symbolic Language of the Qur'an*

A group of Shi'i scholars and thinkers, in order to resolve the conflict between science and religion, resorted to something akin to linguistic differentiation. They held (though only in very limited cases) that the content and wording of the Qur'an should be regarded as *tamthīl* (allegory), that is, as a representation intended to convey a meaning other than what is conventionally understood from speech. In justifying this view, they argued that since every discourse has its own independent aim and each aim requires a separate method, therefore with the language used in the domain of theology we cannot reach results outside that domain. Likewise, when we are in the domain of other sciences, such as biology, we cannot derive theological conclusions from it. Without doubt, Motahhari was among the first to raise this theory. Others, such as Makino (1970), Faramarz Qaramaleki (1994) and Kalantari (2008) can also be considered proponents of this approach.

Motahhari (1997, 16: 100) regards the foundation and basic principle of the language of the Qur'an as reality and truth. He considers it impossible for the divine discourse to be divorced from reality or to contain falsehood or carelessness. He goes so far as to assert that even when God relates a story for the sake of moral instruction or edification, that story nonetheless corresponds to an actual event in the external world. However, Motahhari concedes a single exception—namely, the story of the creation of Adam—where he maintains that although God's words possess an obvious, ordinary meaning, that ordinary meaning is likely only a metaphorical vehicle used to convey an ethical significance consistent with God's purpose in relating the account. In explicating this position, Motahhari (1997, 4: 164) first explains God's purpose in presenting the story of Adam, arguing that the narrative of Adam does appear in the Qur'an, but it is not offered as an *āyah* of theology or divine unity; rather, it functions as a moral lesson. It is intended to show, for example, what pride can do—as illustrated by Satan's pride—or what covetousness can do—as illustrated by Adam's greed—serving as an instructive ethical example rather than a doctrinal lesson of monotheism.

Motahhari (1997, 1: 514) further asserts that when the speaker's purpose is to impart matters that are not doctrinal or theological but ethical and moral, one should not derive meanings other than those intended by the speaker. By this logic, passages of the Qur'an that, in light of their context and accompanying indications, speak of human creation should be contemplated with the understanding that, in this view, such propositions are to be regarded as symbolic statements.

4.2.1. Comparative Examination with the View of Linguistic Differentiation

Although Motahhari advances this interpretation with great caution and only in a single case, it has nonetheless provoked the criticism of many exegetes and theologians. They contend that while it is correct that the Qur'an is not a book of empirical sciences and was not revealed for that purpose, nonetheless, in the course of its discourse_aimed at the moral cultivation of humankind_it occasionally makes references to empirical matters. Since the speaker of the Qur'an is God, the All-Wise and All-Knowing of all realities, these references must necessarily be in accordance with reality (Sobhani 1985, 11: 20; Marefat 2007, 6: 13–14).

Moreover, if one accepts that outside of the literary law of allegory there can be cases in which the apparent meaning serves only as an allegory to communicate a deeper spiritual meaning, then this theory may be said to resemble, in some respects, the notion of linguistic differentiation. However, as noted earlier, Motahhari refers to this possibility only in one case (the story of Adam), and even then, he regards the Qur'an's language as allegorical not throughout the entire story, but only in specific elements such as the miraculous dimension of human creation. Thus, unlike the comprehensive rule required by linguistic differentiation, proponents of this view do not treat it as a general principle.

4.3. Mojtabeh Shabestari and the Qur'an as the Prophet's Monotheistic Reading of the World

As previously mentioned, the full application of Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic differentiation to Islamic-Shi'i beliefs has always faced serious challenges, the primary obstacle being the conviction that both the text and the meaning of the Qur'an are divine. This belief, as a core principle of Shi'i doctrine, renders any interpretation grounded in the assumptions of linguistic differentiation_which are based on the limitations of the text or its author_extremely difficult. A number of reformist thinkers within the Shi'i tradition have challenged this fundamental belief. In order to curtail religious intervention in various domains, they have regarded the Qur'an as a non-divine text. On this basis, they made possible the separation between religious language and other discourses.

Muhammad Mojtabeh Shabestari was the first to introduce this perspective into Shi'i thought. Contrary to the near consensus of Shi'i theologians, Shabestari (2007) regards the Qur'an in both wording and meaning not as the speech of God but as the prophetic discourse and as the

Prophet Muhammad's monotheistic interpretation of the world in the light of revelation. He claims that various indications show that the Prophet never asserted that either the wording or the meanings of the Qur'an originated from God. In other words, the Qur'an is not the word of God; rather, it is the word of the Prophet. Shabestari (2000) further argues that no text can be understood without presuppositions, and the mind of the interpreter is never devoid of them. For him, identifying these presuppositions and analyzing the aim and intention of the speaker is essential for a sound understanding of the text. On this basis, he maintains that none of the Qur'an's declarative statements report objective realities of the world; rather, they reflect the Prophet's particular perspective on existence and humanity, constituting his prophetic interpretation and experience of the world as conveyed in the Qur'an.

4.3.1. Comparative Examination with the View of Linguistic Differentiation

Apart from the critique that can be leveled against Shabestari's view from the perspective of Shi'i theology and *fiqh* (jurisprudence), namely, that this theory is not only contradictory to the certain principles of Shi'a but also opposed to the fundamental beliefs of Islam and ultimately leads to the denial of the divine origin of the Qur'an and, in the end, to disbelief—it can be argued that Shabestari's theory is, in fact, a modern and reconstructed version of Western linguistic differentiation. Yet it must be remembered that this theory falters at its very foundation. In other words, although he adheres to hermeneutics and certain principles of Western linguistic differentiation, he does not remain faithful to Islamic-Shi'i doctrines and ideas. Therefore, this theory cannot be regarded as a Shi'i, or even an Islamic, theory that overlaps with Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic differentiation.

5. Conclusion

The theory of linguistic differentiation emerged as a salvific response to the dominant trend of logical positivism, which considered meaningless anything that transcended sensory experience and logical analysis. It provided, to some extent, answers to the conflicts between science and religion within Christian theology. This theory had various readings, three of which were examined in this study.

In contrast, examining this theory in the field of Shi'i thought demonstrates that there are fundamental differences between the two perspectives, which stem from different approaches to religious texts. In Shi'i thought, it is believed that the difference between the language of the

Creator and that of the creature is essential and results from the divine nature of religious texts such as the Qur'an. Consequently, there exists a serious challenge to applying the notion of linguistic differentiation in its Western sense_ where the limitations are attributed to the speaker of the text or to the text itself_ within Shi'i theology.

Thinkers such as Motahhari, who in only one instance accepted a theory similar to linguistic differentiation, emphasized that this does not mean that religious texts are meaningless in discussions beyond religious domains. Rather, they insisted on the meaningfulness of religious texts in their conventional sense. However, reformist thinkers who have pursued linguistic differentiation by denying the divine origin of the Qur'anic verses have, in fact, distanced themselves from Shi'i beliefs. Therefore, it can be concluded that, up to the present, no comprehensive and complete theory has been offered to justify the notion of linguistic differentiation in its Western reading within Shi'i theology.

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Critical Discourse Analysis of Surah al-Ghāshīyah: A Faircloughian Approach

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ABSTRACT:

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The Meccan Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* in the Qur'an, with its cohesive structure, constructs a multi-layered discourse through descriptions of the Day of Judgment, invitations to reflect on creation, and an emphasis on the Prophet's guiding role, promoting monotheistic faith and challenging the polytheistic hegemony of Mecca. This study examines how the surah represents theological concepts such as monotheism, resurrection, human responsibility, and social concepts including justice, faithful identity, and a critique of polytheism, while confronting the power structures of the Quraysh. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, which views language as a social practice for reproducing or transforming power relations, the study is conducted at three levels: textual, discursive process, and social practice. Findings indicate that the surah employs contrastive vocabulary, concise grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices such as antithesis, repetition, and rhetorical questions to represent the dichotomy between faith and disbelief. These tools, by reinforcing the process of othering, promote faithful identity as a legitimate and ethical alternative, undermining polytheistic hegemony. The surah also proposes a social order based on justice and spiritual equality through intertextuality and the integration of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses. This analysis elucidates the role of religious texts in social transformations and contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language and power in the historical context of Mecca.

KEYWORDS: Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Qur'anic discourse, Norman Fairclough, Othering, Hegemony, Rhetorical strategies, Intertextuality.

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1. Introduction

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* constructs a multi-layered discourse through a cohesive structure by describing the states of two opposing groups on the Day of Judgment (Q. 88:1–16), inviting reflection on the signs of creation (Q. 88:17–20), and emphasizing the Prophet’s (PBUH) role as a reminder (Q. 88:21–26), serving as a divine warning and a call to reconsider beliefs and behaviors (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 10:723; al-Zarkashī 1997, 1:193). The name *al-Ghāshīyah*, meaning “the overwhelming” or referring to the Day of Judgment or fire, reflects its thematic focus (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 10:725; Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah 2001, 5:472). With its concise and eloquent style, the surah focuses on the concepts of monotheism, resurrection, and human responsibility, addressing Meccan polytheists with a warning and inviting tone to reconsider their beliefs.

In the Meccan context—a tribal society with power structures rooted in a commercial economy and polytheism—Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* promotes monotheistic faith as a religious text (Maqdisī 1962, 4:32). The polytheists, relying on tribal rituals, idol worship, and the economic benefits of the Kaaba, resisted the monotheistic message. The surah, with its rhetorical language and vivid imagery of paradise and hell, targets this resistance and reconstructs social and religious identity. Fairclough’s (1992) critical discourse analysis, emphasizing the nexus of language, power, and ideology, elucidates how the surah shapes meanings and produces social impacts.

The primary research question explores how Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* represents theological (monotheism, resurrection, and human responsibility) and social (justice, faithful identity, and critique of polytheism) concepts, and its role in confronting the power structures of Meccan polytheists. The surah highlights the dichotomy between faith and disbelief through linguistic tools like antithesis and rhetorical questions, proposing a new social order based on justice and spiritual equality. Fairclough’s (2015) framework, viewing language as a social practice and a tool for reproducing or transforming power relations, is employed to analyze this process.

The study aims to demonstrate how the surah reinforces faithful identity, critiques polytheistic beliefs, and promotes a new social order. Its significance lies in several aspects: First, religious texts are powerful discursive tools for political and cultural transformations (Said 1978). Second, Fairclough’s framework enables a deep analysis of the language-power nexus. Third, this study enriches Qur’anic studies in discourse analysis and clarifies the role of religious texts in confronting power

structures. Thus, the research focuses on the question: How does Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its linguistic features, discursive processes, and interaction with Mecca's social structures, represent and promote monotheistic discourse while challenging polytheistic hegemony?

2. Literature Review

Discourse analysis of Qur'anic verses and surahs using Fairclough's approach has gained attention in recent years. Many of these studies focus on specific verses or Qur'anic narratives, while fewer address a comprehensive analysis of an entire surah. For instance, the following articles focus on specific Qur'anic sections: Zolfaghari and Dastaranj (2019) on challenge verses; Salehi and Afshar (2019) on the story of Prophet Moses; Fattahizadeh and Mo'tamed Langaroudi (2021) on hypocrisy verses; Mirbazel and Arjomandi (2021) on Surah *al-Kahf*; Mahmoudi and Alipour (2024) on the story of Lot's people; Safayi Sangari and Karimi (2024) on Prophet Abraham's story; and Shirzadi et al. (2023) on descriptions of the Day of Judgment. Some studies, such as Molla Ebrahimi and Nouraeinia (2024) on the depiction of believers in Surah *al-Baqarah*, focus on linguistic and rhetorical aspects but give less attention to the socio-historical context of revelation. In contrast, this study comprehensively analyzes Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* and examines its interaction with the socio-historical context of early Islamic Mecca. Its focus on the social context and the surah's role in reconfiguring power relations offers an innovative approach in comparison with language-centric studies. Some articles, such as Asvadi and Sedarat (2022) on Surah *al-Duḥā*, and Seyedi and Mahfouzi Mousavi (2021) on Surah *al-Qasas*, have conducted discourse analyses of complete surahs, but Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* has not yet been subjected to critical discourse analysis. This study, utilizing Fairclough's framework, fills this gap and elucidates the surah's role in confronting Mecca's power structures.

3. Theoretical Framework

Critical discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary approach, examines language within its social context (Wodak & Meyer 2001). British linguist Norman Fairclough (2015) systematized this approach, viewing language as a social practice and a tool for reproducing or transforming power relations and ideologies. In Fairclough's (1992) view, discourse is a network of meanings that, within specific social and historical contexts, reproduces or challenges power relations. Drawing on the critical theories of Foucault and Gramsci, critical discourse analysis focuses on texts in which language serves to maintain hegemony or foster resistance (Fairclough 2003).

Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for discourse analysis, comprising three interconnected levels:

a) Textual Level: Examines linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric, demonstrating how linguistic choices highlight or marginalize meanings (Fairclough 1992).

b) Discursive Process Level: Addresses the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, including analysis of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and implicit assumptions (Fairclough 2003).

c) Social Practice Level: Situates the text within its social and historical context, exploring its role in reproducing or transforming power structures and identities (Fairclough 1995).

Applying Fairclough's approach to religious texts, particularly Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, is significant for several reasons. This approach views religious texts like the Qur'an not only as theological tools but also as discourses that shape religious and social identities within specific social contexts (Wodak & Meyer 2001). Fairclough's emphasis on the language-power nexus makes it highly suitable for analyzing religious texts in historical contexts such as early Islamic Mecca. This approach not only facilitates a deeper understanding of how religious discourses function but also demonstrates how texts like the Qur'an, through language, contribute to ideological and social transformations.

4. Textual Analysis of Surah al-Ghāshīyah

The textual level in Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework examines the linguistic and structural features of a text to reveal how lexical choices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices produce and represent specific meanings (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, with its 26 verses and concise structure characteristic of Meccan surahs, referred to as *hilyah al-Qur'ān* (al-Zamakhsharī 1986, 1:102), employs rich linguistic and rhetorical features to represent theological and social concepts in the context of early Islamic Mecca. This section, focusing on vocabulary, grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and textual coherence, demonstrates how Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, as a discursive text, challenges Meccan polytheists and reinforces faithful identity. The analysis, grounded in Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (text, discursive practice, and social practice) and the interplay of language and power, draws on critical discourse analysis sources (Fairclough 2015) alongside traditional Islamic references to elucidate linguistic and ideological connections.

4.1. Vocabulary and Lexical Choices

Lexical choices in Surah *al-Ghāshiyah* play a pivotal role in conveying meanings and creating emotional and intellectual impacts on the audience. Fairclough emphasizes that vocabulary not only conveys meanings but, through specific choices, highlights or marginalizes particular ideologies, contributing to the reproduction or disruption of power relations (Fairclough 2003). In Surah *al-Ghāshiyah*, vocabulary is selected to create a stark contrast between the faithful and disbelievers, which, in the Meccan context where polytheists resisted the monotheistic call held strategic significance and facilitated “othering” (Van Dijk 2000) between disbelievers and believers, serving as a tool to challenge polytheistic hegemony.

The opening verses (Q. 88:2–7), describing the state of disbelievers on the Day of Judgment, employ vocabulary with negative and anguished connotations. The term *khāshi‘ah* (humiliated) in verse 2, meaning humiliating submission, conveys a state of abasement and powerlessness; its lexical meaning, “looking down at the ground” (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 1:112), reflects this condition. In Arab culture, where tribal honor and pride were highly valued, this term served as a shocking warning for Meccan polytheists. From Fairclough’s perspective (Fairclough 1992), *khāshi‘ah*, by representing disbelievers as a humiliated and powerless group, undermines the polytheists’ identity rooted in tribal authority and the Kaaba’s status. This term contributes to the “othering” process by distinguishing “self” (believers) from “other” (disbelievers), marginalizing the polytheistic discourse that emphasized earthly honor and power. This lexical choice, at the level of reciprocal relations (Fairclough 2015), challenges the Quraysh’s hegemony based on wealth and religious influence, presenting monotheistic discourse as a legitimate alternative.

The terms *‘āmilatun nāṣibah* (wrought-up and weary) in verse 3 depict the futile efforts and endless suffering of disbelievers, contrasting with Meccan culture’s veneration of material success and demonstrating the futility of disbelief (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3896). Lexically, *naṣb* connotes hardship and difficulty (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991). Such lexical choices (Fairclough 2003), by representing disbelief as a failed path, question the legitimacy of the polytheists’ materialistic discourse and present monotheistic discourse as superior.

The terms *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire) and *‘aynin ānīyah* (boiling hot spring) in verses 4 and 5 create vivid and terrifying images of punishment, eliciting a profound emotional impact on Mecca’s oral audience (Sayyid

Qutb 2004, 6:3896). The term *ḥāmīyah* means hot (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 3:314), and *ānīyah* signifies extreme heat (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 8:399). From a discursive perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), these terms, by instilling fear and anxiety, represent disbelievers as a group doomed to moral and social failure, reinforcing “othering” and undermining the polytheistic hegemony based on wealth and tribal power.

In contrast, the verses concerning believers (Q. 88:8–16) employ vocabulary with positive and soothing connotations. The term *nā'imah* (joyful) in verse 8, meaning freshness and comfort, implicitly conveys a state of joy and serenity reflected in the face (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274). From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2003), *nā'imah*, by representing believers as a group enjoying happiness and tranquility, positions faithful identity as superior and desirable compared to polytheistic identity, contributing to the process of “othering” through its contrast with *khāshī'ah*. The term *rādīyah* (pleased) in verse 9 reflects the believers' inner contentment with their deeds, presenting faith as a path to happiness in contrast to the disbelievers' suffering (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274). By emphasizing spiritual satisfaction, this term prioritizes spiritual and ethical values over the polytheists' materialism, thereby marginalizing the Quraysh's wealth- and power-based hegemony (Van Dijk 2000).

Descriptions of paradise with phrases like *jannatun 'ālīyah* (garden on high), *'aynun jāriyah* (bubbling spring), and *sururun marfū'ah* (raised couches) in verses 10–16 create images of abundance and tranquility (Fadlallah 1998, 24:223), which held particular appeal in Meccan culture that valued material prosperity. From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2015), such terms, by representing divine rewards, reinforce the legitimacy of monotheistic discourse, promote faithful identity as a path to happiness and legitimacy through the distinction between “self” (believers) and “other” (disbelievers), and render the choice between faith and disbelief tangible for the audience both visually and emotionally.

4.2. Grammatical Structures

The grammatical structures of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* contribute to its conciseness and coherence, organizing meanings in a way that enhances its discursive impact. Fairclough argues that grammatical structures, such as word order and sentence types, play a role in representing power relations and meanings (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* employs short, concise declarative sentences, suitable for the Meccan oral audience accustomed to brevity and impact. From Fairclough's perspective, these structures, by creating a sense of certainty and authority (high modality),

reinforce the monotheistic discourse as legitimate and divine (Fairclough 2003).

For instance, verses 2–7 and 8–16 utilize parallel structures: *Wujūhun yawma'idhin khāshi'ah* (Some faces, that Day, will be humiliated) versus *Wujūhun yawma'idhin nā'imah* (Faces that Day will be joyful). This parallelism structurally highlights the contrast between the two groups, enabling direct comparison for the audience. The use of nominal sentences, such as *Wujūhun yawma'idhin khāshi'ah* and *lisa'yihā rādīyah* (Pleased with their striving), instead of verbal sentences, imparts a sense of stability and certainty to the descriptions. From Fairclough's (2015) perspective, nominal sentences, by conveying a sense of permanence and immutability, establish disbelievers as a group doomed to humiliation and believers as a group enjoying felicity.

This syntactic choice, by representing disbelief as a fixed and inevitable state, undermines polytheistic hegemony and presents faith as a legitimate and stable path. Additionally, verses 17–20 employ interrogative structures (*aḡalā yanzurūna ilā... – Do they not look at...*), shifting from a declarative to an interrogative tone, specifically using rhetorical negation (*istifhām inkārī*) (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 30:269), directly engaging the audience in the discourse. These structures, by inviting rational reflection and fostering a sense of invitation rather than coercion (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), promote monotheistic discourse as a logical and rational perspective in opposition to polytheistic beliefs.

4.3. Rhetorical Devices

The rhetorical devices in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, such as antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, and imagery, play a key role in enhancing its discursive impact. Fairclough (2003) emphasizes that these devices, by creating meanings and expressing certainty or probability, target the audience's emotions and perceptions, thereby reproducing or transforming power relations.

The most prominent rhetorical device in the surah is the antithesis between the depiction of disbelievers (Q. 88:2–7) and believers (Q. 88:8–16), which, through parallel structures and contrasting vocabulary, portrays two distinct paths: suffering and punishment for disbelievers versus felicity and tranquility for believers. From Fairclough's perspective (1992), this antithesis, by creating meaning through the contrast between faith and disbelief, represents monotheistic discourse as a legitimate and ethical path, marginalizing polytheistic discourse. Thus, antithesis, by reinforcing

othering, highlights faithful identity against polytheistic identity and undermines the power relations of polytheism.

Another rhetorical device is repetition, evident in verses 17–20 with the structure *afalā yanẓurūna ilā...* (Do they not look at...) and the repeated use of *kayfa* (how) in reference to the camel, sky, mountains, and earth. Repetition is a method of influencing the audience (Khoei 2006). From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2015), repetition, as a tool for constructing meaning, reinforces the monotheistic argument by highlighting signs of creation and, by inviting rational reflection, challenges polytheistic beliefs that attributed creation to multiple deities. Thus, through coherence and emphasis, it promotes monotheistic discourse as a logical and rational perspective. In the oral culture of the Hijaz, where repetition was a common rhetorical device in poetry and oratory (Sayyid Murtaḍā 1994), this technique had a profound impact.

The first verse and verses 17–20 employ rhetorical questions, prompting the audience to reflect and respond. The opening question, with its distinctive tone, connects the audience to the theme of the Day of Judgment, while the questions in verses 17–20, by inviting contemplation of creation, provide a rational argument. From a discursive perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), rhetorical questions, by creating a sense of certainty and inviting reflection, encourage the audience to embrace monotheistic discourse and challenge polytheistic beliefs rooted in the denial of resurrection and multiple deities, presenting monotheistic discourse as a rational and legitimate perspective. Such rhetorical questions, which are not intended literally, aim to convey secondary meanings like negation or reproach in the Qur'an (Tantawi 1997, 1:88).

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* also employs vivid imagery to describe the Day of Judgment and creation (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3897). Descriptions like *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire) and *ʿaynin ānīyah* (boiling hot spring) for disbelievers and jannatun *ʿālīyah* (garden on high) and *ʿaynun jāriyah* (bubbling spring) for believers create tangible images that had emotional and visual impact for the Meccan audience accustomed to poetic description. These images, by creating meaning (Fairclough 1992), transform abstract concepts like resurrection into tangible realities and, by evoking an emotional contrast between punishment and reward, represent faith as a path to felicity and disbelief as a path to suffering. This approach also weakens polytheistic hegemony and strengthens faithful identity by influencing the audience's emotions.

4.4. Textual Coherence and Structure

The coherence of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* is achieved through its tripartite division: description of the Day of Judgment (Q. 88:1–16), signs of creation (Q. 88:17–20), and the Prophet's role (Q. 88:21–26). Fairclough (1995) defines discursive order as an arrangement of meanings and power relations that, through textual structures, reproduce or transform social and ideological relations. In Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, the discursive order is not limited to internal textual coherence (e.g., connections through pronouns and linguistic connectors) but constitutes a strategic arrangement of meanings that positions monotheistic discourse against polytheistic discourse.

The tripartite division moving from the description of the Day of Judgment (emotional warning), to signs of creation (rational argument), and then to the Prophet's role and divine authority (establishing monotheistic authority) creates a discursive order that undermines polytheistic hegemony and represents monotheistic discourse as legitimate and dominant (Fairclough 2015). This structure, with its logical and emotional progression, guides the Meccan audience from fear and reflection to the acceptance of guidance (Wodak & Meyer 2001). According to some exegetes, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* was revealed in its entirety, and its thematic unity supports this view (Darwaza 2000, 5:45). However, its coherence can also be demonstrated across its diverse sections.

The first section, with a warning tone, focuses the audience on the Day of Judgment, highlighting the importance of choosing faith through contrast. The second section, by inviting reflection on creation, provides a monotheistic argument that challenges polytheistic beliefs. The third section, emphasizing the Prophet's role as a reminder and as a bearer of divine authority, brings the discourse to an authoritative conclusion. The surah's discursive order, by representing power relations (divine authority versus Quraysh's tribal power), establishes monotheistic discourse as a legitimate and superior alternative, encouraging the audience to embrace monotheistic ideology through semantic coherence (Fairclough 1992).

Coherence is further reinforced through pronouns and linguistic connectors. The pronoun *yawma 'idhin* (that Day) in verses 2 and 8 creates a temporal link between descriptions of the Day of Judgment. Logical connectors like *fa* in verse 21 (*fadhakkir* – Therefore, do thou remind) and *illā* in verse 23 maintain the text's argumentative flow. These linguistic elements, within the framework of discursive order (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), ensure textual coherence and, by creating semantic connections

between the Day of Judgment, creation, and divine authority, position monotheistic discourse as cohesive and authoritative against the fragmented and irrational polytheistic discourse. This coherence transforms the surah into a text that is both emotional (through imagery of the Day of Judgment) and rational (through signs of creation), rendering it impactful for the Meccan audience that valued coherence in oral orations.

4.5. *Textual Context Analysis*

The textual context of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, particularly in comparison with other Meccan surahs, reflects a specific discursive strategy. Meccan surahs typically focus on conciseness, a warning tone, and calls to monotheism (al-Suyūṭī 2015, 1:69). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, by combining descriptions of the Day of Judgment, signs of creation, and the Prophet's role, presents these features in a focused manner that both counters polytheistic resistance and introduces faith as a meaningful alternative.

From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2003), this textual context, with its meaning-making function, integrates the surah into the broader Qur'anic discourse aimed at transforming Meccan society's beliefs and challenging polytheistic hegemony through the interplay of language and power.

4.6. *Conclusion of Textual Level Analysis*

The textual level analysis demonstrates that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through contrastive vocabulary, concise and parallel grammatical structures, rhetorical devices such as antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, and imagery, and cohesive textual structure, represents theological and social concepts in a manner that serves both as a warning to Meccan polytheists and an invitation to faith.

The quality of lexical choices in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, from the perspective of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, is highly effective and strategic. Terms like *khāshī'ah*, *nā'imah*, *nāran ḥāmīyah*, and *jannatun 'ālīyah* are carefully selected to create semantic and emotional contrasts, reinforcing the process of "othering." These terms, by representing disbelievers as a debased group and believers as enjoying felicity, promote faithful identity as a legitimate and appealing alternative while effectively undermining polytheistic hegemony rooted in tribal honor and wealth.

The appeal of these lexical choices, given the oral culture and materialistic values of Mecca, is emotionally and visually impactful, making

abstract concepts like resurrection tangible through vivid imagery. The meaning-making function of these lexical choices establishes monotheistic discourse as dominant and rational, marginalizing polytheistic discourse and contributing to the transformation of power relations in Meccan society (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The surah's textual structure, with its discursive order, reconfigures power relations through the logical and emotional progression of its verses, positioning divine authority against the Quraysh's tribal power and establishing monotheistic discourse as a legitimate alternative (Wodak & Meyer 2001). These features, by creating a distinction between "self" (believers) and "other" (disbelievers) through "othering," meaning-making functions, and modality, reinforce faithful identity and challenge the polytheistic hegemony rooted in tribal power and wealth. Thus, the surah functions as a discursive tool that marginalizes polytheistic beliefs and promotes faith as a path to felicity and rationality.

5. *Discursive Process Level Analysis*

The discursive process level in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, focusing on concepts such as intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and implicit assumptions (Fairclough 2003). This level reveals how a text interacts with other discourses and how meanings are shaped through interaction with social and historical contexts, and interpreted by specific audiences. Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, revealed in the early years of the Prophet's mission within the oral and polytheistic context of Mecca, produces and conveys its theological and social meanings through interaction with pre-existing discourses, implicit assumptions, and discursive processes. This analysis, focusing on these elements, explores the surah's role in shaping monotheistic ideology and challenging polytheistic beliefs.

5.1. *Intertextuality*

Intertextuality refers to a text's connection with prior or contemporary texts or discourses, showing how a new text borrows from or redefines existing discourses (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, in the Meccan context_a society with diverse cultural and religious interactions_engages with prior religious discourses (particularly those of the Abrahamic traditions) and Arab oral and cultural discourses. This intertextuality enables the surah to introduce new monotheistic concepts while connecting with the audience's existing beliefs and knowledge, thereby reducing resistance.

The depiction of the punishment of disbelievers with *nāran ḥāmīyah*

(blazing fire) and the reward of believers with *jannatun ‘ālīyah* pertains to descriptions of the Day of Judgment. A key aspect of intertextuality in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* is its connection with Abrahamic religious discourses concerning the Day of Judgment and divine accountability. While the Pentateuch lacks references to the afterlife, the concept of the afterlife in the Talmud became a central idea following the Babylonian captivity (Mashkour 1989). However, the Gospels address this topic more explicitly (John 5:28). Thus, the theme of the Day of Judgment is a shared element among Abrahamic religions, albeit to varying degrees. The opening verses (Q. 88:2–16), describing the states of disbelievers and believers on the Day of Judgment, share thematic connections with Jewish and Christian narratives.

Additionally, verses 17–20, which invite reflection on the signs of creation (camel, sky, mountains, earth), engage with Arab oral and poetic traditions. In pre-Islamic culture, poets often used nature as a subject for reflection and praise, with descriptions of animals and natural phenomena common in their poetry (Ayati 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, by referencing the camel—a symbol of survival and economic importance for Arabs—and other elements of creation, employs this tradition while transforming it from a discourse of nature worship to a monotheistic argument. This intertextuality presents monotheistic discourse in a familiar format for the Meccan audience, thereby reducing their resistance.

5.2. *Interdiscursivity*

Interdiscursivity refers to the combination and interaction of various discourses within a single text, demonstrating how a text employs different types of discourse (such as warning, argumentative, or persuasive discourses) to achieve its objectives (Fairclough 2003). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* employs a complex blend of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses, each serving the theological and social purposes of the surah. This combination transforms the surah into a multifaceted text that operates both emotionally (to influence the audience’s feelings) and rationally (to persuade intellectually).

The opening verses (Q. 88:1–7) establish a “warning discourse” by describing the punishment of disbelievers on the Day of Judgment. The first verse, “*Hal atāka ḥadīthu al-Ghāshīyah?*” (Has the news of the Overwhelming Event reached you?), directs the audience to a profound and terrifying subject, while the subsequent verses, with expressions such as *khāshi‘ah* (humiliated), *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire), and *ḍarī‘* (bitter food), evoke fear and anxiety. This alarming discourse, in the context of

Mecca where polytheists denied the afterlife_served as a warning to reconsider their beliefs.

Verses 17–20 employ an “argumentative discourse” by inviting reflection on the signs of creation. The interrogative structure “Do they not look at...” and the emphasis on *kayf* (how) indicate an invitation to contemplation and reasoning, which stood in contrast to the polytheists’ belief in associating partners with God. This discourse, by presenting tangible signs of creation, introduced monotheism as a logical and rational perspective, urging the audience to reconsider polytheism.

Verses 8–16 and 21–26 present a “persuasive discourse.” The depiction of the believers’ reward with imagery such as *jannatun ‘ālīyah* (Garden on high), *‘aynun jāriyah* (bubbling spring) and the emphasis on divine satisfaction with *lisa ‘yihā rādīyah* (Pleased with their striving) encourages faith. The concluding verses, emphasizing the Prophet’s role as a reminder with “You are only a reminder” and divine authority with “To Us is their return,” create an authoritative discourse that promotes faith as a moral choice while marginalizing the earthly power of polytheists. This discursive combination transforms the surah into a tool that targets both the audience’s emotions and intellect.

5.3. *Implicit Assumptions*

Implicit assumptions are beliefs or knowledge that a text expects its audience to accept or at least consider plausible (Fairclough 1995). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* introduces assumptions that align with the cultural and religious context of Mecca but redirects them toward a monotheistic discourse. These assumptions enable the surah to connect with its polytheistic audience while challenging their beliefs.

Firstly, the surah assumes that the audience is familiar with the concept of the Day of Judgment and divine accountability, or at least accepts it as a plausible possibility. The first verse, “Has the news of the Overwhelming Event reached you?”_with a tone that assumes the audience is prepared to hear momentous news_reinforces this belief. Although most polytheists did not believe in the afterlife, some were familiar with the concept due to their beliefs (Farrukh 1984). Thus, this assumption allowed the surah to build its discourse on a shared foundation.

Secondly, verses 17–20 assume that the audience is capable of reflecting on nature and interpreting it as evidence of a single Creator. References to camels, the sky, mountains, and the earth, which were tangible and familiar to Meccan Arabs (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6: 3898), reinforce this assumption.

This assumption counters polytheistic beliefs that attributed creation to multiple deities, presenting a monotheistic argument.

Finally, the concluding verses (Q. 88:21–26) assume that the audience is already familiar with the Prophet’s role through the Qur’an, even if they do not wholeheartedly believe in it. The emphasis on “You are only a reminder” and “You are not a controller over them” reflects an effort to gain the audience’s trust.

5.4. Processes of Production and Consumption

The processes of production and consumption of a text refer to how it is created and received within its social context. Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, in the oral context of Mecca, was delivered by the Prophet (PBUH) gradually, through public sermons or private gatherings. This mode of production, consistent with Mecca’s oral culture, allowed the surah to engage directly with its audience. The consumption of the surah occurred on two levels: first, by polytheists who often responded with resistance or, on rare occasions, with reflection (Q. 21:2–3); and second, by believers who received it as a source of strengthened faith and perseverance (Q. 6:92). These processes transformed the surah into a dynamic part of Mecca’s social dialogue.

5.5. Summary of the Discursive Process Level

Analysis at the discursive process level reveals that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through intertextuality with the discourses of Abrahamic religions and pre-Islamic Arab oral traditions, and interdiscursivity with a combination of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses, along with implicit assumptions about the audience’s beliefs, creates a multifaceted discourse. These processes enabled the surah, in the Meccan context, to engage with existing beliefs, challenge polytheistic resistance, and promote monotheistic ideology as a meaningful alternative.

6. Analysis of the Social Practice Level

The social practice level in Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis framework examines the role of a text within its social, historical, and cultural context, illustrating how texts contribute to reproducing, maintaining, or transforming power structures, identities, and social orders (Fairclough 1995). Revealed in the middle years of the Meccan period, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, as a social practice, challenged polytheistic hegemony,

reinforced the nascent faith-based identity, and proposed a new social order based on monotheism and divine justice. This analysis, focusing on Mecca's social context, explores the surah's discursive role in confronting power structures and its impact on social transformations.

6.1. *Social and Historical Context of Mecca*

Mecca in early Islam was a tribal city with a commercial economy dominated by the Quraysh. As custodians of the Kaaba and intermediaries of trade, the Quraysh held social and religious authority, reinforcing a polytheistic discourse and resisting the monotheistic call (Hodgson 1974). Within Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, the social practice level examines how a text interacts with, represents, or restructures social structures (Fairclough 1992). Through its vocabulary, grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* challenges the Quraysh's dominance and tribal identity, promoting a distinct faith-based identity. This section, by distinguishing historical data from discursive analysis, examines the surah's interaction with Mecca's social structures and analyzes the effectiveness of its warning, argumentative, and persuasive methods.

6.2. *Reinforcing Faith-Based Identity*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through vocabulary and imagery such as *nā'imah* (joyful), *rādīyah* (pleased), and *jannatun 'ālīyah* (elevated Garden), represents a collective faith-based identity. According to discourse identity theory, identities are shaped through discourses that define social differences through processes of othering (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). The terms *nā'imah* (joyful) and *rādīyah* (pleased) portray believers as a group enjoying spiritual felicity (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274), standing in contrast to the Quraysh's tribal identity based on lineage and wealth (Hodgson 1974). These terms, contrasted with *khāshī'ah* (humiliated), reinforce the process of othering and establish the faith-based identity as a distinct and collective identity (Van Dijk 2000). For instance, the emphasis on *rādīyah* (pleased) highlights spiritual values in contrast to the Quraysh's materialism, contributing to the formation of a collective identity based on faith and spiritual equality (Berkey 2003). This representation, by promoting values such as justice and fairness, challenges Mecca's class-based structure that privileged Quraysh elites (Donner 2010). By emphasizing individual responsibility, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* promotes ethical values in opposition to Quraysh hegemony (Cook 2000). The contrast between these values and the Quraysh's class privileges (Fadlallah 1998, 24:223) strengthens the faith-

based identity as an alternative to tribal identity, advocating values such as fairness and justice over Mecca's unequal structures.

6.3. *Challenging Polytheistic Hegemony*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through rhetorical devices, restructures the Quraysh's hegemony, which was based on tribal authority, trade, and idol worship (al-Kalbī 2000; al-Ya'qūbī 2008, 1:349). Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that discursive texts transform existing hegemonies by representing power relations. In the verse, "On that Day, faces will be humbled" (Q. 88:2), the use of a nominal sentence and the omission of God as the agent of punishment convey a sense of certainty and inevitability, emphasizing divine authority over the Quraysh's tribal power. This rhetorical device portrays disbelievers as a passive group, undermining the Quraysh's religious influence tied to their custodianship of the Kaaba (Crone 1987).

Additionally, the rhetorical questions in verses 17–20, inviting reflection on creation, challenge the legitimacy of polytheistic beliefs that attributed the world to multiple deities (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3897). These questions, with their meaning-making function, position the monotheistic discourse as a rational perspective in contrast to polytheistic discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), inviting the audience to reconsider polytheism and weakening the Quraysh's religious authority tied to their custodianship of the Kaaba (Peters 1994). Thus, the surah's rhetorical devices, by undermining the Quraysh's authority, represent the monotheistic discourse as a rational and ethical alternative.

6.4. *A New Social Order*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* proposes a social order based on monotheism and justice, contrasting with Mecca's tribal and class-based structure. Verses 21–26, "So remind, you are only a reminder... Indeed, to Us is their account," emphasize the Prophet's guiding role and divine authority, replacing tribal loyalty with individual accountability to God. These verses, by representing divine authority as the ultimate reference, restructure Mecca's social order rooted in lineage and wealth (Lapidus 1988).

The surah promotes ethical values, enjoining good and forbidding evil in opposition to polytheism (Cook 2000). For example, the depiction of believers' rewards in verses 8–16 with expressions such as *jannatun 'ālīyah* and *'aynun jāriyah* promotes values of spiritual equality and universal felicity, contrasting with Mecca's social inequalities, such as the privileges

of Quraysh elites (Crone 1987). Consequently, this order, emphasizing divine justice and individual accountability, is presented as an alternative to tribal-based social structures (Berkey 2003), proposing a social order that restructures Mecca's tribal inequalities through divine justice and spiritual equality.

6.5. Summary of the Social Practice Level Analysis

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* employs warning, argumentative, and persuasive methods to restructure Mecca's social structures and promote a faith-based identity. These methods, by engaging with power relations and social identities, are effective in contexts with similar structures:

a) Warning Method: Verses 1–7, with descriptions of disbelievers' punishment using terms like *nāran ḥāmīyah* (Blazing Fire), *'aynin ānīyah* (boiling spring), and *khāshi 'ah* (humiliated), convey a sense of degradation and the consequences of disbelief. This method, by portraying disbelievers as a passive group subject to divine authority, undermines the Quraysh's hegemony based on tribal pride.

b) Argumentative Method: Verses 17–20, with rhetorical questions such as “Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?” invite reflection on the signs of creation. These questions, with their meaning-making function, challenge polytheistic beliefs that attribute creation to multiple deities, establishing the monotheistic discourse as a rational perspective.

c) Persuasive Method: Verses 8–16, with descriptions of believers' rewards using terms like *jannatun 'ālīyah*, *nā'imah*, and *rādīyah*, portray faith as a path to felicity. This method, by creating a faith-based discursive identity, positions values of equality and justice against the Quraysh's materialism and social inequality, reinforcing the believers' collective identity.

Together, these methods, by representing power relations and social identities, establish the monotheistic discourse as an alternative to Mecca's tribal and polytheistic system. Their combination emphasizing divine authority, justice, and spiritual equality proposes a social order that restructures hierarchical structures and promotes a collective and distinct faith-based identity.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its linguistic and rhetorical features, represents and promotes the monotheistic discourse

as a legitimate and ethical alternative to Mecca's polytheistic system. At the textual level, contrastive vocabulary, parallel structures, and rhetorical questions highlight the dichotomy between faith and disbelief, making abstract concepts like the afterlife tangible through vivid imagery of paradise and hell. These tools, by reinforcing the process of othering, establish the faith-based identity as a superior and collective identity, undermining the Quraysh's hegemony based on tribal pride and wealth. At the discursive process level, the surah through intertextuality with Abrahamic religious discourses and pre-Islamic Arab oral traditions, and through a combination of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses, engages with the beliefs of the Meccan audience, inviting them to reconsider polytheism. At the social practice level, the surah, by proposing a social order based on monotheism, justice, and spiritual equality, restructures Mecca's tribal and class-based systems. Overall, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its language and rhetoric, promotes monotheistic discourse and challenges polytheistic hegemony. This study reveals that religious texts beyond their theological function serve as discursive tools for social transformation, highlighting the profound connection between language and power in historical contexts.

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Rukū' as a Semantic Unit: A Novel Approach to Interpreting the Qur'an with a Case Study of the Tenth Rukū' of Surah al-Naḥl

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ABSTRACT:

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One of the internal divisions of the Qur'anic text is the *rukū'*, which, as a semantic unit, provides significant potential for rereading the text and uncovering new interpretive levels. Nevertheless, this division has been largely neglected in many contemporary Qur'anic codices and rarely addressed in Qur'anic studies. The present study aims to propose and apply an approach of Qur'anic interpretation based on *rukū'* analysis, focusing on the tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Naḥl (Q. 16:71–76). Conducted through a descriptive-analytical approach, the research proceeds in three stages: first, elaborating the proposed approach of understanding the Qur'an through *rukū'* units; second, applying this approach to the tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Naḥl as a paragraph-like semantic unit; and third, assessing the findings by comparing them with the exegetical categorizations of other commentators.

The results indicate that verses 71–76 of Surah al-Naḥl form a structurally and thematically coherent passage that can be identified as an independent semantic unit. Within this framework, the topic sentence, supporting statements, transitional sentence, and concluding sentences were identified. Furthermore, a comparative critique of three exegetes' approaches revealed

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that neglecting *rukū'* divisions in existing commentaries has often led to semantic discontinuity, disruption of textual coherence, deviation from the surah's main objective, and reader confusion. Accordingly, it can be concluded that a *rukū'*-based reading of Qur'anic surahs not only highlights the thematic independence of each semantic unit but also ensures their internal coherence and contributes to identifying the overarching purpose of the surah. This approach may thus serve as an effective model for Qur'anic exegesis and a means of avoiding the interpretive challenges resulting from fragmented exegetical categorizations.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, *rukū'āt*, Semantic unit, interpretive levels, Paragraph, *sīyāq*.

1. Introduction

The introduction of new methods in understanding the Qur'an paves the way for novel findings in Qur'anic studies, encompassing its linguistic, semantic, and theological dimensions. Such methods must not only prove to be effective but also applicable in practice, and their results should be comparable with those obtained through parallel approaches. One of the less-explored areas in Qur'anic studies is the investigation of semantic units within the text, through which distinct discourses of the Qur'an can be identified, offering a deeper and more precise understanding of the scripture. The present study seeks to employ *rukū'* divisions as a means to advance this objective and to propose a methodological framework for Qur'anic reading and analysis.

Rukū' is one of the internal subdivisions of the Qur'an, referring to a cluster of verses that share a unified theme and semantic coherence. A *rukū'* begins with the introduction of a new subject and ends with a thematic or discursive transition (Khorramshahi 1998, 1: 11). Previous research indicates that verses within each *rukū'* are bound by strong semantic and syntactic relations, contributing to the internal coherence of surahs. In fact, syntactic and semantic examinations reveal that virtually no sentence in the Qur'an is disconnected from its preceding context (Amin Najee & Fazel 2021).

Despite this, *rukū'* markers have been omitted from most Qur'anic codices printed in recent centuries, although they remain prevalent in Indian and Pakistani editions (Moradi Zanjani & Lesani Fesharaki 2015). This neglect intensified following the publication of the *Amīrī Muṣḥaf* in Egypt, which later became a widely recognized model for Qur'anic printing across the Muslim world (Lesani Fesharaki & Moradi Zanjani 2015). Consequently, most printed Qur'ans in the Islamic Republic of Iran lack

rukū' markers. Observations indicate that Indian and Pakistani codices continue to preserve these signs more consistently (Rafei Majoomerd et al. 2024).

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to examine the tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Nahl, highlighting the significance of *rukū'*-based readings and evaluating the interpretive shortcomings that result from neglecting this division in exegetical works. It further seeks to demonstrate the methodological advantages of this approach in comparison with conventional exegetical frameworks. The tenth *rukū'* among the sixteen *rukū'*s of the surah has been selected as a representative example for implementing this approach. It should be noted that this *rukū'* exhibits a more complex structure than the other *rukū'*s in the surah, and it has elicited a variety of interpretations. Therefore, the impact of treating *rukū'* as a unit of meaning, versus neglecting this issue, can be evaluated across different exegeses. Accordingly, this article addresses the following research questions: How can reading *rukū'* as an independent semantic unit (or paragraph) reveal new layers of meaning in the Qur'an? What differences emerge in the semantic interpretation of verses when comparing exegetical *sīyāq* (textual context) divisions with *rukū'* divisions? What are the most significant interpretive challenges arising from the neglect of semantic units in Qur'anic surahs?

2. Literature Review

Al-Sindi (2016) investigated the origins of *rukū'* divisions and scholarly debates surrounding them, while also comparing the positions attributed to al-Bukhārī and others. Zarezardini (2016) sought to effect a shift in the unit of order _ from verses to suras, from the simple to the complex, and from lexical and semantic units to text-fragments. To this end, the arrangement of verses within the *rukū'* divisions of Surah Yā-Sīn was examined. The findings indicate that the three themes of *tawhīd* (divine unity), *ma'ād* (resurrection), and *risālah* (prophethood) are self-similar in this surah that is, they are embodied both in the surah's overall structure and in its finer details and that the surah's internal order is complex.

Zarezardini et al. (2019) identified distinct discourse patterns within the *rukū'* divisions. Their findings suggest that this approach can be extended to other surahs as well, potentially revealing even more complex patterns. Furthermore, Zarezardini et al. (2021) employed rhetorical analysis to demonstrate the surah's symmetrical and chiasmic structures based on *rukū'* boundaries. Sadeghi Turanposhti et al. (2021) examined the historical origins of *rukū'* divisions and their functional role in Islamic pedagogy,

emphasizing their connection with textual paragraphing. Iqbal (n.d.), in his Urdu work *Summary of the Qur'an: Rukū' by Rukū'*, analyzed the Qur'an entirely through its *rukū'* divisions, thereby providing an accessible thematic outline of the scripture.

Alshammeri et al. (2021a) demonstrated that paragraph embeddings can effectively analyze the semantic structure of verses and extract their thematic relations. Using the k-means algorithm, they clustered verses into thematic groups, thereby mapping semantic interconnections across the text. In another study, Alshammeri et al. (2021b) examined pairwise semantic relationships among verses through modern natural language processing (NLP) techniques. Their findings indicated that 3,079 verse pairs are semantically related. Nevertheless, while valuable, this method fails to capture the overarching purpose pursued by an entire surah.

Building on this body of research, the present study offers a novel perspective by reinterpreting *rukū'* divisions as independent semantic units. It aims to uncover the latent interpretive levels within the Qur'an and to assess the interpretive benefits of this approach. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, the study first analyzes the tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Naḥl, identifying its internal coherence and thematic unity, and then compares its findings with exegetical categorizations in order to highlight the advantages of a *rukū'*-based approach over other interpretive methods.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a theoretical framework that brings together traditional Qur'anic scholarship and modern textual analysis. By examining *rukū'* alongside the concepts of the semantic unit and the paragraph, it establishes a basis for viewing Qur'anic divisions as coherent and autonomous textual segments. The following subsections outline these concepts as the foundation of the proposed interpretive model.

3.1. *Rukū'*

The term *rukū'* in its lexical sense means “to bend” or “to lower one’s head” (Qorashi 1992, 3: 120), and it also refers to bowing in prayer (al-Jawharī 1990, 4: 275). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991, 1: 20) states that *rukū'* denotes “bending,” which may appear in the posture of prayer or in the sense of humility and submission. This humility may occur in worship or in contexts other than worship.

In Qur'anic studies, *rukū'* represents one of the earliest technical terms

used to indicate a type of textual division and demarcation of units within surahs. The earliest use of the term *rukū'* to designate a portion of Qur'anic verses is found in a narrative attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It states: "If the son of Adam were to possess two valleys of gold, he would desire a third; nothing fills the belly of the son of Adam except dust. Yet God accepts the repentance of those who repent. It was said that this was among what was once recited in the Qur'an in Surah Yūnus in the second or third *rukū'*, but its recitation was later abrogated while the narration remained" (al-Shaybānī 1979, 1: 61).

The mention of *rukū'āt* (plural of *rukū'*) can also be traced back to the 10th century CE, when during the nightly supererogatory prayers (*nawāfīl*) of Ramaḍān, portions of the Qur'an were recited after *Fātiḥah al-Kitāb*. Gradually, the significance and application of *rukū'āt* increased, and this division came to be included in the margins of some Qur'anic codices (Sadeghi Turanposhti et al. 2021). Some studies trace the origin of this division back to the Prophet Muhammad himself, since he would recite portions of the Qur'an after al-Fātiḥah in the first and second *rak'ah* of prayer and then proceed to bowing (*rukū'*). Based on this practice, the Qur'an has been divided into 555 thematic units (Zarezardini et al. 2019). From early times, this division was commonly known as Qur'anic *rukū'āt*. In many Qur'anic manuscripts, the symbol *'ayn*, indicating *rukū'*, was inscribed at the end of each section (Rezai Isfahani et al. 2010), placed above the last word of the final verse of the section (Roohbakhsh 2010). Each section consists of several verses that are thematically and semantically interconnected (Akbari 2008, 69).

In other words, among the various Qur'anic divisions, *rukū'* is distinctive in that unlike other subdivisions it does not follow equal or fixed lengths. Rather, each *rukū'* comprises a cluster of verses, usually organized around a unifying theme (Rezai Isfahani et al. 2006). In fact, each *rukū'* within the Qur'an illustrates a particular issue within its surah, and *rukū'āt* are more frequently found in the longer surahs (Roohbakhsh 2010). Accordingly, the division of the Qur'an into *rukū'āt* can be considered a form of thematic or content-based segmentation.

As for the number of *rukū'āt*, scholarly opinions vary. The prevalent view cites 540 units (al-Sarakhsī 1988; Rezai Isfahani et al. 2012). Others, however, have proposed 556 units, corresponding to Indian printed Qur'anic editions (Mostafid & Dolati 2005). Modir Shanechi (1983), based on the 1857 edition derived from the Leipzig print prepared by Jafar Tehrani, reported 584 *rukū'āt*. Muḥammad Ṣabbāgh, by contrast, estimated the number at 730 (Mostafid & Dolati 2005). For the purposes of this study, the working basis is the division into 555 *rukū'* units. According to this system,

Surah al-Nahl comprises 16 *rukū'āt*.

3.2. *Semantic Unit*

the concept of the semantic unit has been examined from both dimensions of language study, namely *langue* and *parole* (Chandler 2004; Safavi 2004). what is meant in the present discussion by semantic unit is its manifestation in language as *parole* (speech/discourse). Sasani (2010) argues that the purpose of the semantic unit is to identify where meaning is produced, reproduced, interpreted, and understood. From Sasani's perspective, the semantic unit is the text. He defines text as anything that, in a specific spatiotemporal context, is presented as a unit within a communicative process_ whether face-to-face and present, or indirect and absent_ and, on the other hand, as anything that, whether synchronously or asynchronously, or in the same or different spatial contexts, is read and understood. In discussions of signification and semiotics, the issue of semantic unit is also addressed with different and more holistic terminology as cultural unit (Eco 2018).

One of the benefits of identifying and understanding semantic units in the Qur'an is the possibility of uncovering its interpretive levels which is also a theme in semiotic scholarship. It is possible to take a specified approach to the interpretive levels of the Qur'an, namely, through identifying its semantic units in their entirety rather than from a fragmentary perspective. In this way, sometimes the entire text can be regarded as a single semantic unit, although this text may also contain smaller semantic units within its structure. In other words, while the entire text possesses semantic autonomy, coherence, and completeness, the internal units themselves also exhibit a degree of independence. These layers are not contradictory but rather provide new semantic dimensions for understanding the Qur'an. Whether a text possesses only one interpretive level or multiple levels, and how these levels interrelate, are questions that can only be clarified through textual analysis.

3.3. *Paragraph as a Semantic Unit*

The modern theory of the paragraph was first developed by Aberdeen professor Alexander Bain in the 19th century. The term *paragraph* has Greek origins, derived from *para* (beside) and *graph* (writing). Initially, it was used as a textual marker, placed in the margin of the paragraph, to indicate a significant pause in the continuity of discourse (Rodgers 1966).

A paragraph is an informational unit built around a specific idea, referred

to as the “main idea.” An effective paragraph is one in which the reader can correctly grasp the main idea through its construction and scope (Hurri 1981). Typically, a paragraph conveys an independent idea or a particular component of a broader concept (Šafranĵ et al. 2022). In other words, paragraphs constitute the body of the text. If the body of a text were likened to a chessboard, each square_black or white_would represent a paragraph (Babaei 2017). A paragraph is generally defined as a group of sentences that explain a single idea (concept, thought, or subject) and are distinguished from other paragraphs on a page by indentation or spacing (Šafranĵ et al. 2022). However, it should be noted that in applied linguistics, what is considered goes beyond the superficial structure of a paragraph. A written discourse functions as a medium through which the author’s ideas are expressed, and if it is effectively constructed, it conveys these ideas to the reader in a logical and coherent manner (Yu 2022). A paragraph essentially states a specific proposition of the text and subsequently supports or explains it (Šafranĵ et al. 2022).

In general, each paragraph should possess a degree of autonomy. The independence of any textual segment depends on the autonomy of its central idea. Therefore, a paragraph provides a limited explanation of a point in a few sentences. While it maintains a chain-like relation with other points, it nevertheless enjoys relative independence. It is thus not inaccurate to say that each paragraph is like a short, independent note or a sequence in a feature film (Babaei 2017).

Based on these discussions, numerous similarities may be observed between *rukū‘āt* and paragraphs. Both form the building blocks of a text, a written composition, or a surah. Both maintain meaningful interconnections while preserving semantic independence, and both generate a new paragraph or *rukū‘* upon a change in theme. To illustrate, the marker for a paragraph is indentation at the beginning of the text, while *rukū‘āt* are signaled by the symbol *‘ayn* placed at the end of the relevant verses. Accordingly, a structural model has been proposed for the ideal paragraph, and the study at hand applies this model to Qur’anic *rukū‘āt*. In this way, the inadequacies of exegetical verse sequencing may be identified.

3.4. *The Structure of the Paragraph*

Some scholars argue that paragraphs are cognitive templates that are not necessarily consciously constructed but are either innately embedded in the human mind or formed through imitation of others’ speech (Amini 2010). Contrary to this view, which claims that paragraphs do not follow specific rules, others maintain that each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that

presents an idea. The main idea is then coherently supported by subsequent sentences, and finally, the paragraph concludes with a reaffirmation of the topic sentence (Rahman 2022). Well-structured paragraphs generally consist of following components:

- Topic sentence: States a debatable claim.
- Supporting sentence: Provides evidence and proof for the claim.
- Analytical sentence: Explains how the claim has been substantiated and how the evidence supports it.
- Transitional sentence: Ensures smooth transitions between paragraphs, allowing the reader to logically follow and connect the text (Yaghubyan & Dalalyan 2023).
- Defining sentence (optional): Related to the topic sentence, this element introduces content that challenges or qualifies the central idea of the paragraph, thereby limiting the scope of the topic sentence (Soltani 2017).

Every sentence in a paragraph should contribute additional information to develop the main idea until it is fully clarified. A well-constructed paragraph, like a well-written story, should have a beginning, a middle, and an end (Hurri 1981). The core of each paragraph lies in its central idea, which usually appears in the first sentence, while the subsequent sentences elaborate upon it. It is recommended that at the end of each paragraph, a sentence summarizing and concluding the discussion be included (Amini 2010). An effective conclusion ensures that the reader has comprehended the content fully and, at the same time, is motivated to read the next paragraph in pursuit of answers to new questions that may have arisen.

The topic sentence partly determines the internal relations of the paragraph and may, therefore, contain the most crucial information. In other words, the topic sentence usually provides a brief overview of the paragraph's content and prepares the reader for what follows (Yu, 2022). Research in European languages even suggests that the tone of a paragraph's opening sentence is often significantly distinct from that of subsequent sentences (Amini 2010). This structure, which applies to standard paragraphs, can also be observed in Qur'anic *rukū'āt*. Recognizing and employing these semantic units in Qur'anic exegesis facilitates comprehension of a surah's content and unveils many of its hidden dimensions.

4. Applying the Structure of a Standard Paragraph to the Tenth Rukū' of Surah al-Naḥl (Q. 16:71–76)

Before rereading the *rukū'* as a paragraph, an explanatory note is warranted to enhance comprehension of its content. One undeniable social reality is the variance among humans in benefiting from God's blessings. Some people enjoy blessings such as health and wealth, while others do not. It may be construed by readers that those who are more advantaged are closer to God, and that God has extended such mercy to them. Alternatively, it may raise the question in readers' minds whether those who are more privileged possess greater potential for closer proximity to God, suggesting that they can advance toward divine nearness through acts such as charity or by benefiting from health, and so forth, whereas such opportunities do not exist for the poor, destitute, or infirm. Another potential pitfall is that some groups might pursue greater livelihood and blessings through improper means. Additionally, this topic may sow doubts about God's justice in the minds of readers. Hence, with this preface, we proceed to the reading of the *rukū'*.

The tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Naḥl offers a correct elucidation of the issue of disparities in the reception of blessings, and it seeks to dispel doubts and mitigate the harms associated with this issue in human life. If the structure of a standard paragraph is applied to the tenth *rukū'* of this surah, the following organization will emerge (Figure 1):

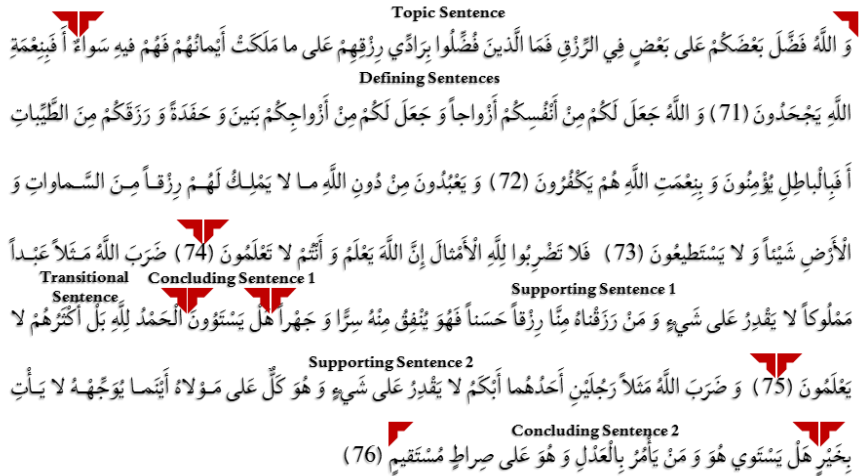


Figure 1. Applying the structure of a standard paragraph to the tenth *rukū'* of Surah al-Naḥl (Q. 16:71–76)

Topic Sentence: Verse 71 functions as the topic sentence of this semantic unit:

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادِي رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ ... (النحل/71)

Allah has granted some of you an advantage over others in [respect of] provision. Those who have been granted an advantage do not give over their provision to their slaves so that they become equal in its respect... (Q. 16:71)

This verse aptly prepares the reader's mind to address an age-old question that has preoccupied human society: the wisdom behind the disparity in provision (*rizq*) among people. In other words, the verse clearly indicates that this *rukū'* will discuss the rationale behind differences in sustenance. Moreover, the verse itself points to one of the reasons for such disparities while simultaneously rebuking humans for criticizing God, despite their own failure to share and give charity to the needy—an act that perpetuates inequality in society.

Defining Sentences: The latter part of verse 71 to the end of verse 74 constitutes the defining sentences of this *rukū'*:

... أَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ (النحل/71) وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ
أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرِزْقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ
(النحل/72) وَ يَعْْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَ
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (النحل/73) فَلَا تَصْرَبُوا بِهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَ أَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (النحل/74)
... *What, will they dispute the blessing of Allah? (Q. 16:71) Allah made for you mates from your own selves and appointed for you, from your mates, children and grandchildren, and We provided you with all the good things. What, will they believe in falsehood while they deny the blessing of Allah? (Q. 16:72) They worship besides Allah what has no power to provide them with anything from the heavens and the earth, nor are they capable[of doing that] (Q. 16:73). So do not draw comparisons for Allah: indeed Allah knows and you do not know (Q. 16:74).*

In the phrase "...*What, will they dispute the blessing of Allah? (Q. 16:71),*" God reproaches humans for not striving to cultivate a culture of social equality. At the same time, by condemning miserliness and narrow-mindedness, the verse encourages generosity and mutual support, equating failure to help others with ingratitude toward divine blessings. Verse 72 continues this admonition by censuring the disbelievers and ingrates, questioning why—despite blessings such as spouses from among their own kind, children and grandchildren, and every form of pure material and spiritual sustenance—they still pursue falsehood and futile endeavors, choosing instead to adopt ingratitude. In other words, verse 72, as a defining sentence, draws attention to the fact that comparing human livelihoods and dwelling excessively on differences in provision leads to ingratitude and disbelief.

Verse 73 further addresses another consequence of this mindset: turning toward superstitions and worshiping entities that neither possess anything in the realm of existence nor have the power to increase people’s sustenance. This verse, therefore, also censures those who, as in verse 71, found fault with God. Notably, both verses 71 and 72 use the expression *ni‘mat Allāh* (blessing of God) and stress that recognizing this divine blessing should not be denied nor transformed into disbelief. The central point here is that human possessions are divine blessings that must be used in accordance with God’s commands. Put differently, whatever one currently possesses is a blessing from God and should not be attributed to oneself or others.

Supporting Sentences: Portions of verses 75 and 76 function as supporting sentences in this semantic unit, elaborating upon the theme through two illustrative examples:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَ مِّن رَّزْقِنَاهُ مِثْرًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَ جَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (النحل/75) وَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمٌ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيْمَانًا يُوجِّهُهُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَ مَن يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَ هُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (النحل/76).

Allah draws a parable: a chattel who has no power over anything, and one whom We have provided a goodly provision and who spends out of it secretly and openly. Are they equal? All praise belongs to Allah. But most of them do not know(Q. 16:75). Allah draws [another] parable: Two men, one of whom is dumb, having no power over anything and who is a liability to his master: wherever he directs him he does not bring any good. Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice and is[steady]on a straight path?(Q. 16:76)

These two verses introduce two parables. Verse 75 contrasts a slave who lacks any capacity with a free individual endowed with provision who is able to spend openly and privately to aid others. This parable appears to relate to the blessing of wealth and property. In verse 76, the second parable compares a mute man who is incapable of doing anything, burdensome to others and his master, and unable to produce any benefit, with a capable person who not only walks rightly himself but also enjoins justice upon others (table 1). This example appears to pertain to the blessings of health and dignity.

Table 1. Comparison of wealth and power versus weakness and deprivation in supporting sentences of tenth rukū‘ of Surah al-Nahl

Verses	Negative Example (Incapable/Deprived)	Positive Example (Capable/Endowed)
Verse 75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A slave who does not even own himself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A free man endowed with abundant wealth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incapable of accomplishing anything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spends his wealth both openly and privately
Verse 76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Mute man • Incapable of doing anything • A burden upon his master • Takes no positive step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Strong and endowed man • Calls people to justice • Walks upon the straight path

The central issue here lies in the meaning of the expression, Are they equal? (*hal yastawūn*). In this reading of the verses as a semantic unit, the meaning is that God's expectations and obligations from each of these two categories of people are not the same; rather, each person is charged with duties in proportion to his capacity and the blessings granted to him. Moreover, this *rukū'* indicates that those who possess greater wealth are required to employ it in establishing an atmosphere of justice. The overarching theme of this *rukū'* is the correct comprehension of the phenomenon of disparities in human endowments. It emphasizes that none but God has instituted this differentiation (*tafḍīl*) among people_ thus one must not turn to others for the expansion of provision. The passage proceeds to call upon the wealthy and powerful to practice charity and solidarity, to view their possessions as blessings of God, to understand the rationale behind differences in provision and status, and to recognize that obligations are assigned according to one's share of blessings or deprivation thereof.

The concluding parts of verses 75 and 76 serve as the summative statements of the supporting sentences, clarifying the purpose of this semantic unit. Verse 75 affirms that God's expectations of a slave in bondage are not the same as those of a free man who possesses the capacity to give charity, and that individuals will be held accountable and tested in accordance with the blessings bestowed upon them. Thus, abundance of blessing increases one's duty and responsibility toward oneself, others, and God. Similarly, verse 76 reiterates that God's expectations of a mute man who brings no benefit are not the same as those of a capable individual who is obeyed by others, calls them to justice, and himself walks the straight path. Divine expectation, responsibility, trial, and obligation are thus contingent upon the degree of blessing one has received.

5. Comparison of the *Rukū'*-based interpretation with the Thematic Classifications of Commentators

As previously noted, the tenth *rukū'* constitutes an independent semantic unit, complete in both content and structure, fully conveying meaning and message to the audience. It should be emphasized that disregarding either the topic sentences or the concluding sentences, fragmenting the paragraph,

or juxtaposing this semantic unit with adjacent *rukū'*s without recognizing its contentual independence results in interpretive flaws. Such flaws affect not only the understanding of the *rukū'* as a meaningful unit but also the broader purpose of the surah. These problems frequently appear in the structural segmentations of exegetes and produce interpretive distortions in the reading of the text.

In table 2, the thematic categorization of Qur'anic verses is traced from the exegetical works of both Sunni and Shia traditions. A general survey reveals that none of the exegetes have adopted a uniform method in their divisions. Some divided the range of verses within a single *rukū'* into two or three distinct sections, while others combined verses from both preceding and subsequent *rukū'*s into their categorization.

Table 2. Comparison of the tenth rukū' of Surah al-Naḥl with the thematic categorization of Qur'anic verses in Selected Exegeses

Qur'anic Exegeses	Thematic Divisions of Verses		
The 10th <i>Rukū'</i> of surah al-Naḥl	71–76		
Tafsīr al-Marāghī	70–72	73–76	
Tafsīr Anwār Dirakhshān	64–77		
Al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm	70–72	73–76	
Şafwah al-Tafsīr (al-Şābūnī)	51–74	75–90	
Tafsīr Min Hudā al-Qur'ān	64–74	75–83	
Tafsīr Nemūneh	70–72	73–74	75–77
Tafsīr Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth	65–77		

To highlight the consequences of disregarding the semantic unity of the *rukū'*, we examine three exegetical works that collectively exhibit all of these interpretive shortcomings. The resulting issues can be summarized as follows:

5.1. Fragmentation of Meaning, Divergence from the Primary Aim, and Reader Confusion

Al-Marāghī (1951, 14: 108) divides the verses comprising the tenth *rukū'* into two separate categories. He places verses 70–72 in one sequence and verses 73–76 in another. In this interpretation, the exegete begins his discussion from verse 73, where God rebukes idolaters for worshipping powerless idols incapable of exercising authority. Beginning the commentary with verse 73, however, results in a structural problem: the

exegete introduces the discourse with a parable, although parables typically function as supporting sentences intended to confirm and illustrate a previously stated claim. Starting a paragraph or *sīyāq* with a parable leaves the reader disoriented in seeking the principal proposition, forcing them to return to the previous paragraph for context. Yet the very purpose of *rukū'* division in the Qur'an is to establish meaningful and purposive subdivisions within a surah that, while semantically independent, maintain coherent interconnections across the surah.

After presenting a few verses, this commentary then proceeds to independent conclusions. For instance, under the verse Q 16:74, the exegete concludes: The outcome is that you must not assign similitudes to God, nor liken Him to His creatures, for there is no comparison between Him and them. Similarly, under the verse Q. 16:75, he concludes: The ultimate lesson is that complete praise belongs to God alone, sincerely and apart from the idols you invoke besides Him. They exercise no favor upon you, though you attribute praise to them. In truth, praise belongs solely to God. Yet most disbelievers do not know this, and for that reason they associate others with Him in worship (al-Marāghī 1951, 14: 114).

It may be suggested that these piecemeal conclusions are a compensatory device, because the semantic coherence was broken by unsuitable delimitation of the textual unit, the exegete seeks to patch the discourse by introducing separate conclusions. However, this approach undermines the Qur'an's intent of engaging readers in reflection and guiding them toward the intended divine message. Moreover, according to the topic sentence and defining statements in verses 71–74, the true purpose of the two parables is to demonstrate the futility of overemphasizing disparities in provision, and to establish that whenever God grants someone greater blessings, He correspondingly imposes greater duties and responsibilities upon them.

On the other hand, this commentary does end the semantic unit appropriately, closing the paragraph with verse 76, which mirrors the final verse of the tenth *rukū'*. It correctly concludes that the superior figure in both parables is the One God, the All-Powerful, who summons His servants to monotheism and obedience, and who, by His command of justice, neither deviates from truth nor ever will (al-Marāghī 1951, 14: 117).

5.2. *The Breakdown of Semantic Coherence and the Disruption of Discursive Relations*

In the *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Tantawi (1997, 8: 192). presents the tenth *rukū'* section of this surah in two separate thematic

contexts. He treats verses 70–72 as one context and verses 73–76 as another. Although this tafsīr identifies the beginning of the thematic unit as verse 73, it introduces verse 72 as a prelude to the discussion. It frames the manifest blessings of God and the ignorance of the polytheists as a preliminary to the discourse of this unit. This indicates that the exegete himself recognized that the introductory elements of the discourse belong to the previous *sīyāq*. Therefore, to avoid disrupting the coherence of the argument, he referred back to verse 72. Accordingly, it would have been more appropriate for the exegete to avoid fragmenting the *rukū'* division in order to preserve the semantic and discursive connections between the verses.

In fact, the verse *Q.* 16: 73 is causally linked to verse 71. The underlying reason for people's turn to idolatry and associating partners with God lies in their incorrect perspective on worldly blessings. This perspective is articulated in verse 71, where the origin of human disparity in sustenance and provision is mistakenly attributed to divine injustice and discriminatory treatment of His servants—an idea that is refuted in verse 73. God presents such disparity as part of His wise plan and forbids attributing inappropriate comparisons and qualities to Him. He further identifies human ignorance and lack of understanding as the source of such erroneous beliefs and attitudes. Tantawi explains that just as people offer examples for others, they should not do so for God, because it is He who knows how to present examples, while they do not. He also draws on al-Zajjāj's interpretation, which notes that the polytheists believed God was too exalted to be worshipped directly, and thus deemed it necessary to turn to idols. It is worth noting that Tantawi himself does not offer any substantial elaboration on the nature of this parable or on the reason for its prohibition. Had he considered verse 71 as part of the same *sīyāq* and as a conceptual prelude to this semantic unit, he would have been better able to explain the interrelations among the verses.

Tantawi concludes his *sīyāq* at verse 76, summarizing the argument by stating that God, in this unit, has illustrated the stark difference between Himself and the false deities worshipped by the misguided through two parables. These two parables, he asserts, constitute the most compelling evidence of God's superiority. Finally, the exegete mentions the link between this *rukū'* and the following one, emphasizing that God—being the One true deity—possesses encompassing knowledge and power, and that the next *rukū'* points to the comprehensiveness of His might and the vastness of His knowledge.

5.3. *The Intermingling of Themes*

The *Ahsan al-Hadīth* exegesis considers the limited scope of verses 65 to 77 as a single thematic unit (Qorashi 1996, 5: 461). In fact, the exegete treats the ninth and tenth *rukū'* of this surah as one semantic unit and interprets it accordingly. He begins the thematic unit with theological discussions, and attributes the reason for such discussions in this surah to the global inclination of people toward idolatry and their attention to beings other than God. Before commencing the discussion, this exegesis offers a summary conclusion of the verses grouped within the thematic unit. The exegete, before starting the analysis of verses 65–77, states that the conclusion is that the creation and management of the world are in God's hands. Honor and disgrace, benefit and harm, all lie with Him; therefore, He alone must be worshipped, and those who worship any being other than Him are in error and misguidance. It seems that, due to the diversity and multiplicity of topics within this kind of thematic grouping, the exegete presents the conclusion at the beginning so that the reader does not become confused and can understand the overall objective of the discourse.

It is worth noting that one of the essential principles in any paragraph or semantic unit is thematic coherence and content harmony. In fact, each paragraph aims to convey a specific point or topic, and writers use multiple paragraphs to discuss different themes. Observing this principle helps the reader fully grasp the speaker's intent while reading a semantic unit. Conversely, presenting multiple themes within a single unit leads to confusion and loss of focus for the reader. In this *sīyāq*, too, the exegete addresses three different topics within a single thematic unit. He begins with *tawhīd*, then proceeds to affirm the incomparability of God and deny the legitimacy of other deities, and finally concludes with a verse demonstrating God's power to establish the Resurrection and affirming that the unseen knowledge of the heavens belongs to Him alone. This improper delimitation likely compelled the exegete to extract conclusions from each verse individually, so that the reader may grasp the intended meaning of each verse and, by assembling them, arrive at an overall conclusion_ which, given the incorrect thematic grouping and poorly defined start and end points, remains rather difficult.

It is important to mention that, unlike *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ*, this exegesis does not separate verses 71 and 72 from verse 73. Therefore, it succeeds in accurately analyzing verse 73 in relation to the preceding verses and reaches appropriate conclusions. Regarding the relationship between these three verses, the exegete states that verse 73 is the outcome of verses 71 and 72, because if people pay attention to what has been said, they will realize that

their deities had no role in the mentioned blessings. Nonetheless, some continue to worship and turn to them. Essentially, verse 71 illustrates that those who are favored in terms of sustenance are not giving to their slaves from their own provision, but rather from what God has provided; thus, in terms of sustenance, they and their slaves are equal. Verse 72 affirms that spouses, children, descendants, and all pure blessings are from God alone. Therefore, in verse 73, God reproaches the polytheists, declaring all these blessings to be from Himself—not from the deities they associated with Him.

Finally, after establishing God's superiority over idols in verse 76, the exegete transitions to the subject of the Hereafter as one instance of *ghayb al-samāwāt wa al-ard*, which he considers exclusive to God. The realization of the Day of Resurrection is not difficult for God; rather, it is as effortless as the blink of an eye. Overall, the inclusion of this verse alongside those affirming God's superiority seems slightly inconsistent and causes thematic fragmentation within the unit. Hence, the reader, who at the end of a semantic unit expects to reach a definitive conclusion, is suddenly confronted with the new topic of Resurrection, which bears no clear connection to the preceding discussions. The verse concerning the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment neither affirms nor denies God's *tawhīd* or the parables proving His superiority. Therefore, placing it at the end of this *sīyāq* is improper, and it would have been more appropriate to introduce it as the opening statement of the subsequent thematic unit.

6. Conclusion

Verses 71 to 76 of Surah al-Naḥl may be considered, from the perspective of a semantic unit, as an integrated whole and counted as an independent *rukū'*. In other words, this passage of Qur'anic verses can, to a large extent, be regarded structurally and thematically as a paragraph within a written text and read as a single unit of meaning. Therefore, attention to such a division of Qur'anic verses is of significant importance, and neglecting it results in various problems in the understanding of the surah's content.

In this study, in addition to offering an interpretation based on this approach by identifying the topic sentence, delimiting markers, two supporting sentences, a transitional sentence, and two concluding statements—the exegetical performance of three commentators was also critically examined. This review revealed that many exegetes have overlooked the importance and necessity of *rukū'* division in interpreting the surahs of the Qur'an. Each has adopted a different thematic segmentation, which in turn has caused interpretive difficulties for the

reader. Major and noteworthy problems that arise from disregarding *rukū'*s and adopting diverse thematic segmentations among exegetes in the comprehension of Qur'anic surahs are neglecting the proper opening and closure of the discourse and fragmentation of semantic coherence. Some exegetes, in their segmentation, failed to include the initial verses of a semantic unit, resulting in the disconnection of the main sentence from the core message. This, in turn, led to the breakdown of discursive relations and a departure from the surah's central objective. It is worth noting that a similar issue arises in cases where the closing of a discourse is disregarded when a verse from the beginning of the next *rukū'* is added to the end of the current one causing comprehension problems for the reader.

Conversely, other exegetes have, in their segmentation, treated multiple *rukū'*s as one thematic unit, or divided a single *rukū'* into several separate *sīyāqs*, which has likewise resulted in the disruption of the semantic unity. This approach has led to issues such as straying from the main objective, reader confusion, thematic intermingling, and presenting the verses as if they were aimless or disconnected. Therefore, it can be said that reading and analyzing the content of a surah in light of its *rukū'*s and the structure that governs them may reveal a new interpretive levels within the Qur'an. However, the interconnection between *rukū'*s should not be overlooked; rather, it is essential to identify and utilize these connections in order to arrive at the surah's central objective and to organize the remaining themes across the *rukū'*s accordingly.

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A Formalist Approach to Surah al-Kahf from the Perspective of Non-Normativity

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ABSTRACT:

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Non-normativity, understood as departures from linguistic norms and standards, has been notably articulated in modern linguistics and, in a serious scholarly manner, by formalists. The Qur'an, as the preeminent symbol of manifestations of beauty, perfection, and coherence of the Arabic language, transcends the framework of norms and standards, thereby placing itself at the apex of eloquence and rhetoric. This sacred text, aimed at institutionalizing monotheistic rationality, eradicating manifestations of polytheism, and instilling thoughts contrary to pre-Islamic (*al-jāhili*) norms, has crossed the boundaries of pre-Islamic tradition with a distinctive literary language, generating a revolution in Arabic language. The present study, adopting an analytical-descriptive approach, examines non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf at three levels: phonological, syntactic, and semantic. The findings indicate that at the phonological level, devices such as *al-ikhfā'* (concealment), *al-idghām* (assimilation), and *al-madd* (prolongation) serve to harmonize sound and musicality with meaning and the situational context of the surah. It is as if the scenes and events are unfolding and the audience perceives them with the faculty of hearing. At the syntactic level, phenomena such as *al-ḥadhf* (ellipsis), *al-taqdīm* (preposing), *al-ta'khīr* (postponing), *al-taḍmīn* (conflation), and *al-iltifāt* (shifts in person) enable the reader to apprehend God's focal points with the most complete concepts expressed in the briefest phrases. At the semantic level, non-normativity manifested through metaphors and figurative language fosters vivid imagery of various situations and dynamic reader cognition; so much so that the reader appears

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to observe all these elements and finds themselves in the scene of events. Consequently, with these aesthetics, the sacred text of the Qur'an is better understood, and its sweetness is savored.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Surah al-Kahf, Semantic implication, Phonological non-normativity, Syntactic non-normativity, Semantic non-normativity.

1. Introduction

One of the most significant characteristics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the division of knowledge into distinct academic disciplines. These disciplines became so specialized that their integration seemed nearly impossible (Scholes 1974). Among these sciences is linguistics, which has now assumed a leading role in the foundational movements of human knowledge particularly in the humanities (Faḍl 1998). This privileged position is not merely due to its foundational status in many intellectual schools or its contributions to their development, but because it has made language itself the object and material of inquiry.

Modern scientific perspectives continuously sow new seeds within the fertile grounds of linguistics, nourishing it with philosophical insights and methods. One of the most fragrant blossoms of this field is non-normativity, which was systematically cultivated by Russian Formalists. Non-normativity, a form of defamiliarization, was first theorized by Russian Formalist thinkers (Ahmadi 2001). They distinguished between normative language and literary language (Bennet 1979), analyzing texts through the lens of aesthetic principles and literary devices.

The Qur'an, as an eternal and inimitable text, occupies the pinnacle of linguistic expression with its miraculous vocabulary, sound patterns, and rhetorical structures. Within the Qur'an, various forms of non-normativity at phonological, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels are employed to subtly guide the reader toward layered meanings. Through these techniques, the divine nature of the text becomes perceptible, offering humanity a roadmap to salvation. Accordingly, this study explores instances of non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf, attempting to address the following research questions: What types of linguistic non-normativity are employed in the Qur'an as a rhetorically elevated text? What semantic implications are conveyed through deviation from standard linguistic norms in the verses of Surah al-Kahf?

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have investigated non-normativity in both literary and Qur'anic texts. Given the scope of the field, only the most relevant examples are mentioned here. Hamrit (2017) examined non-normativity at phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels in Surah Maryam, illuminating the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an. Qelich Pase et al. (2021) analyzed syntactic and semantic non-normativity in the 27th juz' of the Qur'an, elucidating rhetorical devices such as metaphor, allegory, and repetition. Al-Azzam & al-Quran (2014) studied deviations from normative gender morphology in Qur'anic Arabic, interpreting them from an aesthetic-linguistic perspective. Rajae & Khaqani (2014) demonstrated how attention to non-normativity in selected Qur'anic verses can reveal new interpretive meanings. Anari Bozchallouei et al. (2019) investigated *foregrounding* in Surah Tāhā, analyzing the structural-semantic alignment of the surah's composition with its title and message. Misaghian et al. (2023) explored how the grammatical non-normativity of objects in the first three *ajzā'* of the Qur'an contributes to both verbal and semantic beauty and opens the way for new conceptual formations. Despite these extensive efforts, the field remains open to further investigation. In particular, the non-normativity analysis in Surah Al-Kahf remains underexplored.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the late nineteenth century, with the rise of linguistic schools such as structuralism and stylistics, a call for transformation through breaking normative language conventions emerged. Yet, the dominance of the classical school, which emphasized strict adherence to established rules and formal unity, initially resisted this shift. Later, with the advent of Romanticism and subsequently the Symbolist movement, deviation from normative linguistic usage came to be accepted_ eventually becoming a criterion for distinguishing poetry from non-poetry (Rāji' 1987).

Roland Barthes (1975) was among the first theorists to highlight this issue. He viewed the text as a transformed entity in which deviation from conventional norms is not only possible but essential. For Barthes, such non-normativity manifested through alteration of form, structure, and conventional expressions results in the creation of beauty. Non-normativity plays a crucial role in contemporary literary criticism and has revitalized the field of rhetoric. Known by various terms such as non-normativity, norm-deviation, and norm-violation, it is often categorized within the domain of *al-badī' al-ma'nawī* (semantic rhetoric) (Shamisa 1999).

Formalist theorists divided language into two types: Ordinary (referential) language: normative, informational, referential, and everyday; Literary (poetic) language: affective, humanistic, introspective, and non-normative. Both forms arise from the combinatory capacity of words in syntagmatic chains and structural cohesion. However, literary language often abandons conventional rules, embracing creative, non-normative structures (Alavi Moqaddam 1998).

Even the classical scholars of Arabic grammar addressed linguistic non-normativity, often referring to it as *al-ittisā'* (extension) or *al-majāz* (figurative expression), recognizing its role in departing from literal form to convey meaning through unconventional means (Jārallāh 2007). Pioneers like 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī paved the way for such linguistic creativity with his *naẓm* theory (arrangement), which emphasized not only lexical meanings but also the contextual and syntactic arrangement of words. According to al-Jurjānī (2001), such constructions, termed *al-'udūl* (deviation), give rise to two types of eloquent speech: that which derives its beauty from diction, and that which does so from composition.

Clearly, these departures from normative structures result in astonishing rhetorical effects, revealing layers of textual precision and sophistication. The All-Knowing and All-Wise God employs this miraculous technique to unveil profound meanings to those who contemplate the divine word.

4. Typology of Non-Normativity in Surah al-Kahf

In this section, we examine the various forms of non-normativity in Surah al-Kahf, and we analyze them at three levels: phonological, syntactic and semantic.

4.1. Phonological Non-Normativity

Understanding and identifying phonemes constitutes the initial axis of entry into a literary text. Indeed, sound constitutes one of the fundamental elements in the construction of literary text. Accordingly, linguists begin their analyses at the level of sound, the smallest linguistic unit (Khan 2002). The abstract and suggestive power of sound can create a vivid mental image, moving the listener from stillness to motion (Abū Rughayf 2008). Human nature finds auditory variation pleasing (Rāfī'ī 1965), and thus, phonological non-normativity carries significant aesthetic potential, aligning sound with meaning.

Phonetic features in Arabic are traditionally classified as either strong or

weak. Strong features include *al-jahr* (voicing), *al-shiddah* (intensity), *al-isti lā’* (elevation), *al-iṭbāq* (closenes), *al-iṣāmt* (voicelessness), *al-ṣafīr* (sibilance), *al-qalqalah* (echoic burst), *al-inḥirāf* (deviation), *al-takrār* (repetition), *al-tafashshī* (diffusion), and *al-ghunnah* (nasalization). In contrast, weak features include *al-hams* (whispering), *al-rikhwah* (softness), *al-istifāl* (lowering), *al-infitāh* (openness), *al-idhlāq* (fluidity), and *al-līn* (laxness) (Qari 1993).

In Surah al-Kahf, various verses exemplify this interplay of phonetic features. For instance, the phonetic composition of the words *yundhir* (to warn) and *yubashshir* (to give glad tidings) in verse Q. 18:2¹ is analyzed in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Phonetic Features in the terms *yundhir* and *yubashshir* in the verse Q. 18:2

	Phoneme	Strong Features	Weak Features	Strong Count	Weak Count
Yubashshir	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	B	<i>al-jahr, al-shiddah, al-qalqalah</i>	<i>al-infitāh, al-istifāl, al-idhlāq</i>	3	3
	Sh	<i>al-iṣmāt, al-tafashshī</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāh</i>	2	4
	Sh	<i>al-iṣmāt, al-tafashshī</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāh</i>	2	4
	R	<i>al-jahr, al-inḥirāf, al-takrār</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāh, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	3	4
	Total			12	19
Yundhir	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	N	<i>al-jahr, g al-hunnah</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāh, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	2	4
	Dh	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-rikhwah, al-istifāl, al-infitāh</i>	2	3
	R	<i>al-jahr, al-inḥirāf, al-takrār</i>	<i>al-istifāl, al-infitāh, al-idhlāq, al-tawassuṭ</i>	3	4
	Total			9	15

As the table shows, both words are dominated by weak phonetic features, particularly those associated with *al-hams*, *al-rikhwah*, *al-infitāh* and *al-līn*. The word *yubashshir* contains 12 strong and 19 weak features, while *yundhir* includes 9 strong and 15 weak features. This numerical dominance of weak traits contributes to the gentle and persuasive tone of both divine actions: *al-indhār* (warning) and *al-tabshīr* (gladtiding). The believers, who

1 - قِيَمَا لِيُنذِرَ نَاسًا شَدِيدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ... (الكهف/2)

[a Book] upright, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give good news to the faithful ... (Q. 18:2).

are recipients of *al-tabshīr*, are addressed with gentleness, and even opponents are guided through eloquence without any coercion. Another example appears in verse Q. 18:74,¹ in which Prophet Moses describes the child slain by al-Khiḍr using the word *zakīyyah* (pure), a term rich in weak phonetic traits (table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Phonetic Features in the term *zakīyyah* in the verse Q. 18:74

	Phoneme	Strong Features	Weak Features	Strong Count	Weak Count
Zakīyyah	Z	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt, ṣafīr</i>	<i>al-riḥwah, al-istifāl, al-infūtāh</i>	3	3
	K	<i>al-shiddah, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-infūtāh, al-istifāl</i>	2	3
	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-riḥwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	Y	<i>al-jahr, al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-riḥwah, al-istifāl, al-līn</i>	2	4
	tā' <i>marbūṭah</i>	<i>al-iṣmāt</i>	<i>al-hams, al-riḥwah, al-infūtāh, al-istifāl</i>	1	4
	Total			10	18

The word *zakīyyah* contains 10 strong and 18 weak phonetic features. This imbalance is neither coincidental nor stylistically neutral. The dominance of weak sounds creates a sound pattern that aurally mirrors the innocence, delicacy, and moral purity of the child being described, creating an emotive and semantic harmony between sound and meaning.

4.1.1. Types of Sound in Surah al-Kahf

4.1.1.1. Al-Madd (Vocal Prolongation)

Al-Madd is a salient phonological and rhetorical feature in Arabic, evoking varied semantic resonances through elongated articulation. In literary terms, *al-madd* refers to the prolongation of a vowel sound within a word (Naṣr 2003). This device not only carries aesthetic weight but also functions as a form of non-normativity, pushing the text into the realm of foregrounding. The prolonged sound can signify *al-ta'zīm* (magnification) or *al-mubālaghah* (exaggeration). For example, in the phrase *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, the extended pronunciation emphasizes the exclusive divinity of God. Ibn al-Jazarī (n.d., 1:345) refers to this as *al-madd al-mubālaghah*, underscoring intensified negation of all deities besides God. In this respect the *al-madd* aligns with the context and the text in order to produce a secondary

1 - فَانظُرْ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي بِغَيْرِ رِكْبَةٍ بَعِيرٍ نَفْسِي لَقَدْ جِئْتَنِي شَيْئًا نُكْرًا (الكهف/74)

So they went on. When they encountered a boy, he slew him. He said, "Did you slay an innocent soul, without [his having slain] anyone? You have certainly done a dire thing!" (Q. 18:74)

signification. For example, in verse Q. 18:15,¹ the demonstrative pronoun *hā'ulā'i* contains two types of *al-madd*, *al-madd al-muttaṣil* (connected) and *al-madd al-munfaṣil* (separated), both contributing to the depiction of distance between the referent and the speaker. This distance may be spatial or ideological, suggesting how far the polytheists have strayed by worshipping other than God. It may also imply the multitude of those engaged in idolatry (Qari 1993). Another example is Q. 18:42,² in which the *al-madd* of the word *rabbī* prolongs the vocal transition to *aḥadan*, emphasizing the separation between the concept of divinity and association. As Mayyas (2020) notes, this vocal elongation dramatizes the theological and emotional distance. This prolongation highlights the incompatibility between God and any potential partner; they are not only unequal—they are ontologically separate.

4.1.1.2. *Al-Ikhfā'* (Concealment)

Al-Ikhfā' refers to the partial concealment of the first phoneme into the second, while retaining the nasal resonance (Qari 1993). This phonetic concealment produces a form of phonological non-normativity, contributing to the aesthetic soundscape of the Qur'an and aligning the sonic structure with the semantic content. An instance of *al-ikhfā'* appears in verse Q. 18:65.³ In the phrase *min 'indinā* (from Our presence), *al-ikhfā'* occurs between the letters *nūn* and *'ayn*. From a normative perspective, a more straightforward expression would have been *minnā* (from Us), which appears in other verses such as Q. 7:72 and Q. 11:9. These instances convey a universal or general divine mercy, applicable to all of humanity, however, in Q. 18:65, the expression *min 'indanā* signals a specific and concealed type of divine mercy, granted to al-Khiḍr (al-samerai 2016). Moreover, one can say that in cases of *minnā*, the mercy is manifest and evident for the audience, but in Surah al-Kahf, Moses did not know what mercy God had bestowed upon al-Khiḍr. The use of *'indanā* emphasizes the personal, inaccessible origin of this mercy. Unlike other blessings that may be learned or cultivated, this *rahmah* is non-acquirable, infused directly by divine will, an interpretation corroborated by the exceptional acts performed by al-Khiḍr

1- هُوَ لَا يَفْقَهُمْ قَوْلَهُمْ لِيُكْفِرُوا بِهِمْ فَلَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (الكهف/15)

These our people have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not bring any clear authority touching them? So who is a greater wrongdoer than he who fabricates a lie against Allah? (Q. 18:15)

2- ... يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا (الكهف/42)

... He was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord" (Q. 18:42).

3- فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا (الكهف/56)

[There] they found one of Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Ourselves, and taught him a knowledge from Our own (Q. 18:65).

in the narrative. Through *al-ikhfā'*, the Qur'an mirrors this semantic concealment in phonetic form, producing a stylistic unity between sound and meaning.

Another example of *al-ikhfā'* occurs in the phrase *min dūnihimā* (Q. 18:93),¹ that harmonizes the wording with the meaning. That is, the people in question were not apparent; they were hidden among the two barriers from the view of others. Thus this concealment in sense is also mirrored in the wording. In this verse *al-ikhfā'* *al-'ulyā* (higher-level concealment) is effected, because the place of articulation of the letter /d/ is close to that of /n/ (Ḥaṣrī 1995). In this type of *al-ikhfā'*, the proximity of the articulatory organs for the two sounds produces a greater degree of concealment. Consequently, God does not use the expression *min ghayrihimā* and thereby sets aside that normative option. As a result, by aligning meaning and phonetic texture and by enhancing comprehension, the text resorts to non-normativity.

4.1.1.3. *Al-Idghām (Assimilation)*

Al-Idghām (assimilation) refers to the complete merging of the first letter's sound into the second, so that they are pronounced as a single geminated (doubled) consonant (Qari 1993). This process usually occurs between letters of similar articulation or closely positioned points of articulation, particularly when distinct pronunciation would be burdensome or dissonant. From this perspective, *al-idghām* is employed for the sake of facilitation.

A notable instance of *al-idghām* occurs in Q. 18:45.² The deep (underlying) structure of this verse could have permitted an alternative phrasing: *wa kāna Allāhu muqtadiran 'alā kulli shay'*. However, a non-normative phonological shaping takes place that serves specific rhetorical aims. One such aim is to create *al-idghām* in order to beautify the expression and to harmonize wording with meaning. By *al-idghām* of the word *shay'* into the predicate *muqtadiran*, the proposition "God is capable over everything" is rendered more aesthetically and semantically striking, since *shay'* is absorbed into *muqtadiran*. This phonetic merging conveys the idea that anything that can properly be called a "thing" falls entirely within God's power, and that nothing—not even the slightest particle—lies outside God's dominion. Thus, the immersion of one word into another transfers the semantic content into the phonetic shape of the text.

1 - حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا (الكهف/93)
When he reached [the place] between the two barriers, he found between them a people who could hardly understand a word (Q. 18:93).

2 - ... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا (الكهف/45)
...And Allah is omnipotent over all things (Q.18:45).

4.1.1.4. *Al-Tafkhīm and al-Tarqīq*

Among the phonological non-normativities that contribute to the aesthetic richness of the Qur'anic style is the strategic use of *al-tafkhīm* (emphatic pronunciation) and *al-tarqīq* (soft or thin pronunciation). *Al-Tafkhīm* refers to the full and heavy articulation of certain phonemes—specifically those possessing the feature of *al-isti 'lā'* (elevation), namely: *kh, ṣ, ḍ, gh, ṭ, q,* and *ẓ*. In contrast, *al-tarqīq* denotes the light and delicate articulation of phonemes, characteristic of those with *al-istifāl* (lowering), which includes all letters except those with *al-isti 'lā'*.

In Q. 18:19,¹ the phrase *wal-yatalaṭṭaf* showcases a notable phonetic progression from *al-tarqīq* to *al-tafkhīm* and then back to *al-tarqīq*. This verse recounts the deliberations of the Companions of the Cave upon awakening from their miraculous sleep. Needing sustenance, they resolved to send one of their group into the city, but cautiously, lest their presence be revealed. Accordingly, the word begins with four thin (*al-tarqīq*) segments *l, y, t, l* so that the person who will leave does so furtively and without drawing attention. Then, the insertion of the emphatic *ṭ* introduces a tonal shift, indicating the necessity of temporarily emerging into the public sphere to procure food. However, the word ends again with *f*, a softened phoneme, reinforcing the need to immediately retreat and avoid detection. God, as the narrator, does not use alternative formulations such as *liyab 'ath* or *liyadaqq*, which would follow normal narrative expectation, instead He chooses *wal-yatalaṭṭaf*, effecting a deliberate non-normativity so that the phonetic colouring of the word matches perfectly the meaning and the situation in which the Companions of the Cave find themselves.

Similarly, in the verse Q. 18:107,² all the letters of *firdaws* are articulated with *al-tarqīq*. Even the letter *r*, which is commonly realized with *al-tafkhīm*, is rendered thin here because of the preceding *kasra* (the /i/ vowel) (Qari 1993). This thin, gentle sonority and rhythm evoke the condition of paradise—softness, pleasure, and serenity—free from heaviness, hardship, or distress. For this reason God does not use the term *al-na 'īm* here; the phonetic non-normativity renders the meaning more tangibly in the sound

1 - ... فَأَبْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكى طَعَاماً فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا (الكهف/19)
... Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe which of them has the purest food, and bring you provisions from there. Let him be attentive, and let him not make anyone aware of you (Q. 18: 19)

2 - إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا (الكهف/107)

As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds they shall have the gardens of Firdaws for abode (Q. 18:107).

itself. Furthermore, in the verse Q. 18:53,¹ the letter *r* in *al-nār* is given a thickened articulation. This *al-tafkhīm* is employed to manifest in the phonetic plane the intensity, harshness, and density of the fire (Mayyas 2020).

4.1.1.5. *Al-Jinās (Paronomasia)*

Another dimension of phonetic beauty is *al-jinās* (paronomasia), which creates a melodious rhythm in speech. What enhances the aesthetic value of *al-jinās* is the interpretive levels that accompany it; otherwise, *al-jinās* alone does not play a decisive role in beauty (al-Jurjānī 2002). In technical usage, *al-jinās* refers to the similarity of two words in pronunciation while differing in meaning (Hashemi 2012). In the verse Q. 18:14,² an incomplete *al-jinās* (*ghayr tāmm*) occurs between the two words *qāmū* and *qālū* (Harrari 2000, 16: 324). Through this *al-jinās*, God creates a pleasant harmony imbued with emphasis; namely, when these individuals awoke from that extraordinary sleep and rose up, they were endowed with firm spiritual strength (Ibn ‘Āshūr 1999, 15: 29). Thereafter, with the same strength and determination, they declared that their Lord is One. Likewise, in the verse Q. 18:104,³ an incomplete *al-jinās* is established between *yaḥsabūn* and *yuḥsinūn* (Harrari 2000, 17: 77). Just as these two words share identical sound and rhythm, so too in their content and ultimate outcome they are alike: even the good deed they presume to perform is but conjecture, far removed from reality and divine acceptance.

4.1.1.6. *Al-Takrār (Repetition)*

The recurrence of similar elements in different places within a literary work is called *al-takrār* (repetition). Repetition constitutes the very principle and foundation of order and harmony in the text (Majdi & Muhandis 1984, 2: 117). The stylistic device of repetition has a remarkable impact on the musical and semantic richness of the text, thereby contributing to its aesthetic creation. In Surah al-Kahf, various types of repetition, both verbal

1 - وَ رَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاقِعُهَا وَ لَمْ يَجِدُوا عَلَيْهَا مَصْرَفًا (الكهف/53)

The guilty will sight the Fire and know that they will fall into it, for they will find no means to circumvent it (Q. 18: 53)

2 - وَ رَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُنَّا إِذْ أَتَيْنَا (الكهف/14)

And fortified their hearts, when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We will never invoke any god besides Him, for then we shall certainly have said an atrocious lie (Q. 18:14).

3 - الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ يَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا (الكهف/104)

Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose they are doing good (Q. 18:104).

and semantic, can be observed. In the verses Q. 18:72¹ and Q. 18:75,² verbal repetition occurs for the purpose of reminder and admonition, in that al-Khidr recalls the condition he had set with Prophet Moses. In the second verse, the addition of the word *laka* serves as a rebuke to Moses, reminding him of the condition he had disregarded (Ibn Jamā'ah 1989, 1: 242). Similarly, in the verse Q. 18:82,³ repetition indicates Moses failure to uphold that condition. It is as though al-Khidr intends, through this repetition, to convey that no blame attaches to him, since the condition had already been neglected. The repeated phrase serves to forestall any objection by Moses during his explanation. Thus, the sentence, by way of emphasis, also carries an implicit reproach of Moses for his hastiness and failure to remain patient with the condition (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 15: 119). In the verse Q. 18:71,⁴ as well as Q. 18:74,⁵ Moses, in his disapproval of al-Khidr, employs the same phrase (al-Zuhaili 1997, 15: 295). In the Q. 18:1-2,⁶ God removes crookedness from this Book and bestows upon it uprightness and rectitude. Thus, immediately after negating *'iwaj* (crookedness), He employs the word *qayyiman*, which conveys the same meaning as *wa-lam yaj'al lahu 'iwajan*. Here a form of semantic repetition occurs, leaving no room for any doubt concerning non-normativity (Harrari 2000, 16: 323).

4.2. Syntactic Non-Normativity

Observance of the rules, styles, and grammar of any language ensures its cohesion and prevents disintegration. However, at times, departing from these forms and syntactic structures produces the opposite effect, drawing greater attention from the audience and conveying a secondary message. Syntactic non-normativity refers to a departure from the conventional syntactic system and a breaking of its principles, thereby opening up new possibilities in language and creating novel expressions. In this way, the

1 - قال ألم أقل إنك لن تستطيع معي صبيرا (الكهف/72)

He said, "Did I not say, indeed you cannot have patience with me?" (Q. 18:72)

2 - قال ألم أقل لك إنك لن تستطيع معي صبيرا (الكهف/75)

He said, "Did I not tell you, indeed you cannot have patience with me?" (Q. 18:75)

3 - ... ذلك تأويل ما لم تستطع عليه صبيرا (الكهف/82)

... This is the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience" (Q. 18:82).

4 - ... قال أخرجتها لتغرق أهلها لقد جئت شيئا إمرأ (الكهف/71)

... He said, "Did you make a hole in it to drown its people? You have certainly done a monstrous thing!" (Q. 18:71)

5 - ... قال أقتلت نفسا زكية بغير نفس لقد جئت شيئا لئكرا (الكهف/74)

... He said, "Did you slay an innocent soul, without [his having slain] anyone? You have certainly done a dire thing" (Q. 18:74)

6 - الحمد لله الذي أنزل على عبده الكتاب و لم يجعل له عوجا * قَيِّمًا لِيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّن لَّدُنْهُ ... (الكهف/1-2)

All praise belongs to Allah, who has sent down the Book to His servant and did not let any crookedness be in it, * [a Book] upright, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, ... (Q. 18:1-2).

audience is exposed to a broader sphere of beauty and aesthetic experience (Yasrī n.d.). Syntactic non-normativity concerns the combination of a word with its collocates within the context in which it appears. Words and expressions are safeguarded by lexicon and syntax, which, by their norms and principles, regulate these combinations and normally prevent non-normativity. Yet this very transgression, in the realm of poetry and ornate prose, leaves a profound impact on the listener and leads to innovation and creativity in the form and structure of the text (al-Kharshah 2014), thereby generating fresh significations and beauties. Accordingly, any alteration or rearrangement in the collocation of sentence components or their adjuncts, and any departure from established rules, falls within the domain of syntactic non-normativity, whose various types are outlined below.

4.2.1. *Al-Iltifāt* (Grammatical Shift)

The secret of eloquence in *al-iltifāt* (grammatical shift) in Arabic lies in its capacity for variety and transition from one mode of expression to another, producing freshness for the listener and prompting heightened attentiveness to the discourse (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1: 10). In general, there is a psychological and affective relationship between *al-iltifāt* and meaning, since meaning conveys the feeling or state of mind that the speaker seeks to impress upon the audience with the clearest and most proximate words (Barakāt 1984). *Al-Iltifāt* is among the most evident instances of deviation from the norm, as it introduces an unexpected shift within the conventional style of a text, compelling the reader to reflect upon the rupture.

Various examples of *al-iltifāt* occur in Surah al-Kahf. The first is *al-iltifāt* in pronouns, whereby the speaker_often for rhetorical reasons_shifts from one pronoun to another, diverging from the main pronoun of the discourse, whether from the third person to the second, from the second to the first, or vice versa. Arabs, in general, grow weary of prolonged use of a single pronoun; thus, they vary pronouns for stylistic freshness, sometimes switching to the vocative or the absent third person. This variation prevents monotony (Qarṭājī 1966, 1: 115). For instance, in the verse Q.18:46,¹ the phrase *‘inda rabbika* employs the third-person reference; but in the continuation, the discourse shifts to the first-person plural: *wa-yawma nusayyiru al-jibāla wa-tarā al-arḍa* (Q. 18:47).² The reason for this shift

1 -... و الباقيات الصالحات خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَاباً وَ خَيْرٌ أَمْلاً (الكهف/46)

... but lasting righteous deeds are better with your Lord in reward and better in hope (Q. 18: 46).

2 - وَ يَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالِ وَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ... (الكهف/47)

The day We shall set the mountains moving and you will see the earth in full view ... (Q. 18: 47).

from third person to first person is that when God speaks of altering the order of existence, human intellects cannot fully grasp it (Abū Ḥayyān 1983, 6: 134). Thus, He turns to the first person, which signifies the grandeur and magnitude of His power (Ibn 'Aḥḥyah 2001, 3: 520).

In another example, the verse Q. 18:48¹ initially uses the third person in *rabbika* so that the possessive *-ka* (your) might draw greater attention, impressing upon the addressee the terror and severity of the situation. Later in the verse, non-normativity occurs through a shift from a manifest noun to the first-person plural pronoun: *laqad ji'tumūnā kamā khalaqnākum*. This construction functions to threaten, reproach, and induce remorse in those who denied the Resurrection (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 15: 79). The use of the first person in the context of divine threat intensifies the gravity of the warning and humiliates the deniers, who must now stand before the very God who had bestowed upon them innumerable blessings.

In another vers Q. 18:45,² God speaks of rain and its descent, referring to Himself with the first-person plural pronoun *nā*. Then the discourse shifts from the first person to the third person through the divine name *Allāh*, thereby impressing upon the audience the lesson that they must constantly remember their benefactor and show gratitude to Him. The shift to the third person through the majestic name serves to magnify, exalt, and affirm divine uniqueness, since such connotations cannot be conveyed by pronouns alone (Abū Ḥayyān 1983, 2: 236). Moreover, the manifest name encompasses all divine attributes and unambiguously signifies the lordship of the Creator who governs existence and exercises mastery over all things (Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 2: 144).

In some instances in Surah al-Kahf, *al-iltifāt* occurs in grammatical forms (*ṣīghah*). By *ṣīghah* is meant the morphological pattern upon which a word is constructed. Verbs and nouns, according to their structure, fall into various categories: simple trilateral (*thulāthī mujarrad*), augmented trilateral (*thulāthī mazīd*), simple quadrilateral (*rubā'ī mujarrad*), augmented quadrilateral (*rubā'ī mazīd*), and nouns of trilateral, quadrilateral, or quintilateral roots. *Al-Iltifāt* in *ṣīghah* occurs when, within a single unit of discourse, two different forms of verbs or nouns or one verbal form

1 - وَ غَرَضُوا عَلَى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ... (الكهف/48)

They will be presented before your Lord in ranks: "Certainly you have come to Us just as We created you the first time" ... (Q. 18: 48).

2 - وَ اضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَاتَّخِذَتْ بِهِ نَبَاتَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ وَ كَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا (الكهف/45)

Draw for them the parable of the life of this world:[It is]like the water We send down from the sky. Then the earth's vegetation mingles with it. Then it becomes chaff, scattered by the wind. And Allah is omnipotent over all things (Q. 18: 46).

alongside a nominal form_ appear unexpectedly for rhetorical reasons. Such deviation falls within the sphere of grammatical non-normativity.

In the verse Q. 18:78,¹ the phrase *lam tastafī* ' employs a verb in the imperfect form with the augmentative particle *-ta*. Thus one would expect the same form to continue. Yet God deviates from this form in the subsequent verse, employing *tastī* ' (Q. 18:82).² The reason for this non-normativity is that in *lam tastafī* ', al-Khiḍr had not yet revealed the reasons behind his actions, and thus these actions still weighed heavily upon Moses. The heavier form matched the burden of incomprehension. By contrast, in *lam tastī* ', the reasons for al-Khiḍr's actions had already been disclosed, thereby alleviating the weight upon Moses. Accordingly, a lighter form was employed (Ibn Kathīr 1998, 5: 169).

Another form of *al-iltifāt* in this surah concerns particles (*al-adawāt*). By *al-adawāt* is meant, in a broad sense, particles of condition, conjunction, emphasis, and the like. What is intended by deviation from the norm in this context is that within a phrase or expression, a particle may sometimes be mentioned and at other times omitted (Tabl 1997). In the verse Q. 18:71,³ the phrase *kharāqahā* serves as the apodosis for *idhā*. Yet, unlike the two other examples of *idhā* in Q. 18:74⁴ and Q. 18:77,⁵ the apodosis is not preceded by the particle *fa* '. This constitutes a departure from the norm and thus falls within grammatical non-normativity. It is as if, in the cases where *fa* ' is used, the consequence of the condition occurred immediately upon the arrival of Moses and al-Khiḍr at the scene (Shihab n.d.). In contrast, in the instance where *fa* ' is omitted, the action did not take place immediately but only after some time had elapsed; al-Khiḍr did not pierce the ship at once, but rather after they had sailed into the sea, he made the hole.

4.2.2. *Al-Ḥadhf* (Ellipsis)

The phenomenon of *al-ḥadhf* (ellipsis) is one of the most significant

1 -... سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (الكهف/78)

I will inform you about the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience (Q. 18:78).

2 -... ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (الكهف/82)

This is the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience" (Q. 18:82).

3 - فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ... (الكهف/71)

So they went on. When they boarded the boat, he made a hole in it... (Q. 18:71).

4 - فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ ... (الكهف/74)

So they went on. When they encountered a boy, he slew him... (Q. 18:74).

5 - فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطْعَمُوا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّقُوا ... (الكهف/77)

So they went on. When they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to extend them any hospitality... (Q. 18:77).

issues in language, bearing rhetorical functions and implications in discourse. As al-Jurjānī (2001) remarks: Ellipsis is a field whose path is subtle, a phenomenon wondrous and akin to magic; for sometimes omission is more eloquent than mention, and silence yields greater effect than speech. In technical usage, ellipsis means the deliberate omission of a part of the sentence for a specific rhetorical purpose, while the omitted element can be inferred through verbal or contextual indicators (Hashemi 2012).

This surah contains multiple examples of ellipsis. In the verse Q. 18:25,¹ the noun *al-tamyīz* following the number *tis 'an* is omitted. The normative structure would be *tis 'a sinīn* (nine years). The non-normativity is justified by the fact that the omitted word is already clear from the preceding phrase, where *sinīn* is mentioned. In Q. 18:23–24,² a verb is omitted, its presence being understood through the context. Similarly, in Q. 18:14,³ contrary to the usual norm, both the conditional verb and its particle are omitted, leaving only the apodosis expressed.

4.2.3. *Al-Taqdīm & Al-Ta'khīr (preposing & postponing)*

Another rhetorical device frequently employed by eloquent speakers for diverse purposes is *al-taqdīm and al-ta'khīr*, which consists in placing a word before or after its usual position in order to achieve exclusivity, emphasis, or rhetorical necessity (Şarşarī 1988). In this device, the arrangement of speech is altered so that by advancing or delaying a word, phrase, or meaning, a specific aim or wisdom may be conveyed ('Awn 2005).

In Surah al-Kahf, various instances of this stylistic feature occur. In Q.18:5,⁴ the normal word order is not observed, as the subject *'ilm* is delayed and the predicate *lahum* advanced_ contrary to the standard Arabic sentence structure. This non-normativity, on one hand, serves as a reproach for their ignorance and, on the other, intensifies the negation (Ṭanṭāwī 1997, 8: 468). Thus, the inversion generates an additional layer of meaning.

1- وَ لَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَ اِزْدَادُوا تِسْعًا (الكهف/25)

They remained in the Cave for three hundred years, and added nine more [to that number] (Q. 18:25).

2- وَ لَا تَقُولُنَّ لِنَشْرِئِهِ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكُمْ غَدًا * إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ... (الكهف/23-24)

Do not say about anything, "I will indeed do it tomorrow," (23) without [adding], "if Allah wishes" (Q. 18:23-24).

3- ... لَنْ نَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا (الكهف/14)

We will never invoke any god besides Him, for then we shall certainly have said an atrocious lie (Q. 18:14).

4- مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ... (الكهف/5)

They do not have any knowledge of that... (Q. 18:5).

In Q.18:26,¹ the normative order is altered so as to emphasize that knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and the earth belongs exclusively to God. Later in the same verse, another inversion appears in Q. 18:26,² where the subject *walī* is delayed and the predicate *lahum* advanced, thereby underscoring that the only true guardian and sovereign of affairs is God (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1: 527). Another example occurs in the precedence of the second object over the first in verbs of cognition, as in Q. 18:94.³ Here, the people of the region request Dhū al-Qarnayn to erect a barrier between them and Gog and Magog (Ṭantāwī 1997, 8: 573). Their non-normativity in word order reflects urgency, indicating their desire for Dhū al-Qarnayn to give immediate priority to solving their problem.

In Q. 18:22,⁴ the norm is likewise altered by advancing *minhum* before *aḥad*. Two reasons account for this non-normativity: a) to establish absolute generality of negation, meaning the prohibition applies to all individuals without exception (‘Atīq 1984). If *aḥad* had been advanced, the meaning would have been restricted, implying that the Prophet was only forbidden from inquiring about certain individuals, while others would remain permissible. By inverting the order, the prohibition is universal. b) Another rhetorical purpose is observance of rhythmic spacing, which maintains stylistic balance. Finally, in Q. 18:82,⁵ the usual surface structure is modified to emphasize that the treasure buried beneath the wall belonged solely to the orphans, with no one else sharing a claim.

4.2.4. *Al-Taḍmīn* (Conflation)

Through *al-taḍmīn*, the eloquent speaker conveys abundant meaning within a concise expression, saturating the audience with depth while using the fewest words. This device falls under the category of elliptical brevity (*al-ījāz bil-ḥadhf*). *Al-Taḍmīn* consists in injecting into a word the meaning of another word and assigning to it the function of that second word, such that a single expression bears two meanings simultaneously. The principal

1 - قُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ... (الكهف/26)
Say, "Allah knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth... (Q. 18:26).

2 - ... مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ ... (الكهف/26)
... They have no guardian besides Him ... (Q. 18:26).

3 - ... فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا (الكهف/94)
... Shall we pay you a tribute on condition that you build a barrier between them and us? (Q. 18:94)

4 - ... وَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (الكهف/22)
... and do not question about them any of them (Q. 18:22).

5 - ... وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا ... (الكهف/82)
...Under it there was a treasure belonging to them...(Q. 18:82).

aim of *al-taḍmīn* is therefore to convey dual signification through one utterance (Ibn Hishām 1979, 2: 897). It serves both conciseness and semantic expansion (Ibn Qayyim n.d.). By definition, then, *al-taḍmīn* is a kind of deviation from linguistic norm employed for rhetorical purposes, designed to enhance the aesthetic force of speech. An example occurs in the verse Q. 18:28.¹ The verb *ʿadā* is normally transitive without a preposition, meaning “to cross, to pass over.” Here, however, it is made transitive with the preposition *ʿan*, thereby conveying an additional sense: “to disdain, to disregard.” This non-normativity achieves conciseness with expansion of meaning, combining both senses: one must not turn one’s gaze away from them, nor should one disdain them in favor of others (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2:716). In Q.18:37,² the verb *sawwā* incorporates the meaning of *ṣayyartuka* and *jaʿaltuka* (I made you/I rendered you), and thus requires two objects (al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī 1993, 4: 456). Consequently, *sawwāka* here conveys not merely “to shape” but also “to constitute, to render” (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2: 722).

4.3 Semantic Non-Normativity

Semantic non-normativity represents another level of norm-breaking, whereby the reader or listener is led to the intended meaning in a way that departs from habitual usage. This stylistic device disrupts expectations in order to draw greater attention and create surprise (Riffaterre 1993). At this level, discourse transcends its primary denotations, suppressing conventional associations in favor of novel, non-habitual signification (al-Rawashidah, 2004).

4.3.1. *Al-Istiʿārah* (Metaphor)

In technical usage, metaphor is the employment of a word in a sense other than that for which it was originally coined, on the basis of a relation of similarity between the original and borrowed meaning, accompanied by an indicator (*al-qarīnah*) preventing the literal sense from being intended (Hashemi 2012). Metaphor is abundantly present in Surah al-Kahf, producing striking imagery that enables the audience to penetrate more deeply into the divine message. As a form of non-normativity, metaphor conveys a concept contrary to its literal norm, thereby intensifying perception. It removes the word from its conventional range and ushers it

1 - ... وَ لَا تَعُدُّ عَلَيْكَ عَنْهُمْ ثَرْيُدًا زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ... (الكهف/28)

...and do not loose sight of them, desiring the glitter of the life of this world... (Q. 18:28).

2 - ... ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا (الكهف/37)

then fashioned you as a man? (Q. 18:37)

into a greener field, or rather pours it into the valley of figurative speech, where it flourishes beyond its original capacity (Nasif 1981).

For instance, in Q. 18:6,¹ the tireless effort of the Prophet to guide the idolaters is expressed through an *al-isti'ārah al-tamhīlīyyah* (allegorical metaphor), likening him to one who has lost a loved one and wishes to destroy himself out of grief (Sabuni 1997, 2: 173). This expression consoles the Prophet while simultaneously underscoring his intense devotion to human guidance. In Q. 18:51,² although *'aḍud* in Arabic literally refers to the upper arm between elbow and shoulder (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991), here it is used metaphorically to signify “supporter, ally” (Harrari 2000, 16: 428). Since the arm symbolizes strength, the metaphor emphasizes that no matter how powerful the misguided may be, God does not take them as helpers. In Q. 18:63,³ the verb *ra'ā* departs from its basic meaning of visual perception. Through an *al-isti'ārah*, it comes to signify full knowledge and awareness (al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 2: 733). Thus, complete recognition is likened to complete visual seeing. Here *ra'ayta* is the borrowed term (*musta'ār minh*), while cognition is the intended referent (*musta'ār lah*). The unifying factor is the acquisition of knowledge, as though the matter were so vividly observed that no doubt remained (Harrari 2000, 16: 459).

4.3.2. *Al-Majāz (Metonymy)*

Metonymy refers to the attribution of an action, or that which implies action, to something other than its true agent, on the basis of a semantic association (*'alāqah*), accompanied by a contextual indicator that prevents the literal meaning from being intended (Sultani 2005). Classified into *al-majāz al-'aqlī* and *al-majāz al-mursal*, this rhetorical device represents a type of non-normativity that enriches discourse with aesthetic effect. It stimulates the imagination to substitute an analogous meaning for the original, thereby broadening interpretive horizons (al-Jurjānī 2002).

An instance appears in Q. 18:77,⁴ where *al-majāz al-'aqlī* attributes volition to an inanimate object, portraying the wall as if endowed with will and sensation (al-Saghir 1999). This non-normativity harmonizes with the

1 - فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا (الكهف/6)

You are liable to imperil your life for their sake, if they should not believe this discourse, out of grief (Q. 18:6).

2 - ... مَا كُنْتُ مَتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا (الكهف/51)

... nor do I take those who mislead as assistants (Q. 18:51).

3 - قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ ... (الكهف/63)

He said, "Did you see?! When we took shelter at the rock...(Q. 18:63).

4 - ... فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ ... (الكهف/77)

... There they found a wall which was about to collapse ... (Q. 18:77).

verse's context, in which Moses encountered extraordinary phenomena. The image of a wall "desiring to collapse" aptly reflects the pattern of wondrous events that characterized his journey with al-Khidr. The use of the imperfect verb *yurīdu*, conveying continuity, intensifies the imagery by suggesting repeated tremors that drew attention, prompting their repair of the wall. In Q. 18:57,¹ the word *yad* (hand) functions metonymically, representing the human being as a whole. The hand is employed because of its vital role in human activity, standing here for the totality of human deeds (Harrari 2000, 16: 428).

4.3.3. *Al-Kināyah* (Allusion)

Al-Kināyah constitutes another striking manifestation of harmony between form and meaning in Arabic rhetoric. It involves expression through imagery whose apparent meaning is not intended, yet unlike metaphor, it lacks an explicit contextual indicator redirecting the reader toward the hidden sense (Shamisa 2002). In Q. 18:42,² the gesture of "turning one's palms" is an allusion to deep regret and remorse. The physical act symbolizes the inner state of one who, out of despair, strikes one hand against the other in grief.

5. Conclusion

Deviation from conventional linguistic norms engages the reader more profoundly with the text, drawing attention to secondary meanings alongside primary ones, and allowing for a fuller apprehension of the speaker's intent. As the Qur'an employs diverse stylistic and formal strategies to saturate its audience with guidance while presenting ever-renewed linguistic artistry. The analysis of Surah al-Kahf yields the following findings:

In phonological level, a wide range of sound patterns, including strong and weak phonetic features, concealment (*al-ikhfā'*), assimilation (*al-idghām*), prolongation (*al-madd*), emphatic and soft articulation, repetition (*al-takrār*) (lexical and semantic), and paronomasia (*al-jinās*), creates a musical harmony between sound and meaning. This interplay generates a dynamic, sensorially rich atmosphere in which the audience not only comprehends the meaning but also experiences it aurally and visually, enhancing their grasp of Qur'anic eloquence. In syntactic level, numerous

1 -... وَ نَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَ يَدَاهُ ... (الكهف/57)

... and forgets what his hands have sent ahead?... (Q. 18:57)

2 -... فَأَصْبَحَ يَنْفَعُ كَفَيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا ... (الكهف/42)

... and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it... (Q. 18:42).

rhetorical non-normativities appear, such as ellipsis (which demonstrates that the omitted element is contextually evident and enhances brevity), preposing and postponing (for emphasis and specification), syntactic incorporation (*al-tadmīn*, which conveys multiple meanings simultaneously), and various shifts of references (*al-iltifāt* in pronouns and particles), which maintain textual freshness and prevent monotony. Collectively, these features intensify eloquence, brevity, and rhetorical force, ensuring the audience's undistracted focus on the divine message. In semantic level, devices such as metaphor, metonymy, and allusion provide vivid mental imagery of diverse situations, stimulating the reader's imaginative faculties. Thus, reciting the surah evokes the sensation of witnessing its events directly, immersing the reader in its dramatic scenes, and deepening appreciation of the Qur'an's aesthetic and miraculous qualities. In sum, the linguistic structure of Surah al-Kahf, particularly its systematic non-normativities from ordinary usage, serves as an effective medium for deepening comprehension, anchoring meaning in the reader's mind, and amplifying receptivity to its divine teachings.

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The Relationship between Faith and Creativity: Qur'anic Foundations for Creative Thinking in Educational Sciences

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ABSTRACT:

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In educational sciences, human creativity is regarded as one of the highest intellectual blessings. It represents a blend of intelligence and key personality traits, such as independent thinking, self-control, and problem-solving ability. The achievements and advancements of humankind have consistently been driven by creative thinking. The Qur'an highlights the unique role of humans as the vicegerents of Allah, emphasizing creativity as an innate characteristic bestowed by the Creator. This creative potential, however, must be cultivated and trained. The cultivation of talented and creative individuals has been a central concern across societies, not only in contemporary times but also throughout history. The primary question addressed in this study, which has not been previously explored, is how creativity is explained in the Qur'an and whether there is a relationship between creative thinking in educational sciences and faith as expressed in the Qur'an. Drawing on a descriptive-analytical methodology, research findings suggest a profound connection between Qur'anic teachings and creative thinking in educational sciences. In particular, the study identifies five key Qur'anic principles: imagination, reason, emotion, free thinking, and hope as foundational components that contribute to the development of creativity.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Creativity, Educational sciences, Creative thinking, Faith, Heart belief.

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1. Introduction

Creativity is regarded as one of the greatest human blessings, embodying a harmonious blend of intellect, original thinking, emotional tranquility, and problem-solving abilities. Within the field of educational sciences, creativity is not only a key driver of intellectual development but also an essential component of personal growth and societal progress. It is closely linked to traits such as emotional strength, resilience, and the mental peace that comes from realizing one's potential. Research underscores the connection between mental relaxation and heightened creativity, revealing that individuals with greater emotional balance and inner peace are better equipped to innovate and solve problems (Afrooz 2014). Moreover, from the perspective of Qur'anic studies, creativity emerges as a deeply spiritual phenomenon, intertwined with faith and the pursuit of divine wisdom. This study therefore seeks to answer the following question: How does the Qur'an conceptualize creativity, and what is the relationship between faith and creative thinking within educational sciences?

Belief in the Creator instills purpose and security, counteracting feelings of futility and mental harshness (Q. 23:115). Such faith fosters inner peace, enabling individuals to think freely, unhindered by material, emotional, or spiritual obstacles. All divine religions stress that the ultimate goal of humanity is the establishment of friendship, peace, and justice (Mohammadi Arani 2007; Q. 24:55), nurturing a mindset of optimism and calmness that is conducive to creative thought. The Qur'an further emphasizes the transformative power of belief in Allah, which liberates the mind from intellectual stagnation, inspiring dynamism and innovation. Through faith, humans are encouraged to explore their intellectual capacities and engage deeply with the world around them. The remembrance of Allah provides peace of mind (Q. 48:4; Q. 13:28; Q. 89:27–30) and a sense of security (Q. 6:82), fostering conditions under which creativity flourishes. Imām 'Alī (PBUH) describes how those with profound faith in Allah experience unparalleled spiritual exhilaration and inner contentment (al-Raḍī 2005, sermon 90). This heightened spiritual state inspires devotion, persistence, and engagement with creative endeavors without weakness or distraction.

Studies also reveal the intersection between spirituality, mental health, and creativity. A spiritually oriented life contributes to psychological well-being, enabling individuals to be more resilient under stress, less prone to negative emotions, and more inclined toward happiness and fulfillment. Religious individuals often experience lower anxiety, reduced substance abuse, and stronger social support networks. These factors collectively contribute to a healthier lifestyle, often leading to increased longevity and

vitality. From a Qur'anic perspective, the relationship between faith and creativity is further underscored by the emphasis on reason, curiosity, and reflection as pathways to divine knowledge. The Qur'an encourages humans to explore the phenomena of existence through sensory and intellectual faculties (Q. 17:36), linking curiosity to creative processes. Reason, guided by faith, becomes the foundation of rationality and wisdom (Baqeri 2007), providing the intellectual and spiritual grounding necessary for innovation (Afrooz 2010).

This interconnectedness between educational sciences and Qur'anic teachings underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary challenges. Creativity, as a shared focus of these two fields, acts as a bridge that integrates intellectual development with spiritual growth. Such an approach not only strengthens problem-solving abilities but also ensures that solutions are imbued with moral and ethical considerations. In a world increasingly shaped by complex social, environmental, and technological challenges, the synthesis of educational insights with Qur'anic principles offers a holistic framework for navigating these issues. By examining creativity through the lenses of both educational sciences and Qur'anic studies, this paper seeks to highlight the dynamic interplay between intellectual and spiritual dimensions of human development. It underscores the necessity of integrating these perspectives to produce innovative and meaningful solutions, rooted in both scientific rigor and spiritual wisdom that address the multifaceted challenges of the modern world.

2. Literature Review

Creative thinking have captivated human interest across human history and cultures, driving efforts to understand and cultivate innovation. These endeavors became especially pronounced during the Industrial Revolution, as societies embraced modernity and moved away from earlier paradigms of understanding. A pivotal shift occurred in prioritizing the exploration and mastery of nature to address human needs and questions, necessitating a reevaluation of human thought processes and imagination. Creativity emerged as a cornerstone for understanding, problem-solving, and innovation, gaining prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as societies increasingly sought to identify, nurture, and utilize creative talent.

This trend continued to intensify with the acceleration of globalization, technological advancements, and the growing complexity of social and economic systems. Creativity became a defining feature of the modern era,

leading some scholars to describe contemporary times as the Age of Creativity (Javaheri 2000). This characterization underscores its vital role in shaping human progress and addressing the multifaceted challenges of our interconnected world (Manteghi 2001). Research indicates that psychological studies on religion, psychiatry, and clinical psychology have expanded considerably (Khodayarifard et al. 2001; 2016). Islamic intellectual traditions have long recognized the significance of creativity. Philosophers such as Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Suhrawardī, and al-Fārābī explored human imagination and intellectual capacities, while mystics and poets like Rumi, 'Aṭṭār, and Sanā'ī celebrated the transformative power of human ingenuity. Despite this rich legacy, contemporary scholarship has yet to fully investigate the concept of creative thinking within the Qur'an. While Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of reflection (*tafakkur*) and intellectual effort, the exploration of creativity as a structured concept remains underdeveloped.

Several contemporary works address related themes and provide valuable insights into creativity from various perspectives. Mahmoudi et al. (2011) examines thought in the Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition, and Islamic philosophy, with particular emphasis on Mullā Ṣadrā's theories of imagination. However, the work does not comprehensively explore methods for fostering creativity based on Qur'anic teachings. Hosseini (2009) offers an in-depth analysis of creativity, its definitions, and its educational applications, drawing primarily from Western psychological frameworks. Other notable contributions include Ehsani (2014), which discusses rational thought and its role in Islamic education, and Maftuni (2006), which examines Suhrawardī's philosophical contributions to understanding creativity. Naghipour (2011) and Maddahi and Hoseinzade (2014) touch on foundational concepts and practical aspects of creativity in Islamic teachings. However, these works often address creativity indirectly, underscoring the need for more comprehensive and focused research.

While the growing recognition of creativity underscores its significance, systematic studies on creative thinking within the Qur'an remain sparse. This gap highlights an opportunity for further exploration, particularly in uncovering how Islamic teachings can inform contemporary approaches to fostering creativity in education and broader societal contexts. Existing literature, though valuable, calls for more integrative research to bridge traditional Islamic wisdom with modern understandings of creativity.

3. Imagination, Creativity, and Faith in the Unseen

One of the foundational principles derived from the teachings of the

Qur'an for fostering creative thinking is the utilization of human imagination. Enhancing the power of imagination is undoubtedly a key skill for nurturing creativity. The ability to visualize and conceptualize the intangible has historically been the source of numerous innovations. A person aspiring to create must possess a strong imaginative capacity to bring their mental concepts into reality. Al-Rāghib al-İṣfahānī (1991) defines thought as a dynamic and continuous force that moves a person from knowledge of the unknown to the known. Reflection (*tafakkur*), is the exercise of this force according to human intellect and reason, a faculty unique to humans and absent in animals. Some scholars note a linguistic connection between *f-k-r* (thinking) and *f-r-k* (turning over, examining), indicating that reflection involves actively probing, examining, and investigating matters to reach their ultimate truth.

Psychological studies also highlight imagination as a critical factor in enabling creative thought (Bensley 1998). Among the shared traits of creative individuals, universally acknowledged by psychologists and researchers, is an extraordinary capacity for imagination, observed in both children and adults (Afrooz 2014). Imagination represents a form of free thinking, wherein the mind is not bound by the immediate need to resolve real-world problems but can freely visualize and construct what it desires, unrestricted by existing norms and constraints. This mental freedom opens up vast possibilities, allowing children and adults alike to dream beyond tangible realities and explore uncharted creative territories. As Hurlock (1980) aptly states, creativity is a form of controlled imagination that leads to innovation and invention. By strong imagination, we mean the capacity to conceptualize the intangible, form vivid mental images, and represent realities that are not immediately perceptible. This capacity differs fundamentally from delusion, a concept in philosophical literature typically contrasted with reason. Imagination and fantasy are gifts from God that enable humans to grasp what lies beyond the senses. One distinctive quality of imagination is its timeless and spaceless character. Across history, imagination has generated many innovations and creations: for example, inspired by birds, early humans long imagined the possibility of flight, and that persistent vision ultimately culminated in the invention of the modern airplane.

The Qur'an, through the use of examples, analogies, various stories, and other methods, has adopted different approaches to develop the imaginative faculty of individuals (Q. 62:25). One of the most prominent traits of the God-conscious is faith in the unseen (Q. 2:3). The unseen refers to what is not visible and is hidden, and a believer must initially have faith in the imperceptible. God Almighty, the angels, jinn, paradise, and hell are

examples of the unseen. Many things that cannot be perceived through the physical senses must still be believed in. This indicates the presence of a certain sense in humans, which we call imagination, and through this imaginative faculty, humans can visualize such things.

In this regard, Hasanzadeh Amoli (2013) argues that the imaginative faculty is one manifestation of God, more precisely, one manifestation of the Divine Names, among which is *al-Muṣawwir* (The Fashioner) (Q. 59:24). Consequently, the imaginative faculty can be regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Name *al-Muṣawwir*. Since the Divine Names are true, their manifestations are also true. Moreover, these names are fixed and immutable, and removing them would disturb the order of creation. Therefore, imagination that is good and appropriate in its proper place and is necessary within the best possible system of creation, cannot be discarded. The function of the imagination is to give form to understood meanings and realities: the soul receives concepts from the immaterial realm, passes them to the spirit, then to the heart, which conveys them to the imagination. The imagination transforms these realities into images—for instance, “hostility” is depicted as a snake or a dog, and “knowledge” or “sustenance” is depicted as water or milk. Sometimes the imagination transforms the essence of things into a form—for example, the essence of Gabriel into the form of Dihyah al-Kalbī. Other times it transforms a meaning into a word or sound, which only the person with that imaginative perception can see or hear—unless someone else has an equally powerful imaginative faculty. For example, those who had not reached the level of the Prophet’s spiritual awareness could neither see Gabriel nor hear the sound. To explain this further, God granted the Prophet Muhammad a special imaginative faculty so that he could perceive revelation. In any case, the imaginative faculty is also essential in worldly matters of perception, because after the senses grasp physical data, they hand it over to the imagination. The imagination then gives form to this data and passes it to the intellect for analysis, combination, and understanding. Therefore, if there were no imaginative faculty, intellectual perception would be impossible.

In Qur’anic ontology, the concept of *al-ghayb* (*the unseen*) holds a central role in shaping the epistemology of faith. Unlike *al-shahādah* (*the seen or witnessed*), which refers to phenomena accessible to the senses, *al-ghayb* denotes realities that lie entirely beyond empirical observation. Tabataba’i (1996, 1: 73) explains that the term includes transcendent truths such as God Almighty, His exalted signs, and revelation itself—realities that are entirely hidden. Faith in the unseen, therefore, is not mere submission to the unknown but an informed orientation toward metaphysical truths, mediated through cognitive faculties such as imagination and reason. Allah

endowed the Prophet Muhammad with a special imaginative faculty to comprehend revelation. Even in worldly matters, imagination is crucial for understanding. Sensory data, once perceived, is passed to the imagination, which processes and prepares it for analysis, synthesis, and reasoning by the intellect. Without the imaginative faculty, rational understanding of sensory phenomena would be impossible.

The imagination's role in mediating metaphysical forms into the human soul, its contribution to divine revelation, and its importance in understanding sensory phenomena reveal its significance in both religious and worldly contexts. Among Islamic thinkers, Mullā Ṣadrā addresses the imaginative faculty and its connection to creativity in his works (Mahmoudi 2008). Motahhari (2008, 3:345–348) considers inspirations and illuminations as a kind of divine assistance occasionally granted to scholars, often leading to sudden and significant discoveries beyond the usual means of knowledge acquisition such as experience and reasoning. Referring to Avicenna and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, he notes that this faculty exists in varying degrees among individuals and can profoundly impact intellectual achievement.

In conclusion, the imaginative faculty bridges the intangible and the tangible, serving as a vital tool for creativity and faith. By enabling humans to conceptualize the unseen and fostering innovation, it plays a profound role in both religious understanding and the advancement of human knowledge. The Qur'an's emphasis on imagination and belief in the unseen underscores its significance as a divine gift and an essential component of human existence.

4. Reason and Reflection

One of the most important means of attaining deep heartfelt faith in the Creator is reason and wisdom (Q. 12:108). By “wisdom” is meant guided reflection that is thinking that leads to self-restraint. In the Qur'an, wisdom is presented alongside a restraining and constructive supervisory role, and it is set in opposition to ignorance (*jihālah*). In the verse, “*whoever of you commits an evil [deed] out of ignorance and then repents after that and reforms, then He is indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful*” (Q. 6:54), if the term ignorance is understood simply as lack of knowledge, the following question arises: why is a person called to repent when an act done from ignorance would seemingly not qualify as blameworthy or sinful? To resolve this difficulty we must construe ignorance differently. In such contexts ignorance denotes the predominance of base desire; that is, a state in which a person not out of hostility to the truth but because of the overpowering

influence of passion and inclination becomes so dominated by the self that the light of reason and its restraining power are dimmed. This condition means that, although the individual is aware that an act is forbidden, that awareness is overshadowed by desire and does not guide their behavior; for this reason the action is called out of ignorance. Evidently such a person remains morally responsible for the sin, but because the act did not arise from animosity toward the truth, the person normally strives to make amends and, through repentance and reform, returns to the right path (Baqeri 2007).

In the Qur'an, not all thinking is acceptable (Q. 74:18–20); rather, the purpose of thinking is decisive. Pure thought has no intrinsic merit, but what is desirable and acceptable is guided thought, and this sense of “guided thought” is synonymous with reason in the Qur'an. In this regard, reasoning in the Qur'an is conceived as a journey along the path of knowledge (Q. 17:36) and a refusal to follow mere suspicion (Q. 10:36). The essential tools for reasoning are hearing, sight, and the heart (Q. 17:36). Profound reflection and curiosity about the phenomena of existence, which stimulate the dynamics of thought and foster creative thinking, are the duty of every believer. Sabzavari (2009) defines thought as the movement of the mind from the unknown to established premises and then onward to the intended conclusion. In this light, the Qur'an underscores that human faculties such as hearing, sight, and intellect are divine gifts.

In general, faith in the Creator is presented as the outcome of human reasoning. This arises through wisdom and revelation, which function as evident and existential proofs (al-Kulaynī 1986). According to Qur'anic teaching, people possess the capacity to think (Q. 30:8). When the Qur'an reproaches some for irrationality, it does not mean they lack the faculty of thought, but rather that they lack a purposeful orientation in their thinking. Reasoning proceeds by interpreting information, and thought is the kind of effort made by one who wanders, whether that wandering leads to water or to a mirage, or even beyond them to the enigma of humanity: a veil covering a mystery which, when lifted, yields genuine insight.

One of the fundamental educational methods emphasized in the Qur'anic system is the use of rational argumentation and the transmission of wisdom—a process that plays a key role in cultivating creative thought. In verse Q. 16:125, God introduces three core approaches to inviting others to the path of truth: “*invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best.*” These three elements—wisdom (*al-hikmah*), good admonition (*al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah*), and the best form of disputation (*al-jidāl al-aḥsan*)—each

correspond to a specific discourse strategy that serves both educational and persuasive functions.

The term *al-ḥikmah* is derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*, which conveys the sense of restraint or prevention (Ibn Fāris 1979). Thus, wisdom is so named because it protects a person from ignorance. Conceptually, wisdom refers to rational and revelatory reasoning that leads to the truth in a clear and unambiguous manner. Good admonition, by contrast, is a persuasive form of moral guidance that touches the heart and inspires ethical reform. It is characterized by a gentle tone and emotionally impactful content. The third method, “disputation in the best manner,” refers to dialogical engagement with the opponent, aimed primarily at deflecting their argument using their own premises or those widely accepted by the public without necessarily revealing the ultimate truth.

Tabataba'i (1996, 12: 371–373) explains that wisdom refers to definitive reasoning that arrives at truth without room for doubt. Good admonition is speech that softens the listener's soul and encourages introspection, often by drawing on inspiring or morally uplifting content. As for disputation, he describes it as an argumentative strategy that aims to redirect the opponent by using what they themselves already accept, rather than by illuminating reality. Its goal is rhetorical effectiveness rather than epistemic clarity. Thus, from the Qur'anic perspective, effective education and *al-da'wah* (divine invitation) are grounded in a balanced integration of these three approaches. Each method, when applied appropriately, can break cognitive rigidity, awaken intellectual engagement, and contribute to the development of creative and reflective thinking.

Thinking and reasoning are the basis of Islam's faith and religion, and require divergent or creative thinking (see Amabile 1983; 1989). The Prophet Muhammad considers an hour of thinking better than a year of worship (al-Majlisī 1982, 6: 133). Imam 'Alī has considered thinking as the supreme worship, and regards thinking about the realms of heaven and earth as the worship of the purified (al-Tamīmī al-Āmudī 2001), because thinking gives human consciousness and insight and provides a correct worldview (al-Raḍī 2005, Letter 31). He emphasized that “Wisdom is the lost property of the believer; therefore, take it even from the people of hypocrisy” (al-Raḍī 2005, Wisdom 80). Indeed, wisdom passes through the heart of a hypocrite, unsettled and restless, until it departs and settles firmly in the heart of a believer” (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 1959, 18:229).

The purpose of the call of the prophets is nothing but thinking (Q. 34:46). The lack of thinking is the root and source of the doom of Hell. This concept is taken from the single form of the statement in the verse “for their sins” (Q.

67:10–11). In the Qur'an, the best believers are “the owners of wisdom.” They are those who have the deepest understanding of the truths of the world and the Hereafter (Q. 2:179, 197, 269; 3:190, 7; 12:111; 13:19–22; 14:52; 38:29; 39:9, 18, 21). The worst creatures in the sight of Allah Almighty are those who lack reason and are unbelievers (Q. 8:55). The most rude (uncivil) are also lacking in wisdom (Q. 49:4). Imam 'Alī has always emphasized the use of human intellection in all phases of life, and the expression and comprehension of material through strong, solid, and rational reasoning (al-Raḍī 2005, Wisdom 281). In explaining the characteristics of the human being, the seeker of Allah's way, who is one of the most prominent examples of believing human beings, he says: He has revived his mind and deadened himself (al-Raḍī 2005, Sermon 220).

5. Emotion, Heart, and Intellectual Vitality

Sentiments and human emotions play an indispensable role in the realization of deep heart belief, mental relaxation, spiritual vitality, and the emergence of creative thinking. The prominent characteristics of the personality of creative people are strong emotions, the lack of stinginess, envy, and grudge, and having a smile, serenity, and indifference to others and, in general, to society (Afrooz 2014), all of which express the importance of human emotions. If there are no strong and favorable emotions in the human heart and soul, creativity will not emerge. In other words, the combination of human knowledge and reason with the emotions arising from the heart leads to creativity. This is precisely what the author calls the rise of intelligence, a characteristic that is the main feature of intellectual thinkers, and which intelligent people do not necessarily possess (Afrooz 2007). By fostering the emotions and intelligence of humans, one can cultivate creative people.

In the authors' view, the strengthening of emotions is the same as the strengthening of intelligence in humans, and the purpose of consciousness is, in fact, the bond between the products of reason and the heart. In the Qur'an, the term intelligence is a comprehensive concept that includes emotions on the one hand and reason and wisdom on the other. In other words, as intellection and rationale are important in the formation of a firm faith, it is also important to cultivate human consciousness, sense, and conscience. Perhaps the most important achievement of rational thoughtfulness and correctness is the strengthening of intelligence in humans. The place and destination of the development of human intellect in Islam is the penetration of faith into the hearts and minds of human beings, which leads to righteous action and increases human understanding and

awareness. According to the narrative teachings, faith is the knowledge of the heart and the confession by tongue and action with the organs (al-Raḍī 2005, Wisdom 227), and these three stages are necessary for faith.

In verse Q. 22:46, the heart is considered to be the place of reason: “*Have they not traveled over the land so that they may have hearts by which they may apply reason?*” When we think with our hearts, it means that we have been able to use the mind that God has given us. God, in the following context, says that not following the heart, the ear, and the eye causes blindness, and He introduces the dead heart as far worse than blind eyes. When the human heart is dead, there is no motivation to move and the human being will lack inner vitality and mental relaxation. Intelligence is the kind of knowledge that comes with imagination and feeling (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 1: 133). The mind is a deep and precise perception, and therefore human senses are called *al-mashā'ir*; thus, the Qur'an uses *lā yash'urūn*, meaning that they do not understand deeply and precisely (Mustafavi 2007, 6:89). Tabataba'i (1996, 20:360) believes that the meaning of the heart in the Qur'anic term is the human soul, which is the result of human consciousness. Ibn Sīnā preferred the heart as the center of perception in human anatomy: the heart is the center of all perceptions and the brain is the instrument; thus, all perceptions originate in the heart, and the brain is the intermediary of understanding (Tabataba'i 1996, 2: 223).

Consciousness in humans is the level that can harmonize wisdom and feelings, and makes them calm; it is a very effective and penetrating state that motivates human movement, because it connects the heart, soul, and intellect together. As a result, in order to achieve a deep heart's belief in the Creator, one should be practiced in the Qur'anic way. On the other hand, one should never extinguish the light of reason, for numerous verses emphasize open-mindedness, complete insight, wisdom, and consciousness (Q. 12:108). Moreover, rational reasoning alone does not suffice for faith; rather, the Qur'anic method stimulates human consciousness by linking the products of reason and the heart. The Qur'an, through its artistry, rhythmic and pleasing verses, and eloquent expression, affects human beings and their emotions. It addresses their intellect with the sole intention of awakening them from heedlessness and moving them along the path of their divine nature, so that they act in accordance with their innate disposition and align their integrity with their hearts and minds provided this divine nature is not veiled.

The Qur'an, a book in harmony with human nature and the divine disposition placed in the hands of human beings, profoundly influences their hearts and minds. As Qutb notes (1991), this divine guidance establishes a connection between human nature and the religion created by God, both

being in harmony with existence and immutable by design. Whenever the heart strays from its natural disposition, only a religion aligned with this innate nature can restore it.

6. *Freedom of Thought and Exclusive Reverence of God*

The result of the monopoly of divine humility and the elimination of tyranny is nothing but freedom of thought. Anyone who is freed from under the yoke of oppression and the arrogance of tyrants can thoroughly think and be placed under the authority of Allah the Almighty. One of the primary and essential needs of a creative thinker is free thinking, so that he can achieve new creativity with courage and distance from the traditions of the ancients. A free thinker never imitates blindly, because the important condition for free thinking is not to imitate. In the Qur'an, blind imitation is highly discredited and is considered as destroying the human intellect (Q. 2:170; 43:23). In his interpretation of this verse, Tabataba'i explains that following one's ancestors without knowledge or discernment constitutes speech and behavior devoid of understanding, which ultimately leads to irrational conclusions_ones that no reasonable person would accept. He clarifies that if the forefathers had acted upon knowledge and guidance, and if their descendants were aware of that, such imitation could be justified. However, the context of the verse illustrates a hypothetical scenario that underscores the irrationality of blind and unconditional imitation. The Qur'an, therefore, rejects such uncritical adherence to ancestral traditions as intellectually and spiritually invalid (Tabataba'i 1996, 1: 419).

In the field of social psychology, the main factor behind conformity with the majority is the individual's fascination with the majority and the fear of being left alone in the minority (Kaviani 2001). God blames those who want to eliminate the crime of their misguidance on the pretext of following their leaders (Q. 33:67). Blindly following leaders and community elders is condemned (al-Ṭabrisī 1993). Imam Sādiq addressed one of his companions: "Do not be an imitator to say I am with people and I am as one of the people" (al-Ṣadūq 1982). Imam 'Alī warns against obedience to elders and notable figures (al-Raḍī 2005, Sermon 192). Carrying divine trust is the greatest honour for human beings. With exceptional talent and free will, a person can, through knowledge, self-purification, and moral development, attain the status of *khalīfah Allāh* and even surpass the angels (Makarem Shirazi 1995, 17:451–453).

Free thinking promotes the dynamics of thought, peace of mind, and spiritual vitality. Another main feature of a true believer is exclusive submission before God and not being afraid of anyone other than God. This

condition produces mental relaxation, spiritual vitality and becomes one of the characteristics of creative people. The system of human creation is based on freedom; that is, humans are servants of Allah, accept the authority of Allah, and do not submit to other authorities (*wilāyah*). God the Almighty says: “*Allah is the Guardian of the faithful: He brings them out of darkness into light. As for the faithless, their patrons are the Rebels, who drive them out of light into darkness. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever]*” (Q. 2:257). The Great God reminds us of the need to fight against tyranny, saying: “*Whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has certainly incurred a manifest loss*” (Q. 4:119). For this reason, the prophets' goal was to liberate human beings from one another's slavery and servitude: “*Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah.' But if they turn away, say, 'Be witnesses that we are Muslims*” (Q. 3:64). According to Imam ‘Alī: “*Do not be another’s slave, for God has made you free*” (al-Raḍī 2005, Letter 31). To attain true knowledge, a person must approach issues with deliberate and measured doubt, avoiding blind acceptance of apparent evidence or popular opinion (Mahmoudi et al. 2011). Such conscious skepticism is essential for creative thinking.

As a result, the human being is intrinsically free, independent, and thoughtful, distinguishable from other beings; but sometimes they are disturbed from their original identity and dominated by Satan under the influence of evils.

7. *Hope, Positive Thinking, and Spiritual Resilience*

The believer is a hopeful and positive thinker. We need hope very much for the growth and development of thinking and creativity and for achieving success. Naturally, the person who hopes will never lose his morale when faced with the problems and difficulties that occur in the way of every human being's life: “*certainly We created man in travail*” (Q. 90:4). Of course, some of these problems will be on the path to innovation and progress. Psychologists often regard creativity as a form of problem-solving. Gagné (1985), for instance, considers problem-solving the highest level of learning and views creativity as a special type of problem-solving. Similarly, Torrance (1965) discussed the relationship between creativity and problem-solving processes, describing creativity as a process of generating novel and effective solutions when facing problems and challenges (Shaughnessy 1998).

Indeed, the secret of success is to preserve hope and positive thinking

about the future. It should be noted that the object of our hope, according to Qur'anic teachings, is hope in Allah alone, not in non-divine entities, and it should always be accompanied by fear of the Divine in order not to be misguided. In other words, the believer in all circumstances hopes for the mercy of his Lord while fearing His torment; in other words, he is between fear and hope (Q. 17:57). The Qur'an strongly emphasizes the need for hope, considering the person who despairs of God's mercy as misguided; the believer never despairs of the grace of God, Who can do all things and for whom even the most difficult matters are easy (Q. 12:87; 15:56). One of the most consoling verses of the Qur'an addresses those who have wronged themselves, reminding them of God's mercy and bidding them not to despair: "*Say [that Allah declares,] 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah will forgive all sins. Indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful'*" (Q. 39:53). The positive thought that lies at the heart of hope is essentially innate, and with this attitude dynamism and positive outcomes can grow. Negative thoughts distress human beings and inhibit the growth and development of creativity; hence, one characteristic of positive people is their association with mental relaxation (Afrooz 2014). In all divine religions, the world will finally attain friendship, peace, and global justice (Muhammadi Arani 2007), which in turn strengthens positive thinking in humanity (Q. 24:55). Imam 'Alī described hope as follows: "If in his opinion he claims that he hopes in God, I swear by God that he is lying. Why then is his hope not manifest in his deeds? Whoever truly hopes, his hope is evident in his actions" (al-Raḍī 2005, Sermon 160). Imam 'Alī also spoke about good suspicion: "It is not fitting to think ill of a word that comes from someone's mouth when you can interpret it positively" (al-Raḍī 2005, Wisdom 360).

Since the Islamic intellectual system is grounded in the Divine nature embodied in human existence, and humans are inherently hopeful and seeking remedies, Islam urges that man should never cease evolutionary and intellectual movement and should not be confined by environmental conditions. Even when he appears oppressed, he must always think and seek a way out of impasses. In this perspective, the Qur'an considers man as inherently aware, endowed with intuitive knowledge such as God-consciousness, recognition of divine names and attributes, and the principles of revelation and prophet hood_innate knowledge that accompanies him throughout life (Javadi Amoli 2005; 2010). The Qur'an warns in some verses that when the angels come to take the spirit of those who have wronged themselves, they offer the excuse of being weakened on earth; the angels ask: "*Was not Allah's earth vast enough so that you might migrate in*

it?" (Q. 4:97). This point reiterated in exegesis is a rebuke and underscores the necessity of human effort to overcome challenges and eliminate impasses in any circumstances, including environmental and geographical constraints, except for truly impotent cases which the verse subsequently exempts (Tabataba'i 1996, 5: 48). This refers precisely to the issue of the necessity of human challenges and the elimination of impasses in any circumstances, even environmental and geographical conditions, except for the true impotent ones that are excluded from the verse after that.

8. Conclusion

The study underscores five key findings on creativity as a divine blessing and its vital role in fulfilling Allah's vicegerency on Earth. First, the power of imagination in creative thinking and faith in the unseen is emphasized in the Qur'an as a driving force for innovation and belief. Second, the power of reason in creative thinking, faith, and reflection is highlighted, linking intellectual growth to spiritual understanding. Third, strong emotions in creative thinking, faith, and the heart enrich creativity by harmonizing rational and emotional dimensions. Fourth, the Qur'an stresses the importance of courage, free thinking, and exclusive reverence of Allah, which inspire independent thought and moral clarity. Fifth, the integration of psychological peace, positive thinking, faith, and hope is identified as a cornerstone for nurturing creative thought. These findings demonstrate that creativity, rooted in the Qur'anic perspective, extends beyond artistic expression to encompass problem-solving, innovation, and ethical decision-making. By aligning Qur'anic insights with modern educational theories, the research highlights the compatibility of faith and reason and advocates for an education system that fosters intellectual, spiritual, and moral growth. This holistic approach to creativity offers profound implications for personal development, ethical living, and societal progress.

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A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in the Qur'an with an Emphasis on Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions: A Case Study of Juz' 26–28

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ABSTRACT:

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This study explores the relationship between speech acts, based on John Searle's theory, and emotions according to Robert Plutchik's emotional model in the verses of Juz' 26 to 28 of the Qur'an. Despite the central role of emotions in guiding the audience, the precise connection between speech acts and emotions in the Qur'an has received limited scholarly attention. Thus, identifying how emotions are represented within the framework of speech acts may offer new horizons for understanding Qur'anic messages. Searle's speech act theory, with its five-fold classification (assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative), along with Plutchik's emotion wheel, featuring eight primary emotions (joy, sadness, fear, anger, trust, disgust, surprise, and anticipation) and their combinations, provides tools for accessing the semantic and affective layers of the verses. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, and through both qualitative and quantitative analysis of extracted data from the verses, the study identifies various types of speech acts and their corresponding emotions. The findings demonstrate that the integration of Searle's speech act theory with Plutchik's emotional model offers a more precise understanding of the implicit meanings and emotional impacts of the verses under study. The results show

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that directive acts occur most frequently (166 instances), while commissive acts appear least frequently (16 instances). Furthermore, emotions such as *warning* and *friendship* reflect a deep emotional connection between the text and its audience, contributing to awareness-raising, encouragement toward righteous action, and the articulation of divine order. The emotional continuum moves from positive states (hopefulness) to negative ones (fear), highlighting a balance between glad tidings (*al-tabshīr*) and warning (*al-indhār*). The results confirm that the Qur'anic verses, while serving distinct linguistic functions such as glad tidings and warning, also convey emotions aligned with these functions. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this research affirms the alignment between speech acts and emotional continuums, and underscores the Qur'an's role as a guiding text imbued with both positive and negative emotional charges.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Pragmatics, Speech acts, Searle's theory, Plutchik's theory of emotions.

1. Introduction

Pragmatics focuses on the study of language in its real communicative context, emphasizing the role of the language user in the production and interpretation of meaning. Unlike semantics, which mainly centers on lexical and syntactic meanings, pragmatics deals with extra-linguistic dimensions such as speaker intent, conversational context, and the social impact of language. One of the foundational theories in this field is *Speech Act Theory*, initially proposed by John Austin (1962) and later developed by John Searle (1969). According to this theory, language is not merely a vehicle for conveying information but also a tool for performing various actions such as promising, threatening, requesting, and more. In parallel, Robert Plutchik's (1962) *Wheel of Emotions* provides a framework for analyzing human emotional states. Plutchik identifies eight basic emotions: joy, sadness, fear, anger, trust, disgust, surprise, and anticipation. He argues that the combination of these core emotions gives rise to more complex affective states. His model also illustrates the intensity and polarity of emotions, offering a structured understanding of emotional dynamics.

Both theories investigate different aspects of language function in human experience: Plutchik's model emphasizes the psychological–emotional dimension of language, while Speech Act Theory focuses on its functional–social dimension. Integrating these two perspectives enables a more comprehensive analysis of linguistic texts, especially those rich in emotional content and rhetorical impact. Emotions are not only reflected in linguistic structures but also serve as both motivation for and responses to speech acts. In other words, speech acts are often the linguistic manifestation of emotion

or are designed to evoke specific emotions in the audience. For instance, the speech act of warning is typically associated with the emotion of fear, while congratulating aligns with joy. Conversely, Speech Act Theory holds that every utterance is a form of action through language, the speaker performs acts such as promising, threatening, questioning, or expressing emotion. These speech acts are frequently shaped by the speaker's emotional state and simultaneously evoke emotions in the listener. From this perspective, emotions operate as motivational forces aligned with speech acts, while speech acts function as instruments for conveying, controlling, or inducing emotion. This reciprocal relationship facilitates linguistic–psychological analyses of texts, particularly those with a pronounced emotional texture, such as religious, literary, or political discourse.

The Qur'an, as a sacred text imbued with emotional, ethical, and pedagogical depth, serves as an exemplary corpus for examining the interplay between linguistic and emotional functions. Given that Qur'anic verses were revealed within diverse socio-psychological contexts, analyzing them through the lens of speech acts and emotional dynamics can uncover latent semantic layers. This study seeks to apply both Speech Act Theory and Plutchik's Emotion Wheel to the analysis of verses from Juz' 26 to 28 of the Qur'an. The central research question is: How can the application of speech act theory, in light of Plutchik's model, be used to interpret the selected verses? This integrative approach aims to uncover linguistic–emotional patterns in the Qur'an and enhance the reader's understanding of its profound moral and spiritual messages.

The simultaneous use of these two theoretical frameworks in analyzing sacred texts offers a novel tool for interdisciplinary interpretations. Analyzing speech acts in the verses not only clarifies the divine intent behind human-directed discourse but, when aligned with Plutchik's emotion model, also reconstructs the emotional states of the audience. For instance, a verse delivered in a threatening tone may be classified as a warning in terms of speech act and simultaneously indicate emotions such as fear or anger. This combined perspective provides a fertile ground for understanding the semantic and psychological complexities within the sacred text and allows for the discovery of deeper structures in the divine–human relationship.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies in the field of Qur'anic pragmatics have primarily focused on speech acts. Alamolhoda et al. (2021) analyzed the concepts of emotion and growth in the Qur'an, while Kiaei et al. (2021) explored

Plutchik's emotional categories and the image of the human being through content analysis. Their findings revealed that all of Plutchik's emotional categories are reflected in the human structure depicted in the Qur'an. Tajabadi & Pourmohammad (2022) examined commissive speech acts, such as oaths, promises (*wa'id*), threats (*wa'id*), and covenants (*'ahd*), each with distinct divine and non-divine forms. A quantitative comparison of these four categories indicated that threats were significantly more frequent, followed by promises, oaths, and covenants. Mohammadi et al. (2023), using Plutchik's theory, demonstrated the alignment of core Qur'anic emotions and the variation of their secondary forms, attributing this to the Qur'an's guiding function. Mohases and Safipourshamansouri (2024), using a descriptive-analytical method and Searle's theory, showed that the act of *iftirā'* (false accusation) in the Qur'an is frequently attributed to disbelievers, Jews, and hypocrites and is predominantly directed at God, the Prophet, and the Qur'an, constituting a highly recurrent emotional act.

Cuciniello (2024) analyzed direct speeches of the Qur'anic Prophets, Hūd, Šāliḥ, and Shu'ayb. Badr (2022) investigated persuasive speech acts in the short surahs of the Qur'an and demonstrated how these acts are used to influence audiences and guide them toward moral reform. Tawfiq and Mohammed (2023), applying the models of Searle, argued that directive speech acts of advice in the Qur'an are primarily issued by God to His servants, using indirect strategies to convey implied meanings. Al-Mekhlafy (2025) analyzed imperative verbs in one surah based on Searle's (1976) classification and illustrated how these verbs are employed to guide the audience. His study emphasized the role of imperative verses in transmitting ethical and pedagogical messages.

In the specific domain of combining Speech Act Theory and Plutchik's emotion model, few studies have been conducted within the field of literature. Given the close connection between speech acts and intention analysis, and the domains of emotion and affect, which emerge from the interpretation of speaker intention within texts, examining the intersection of speech acts and emotional frameworks presents a promising new avenue for expansive and innovative research in Qur'anic studies grounded in these theoretical models.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods. Data collection was conducted through library research, covering 352 verses from Juz' 26 to 28 of the Qur'an. These include the surahs: *al-Aḥqāf* (35 verses), *Qāf* (45

verses), *al-Dhārīyāt* (60 verses), *al-Najm* (62 verses), *al-Qamar* (55 verses), *al-Ḥashr* (24 verses), *al-Mujādalah* (22 verses), and parts of adjacent surahs. The selection was based on the diversity of themes related to guidance, ethics, and emotions, such as glad tidings, warning, resurrection, and prophet hood.

The verses were systematically extracted using the Arabic text of the Qur'an. In the first stage, the verses were analyzed and classified according to John Searle's Speech Act Theory into five categories: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative, based on linguistic context, speaker intention, and social function. In the second stage, using Robert Plutchik's Emotion Wheel model, primary emotions (joy, sadness, fear, trust, disgust, surprise, anticipation, and anger) and their compound forms (such as warning, friendship, regret) were identified in the verses and linked to the corresponding speech acts. Then, qualitative analysis was used to interpret the implicit meanings and affective-pragmatic connections, while quantitative analysis recorded the frequency of speech acts and emotions in tables (Tables 1–6) and frequency charts.

To ensure accuracy, each verse was independently examined by the researcher and, where necessary, cross-referenced with authoritative exegetic sources. The relationship between speech acts and emotions was evaluated through contextual analysis of the verses, identification of divine intentions, and assessment of emotional impact on the audience. This integrated method facilitated precise identification of semantic layers, speech intentions, and psycho-emotional effects of the verses. By combining the theoretical frameworks of Searle and Plutchik, the study offers a multi-layered and profound understanding of the linguistic and emotional structure of the Qur'anic text.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Speech Act Theory

One of the key theories in the field of pragmatics is Speech Act Theory. This term refers to an act that occurs as the result of uttering a certain expression or sentence (Austin 1962). According to this theory, many utterances cannot be evaluated in terms of truth or falsehood, nor do they necessarily convey factual information. To illustrate Austin's point that many utterances cannot be judged for their truth value, one may consider the example: I promise to go to the university tomorrow. Such a sentence cannot be labeled as true or false in the conventional sense (Safavi 2008). Austin categorized these utterances as *performative acts*. Following Austin, his

student John Searle significantly developed and systematized this theory, contributing to its formalization and wider application in linguistic analysis.

4.1.1. Searle's Classification

Searle proposed a five-category classification of speech acts as follows:

- **Assertive Acts:** These are utterances that express the speaker's belief in the truth of a state of affairs. Examples include statements of fact, affirmations, conclusions, and descriptions. They function to represent reality.
- **Directive Acts:** These are intended to cause the listener to perform an action. They reflect the speaker's desires or requests, and include commands, orders, requests, and suggestions presented either affirmatively or negatively (Yule 1996).
- **Expressive Acts:** These convey the speaker's psychological state or emotional response to a particular proposition or event. The expressive function lies in articulating feelings and attitudes.
- **Commissive Acts:** These bind the speaker to a future course of action, indicating their intention or obligation to perform (or refrain from) a certain act. This reflects commitment.
- **Declarative Acts:** These are performative in nature, whereby the act of uttering the statement brings about a change in the external situation. In such cases, there is no temporal gap between speech and action (Searle 1976).

4.2. Plutchik's Theory of Emotion

In psychology, emotions typically refer to affective experiences and emotional reactions. Each emotion comprises three main components:

- **Cognitive Component**, which includes thoughts, beliefs, and expectations that determine the type and intensity of emotional response;
- **Physiological Patterns**, such as heart palpitations and elevated blood pressure;
- **Behavioral Tendencies**, specific emotional responses and observable behaviors.

While emotion is commonly perceived as a subjective feeling, in scientific terms it is treated as a behavioral phenomenon that plays a critical

role in species survival and reproduction. Plutchik proposed eight primary emotions, which he visually represented in a circular, multi-layered diagram (Figure 1). These eight basic emotions are arranged in opposing pairs: Joy & Sadness; Trust & Disgust; Surprise & Anticipation; Anger & Fear (Plutchik 1962).

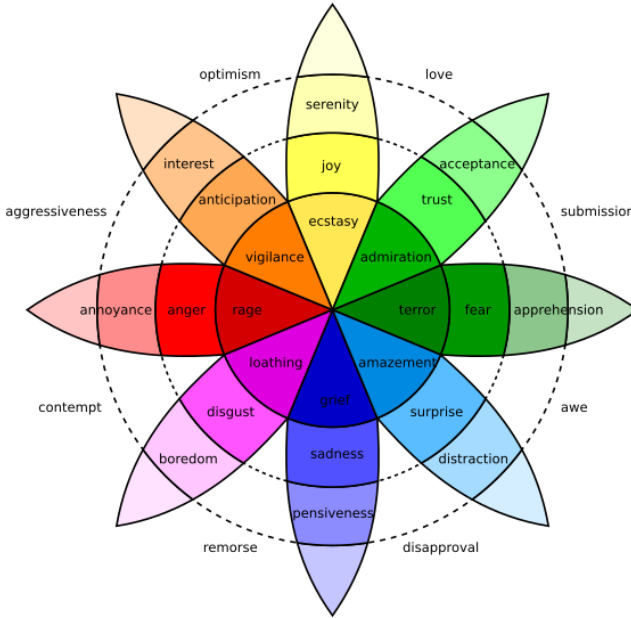


Figure 1. Plutchik's Emotional Wheel (Plutchik-wheel.svg. Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved 9 June 2024)

According to Plutchik (1962), other emotions are combinations of these core pairs. Just as the blending of adjacent colors in a color wheel produces intermediate hues, the blending of neighboring primary emotions results in compound emotions. Examples of these complex emotions include: Anger + Joy = Pride; Joy + Trust = Love, Friendship; Trust + Surprise = Curiosity; Surprise + Fear = Terror; Fear + Sadness = Despair; Sadness + Disgust = remorse; Anger + Anticipation = Aggression; Disgust + Anticipation = Suspicion; Anger + Trust = Dominance; Joy + Surprise = Delight; Trust + Fear = Obedience; Surprise + Sadness = Hopelessness; Fear + Disgust = Shame; Sadness + Anticipation = Pessimism; Disgust + Anger = Contempt; Anticipation + Joy = Optimism, hopefulness; Anger + Surprise = Outrage; Joy + Fear = Guilt; Trust + Sadness = Sensitivity; Fear + Anticipation = Anxiety; Anticipation + Trust = Hope, Fatalism; Disgust + Joy = Sickness; Sadness + Anger = Envy.

5. Data Analysis Based on Searle's Speech Act Model and Plutchik's Emotional Wheel

This section examines selected Qur'anic verses through the dual lens of Searle's (1976) taxonomy of speech acts and Plutchik's (1962) emotional wheel. By integrating the linguistic-pragmatic framework of speech acts with the psychological model of emotions, the analysis seeks to uncover how divine discourse in the Qur'an simultaneously performs communicative functions and evokes specific emotional responses. Each sub-section focuses on a distinct type of speech acts_ assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative_ highlighting both its linguistic realization and its corresponding emotional dimension.

5.1. Assertive Speech Acts

Assertive speech acts carry a truth value (true or false), and the speaker presents the proposition as corresponding to reality. The purpose of assertive acts is to describe how things are. The speaker depicts the external world through statements, claims, conclusions, and descriptions, according to their beliefs (Searle 1976). In the following, two examples of verses with assertive speech acts are examined.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (الاحقاف/13)

Indeed those who say, "Our Lord is Allah," and then remain steadfast, they will have no fear, nor will they grieve (Q. 46:13).

At the beginning of the verse, the word *inna* (translated as *Indeed*) emphasizes the certainty of the proposition and points to the eschatological theme (belief in the Hereafter). Furthermore, the use of the expression *falā khawfun 'alayhim wa lā hum yaḥzanūn* (there will be no fear upon them, nor will they grieve) at the end of the verse reflects God's affirmation and commitment to the truth of the statement. This ties back to the opening emphasis (*inna*), indicating divine confirmation of the believers' salvation_ thus evoking hope for a promising future. Assertive acts foster a sense of inner security and are associated with spiritual well-being. It is important to note that two key manifestations of assertive speech acts_ affirmation and emphasis_ are both present implicitly and indirectly in this verse. Accordingly, a speech act of this verse classifies it as an assertive act expressed through emphatic affirmation.

In this verse, God gives humanity glad tidings of the Resurrection, and the emotion of hope_ as a result of faith in God_ is clearly present. Hope is a motivational construct that encompasses the energy and strategy required

for goal pursuit, enabling individuals to chart pathways toward achievement. Based on Plutchik’s emotion wheel, the combination of anticipation and joy gives rise to optimism, courage, and hopefulness. In this verse, the fusion of these two emotions clearly denotes hope. The phrase *no fear upon them, nor shall they grieve* reveals the emotional reward_joy and anticipation_that stems from belief in God. Thus, the emotional reading of this verse identifies hope as the dominant emotion resulting from faith in God. In the verse Q. 54:2, another instance of assertive speech acts is evident:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ (القمر/2)

If they see a sign, they turn away, and say, "An incessant magic!" (Q. 54:2)

In this verse, God describes the miracle of the splitting of the moon (*shaqq al-qamar*), which exemplifies an assertive speech act. The use of the word *in* (if) indicates a conditional clause_another hallmark of assertive statements. The continuation of the verse (they turn away, and say, "An incessant magic!") reveals the disbelievers’ denial and rejection of the miracle. It is notable that denial and rejection are both manifestations of assertive acts, which are present implicitly and indirectly in this context. Therefore, this verse can be read as an assertive act expressing skepticism and denial by the disbelievers. Within Plutchik’s emotional framework, the disbelievers’ rejection of divine miracles signifies the emotion of despair, which emerges from the combination of fear and sadness. The phrase, “*if they see a sign, they turn away,*” expresses God’s disappointment at the disbelievers’ refusal to return to truth. Hence, the emotional reading of this verse identifies despair as the dominant emotion_reflecting God’s grief and sorrow over their persistent rejection.

Table 1. Frequency of Assertive Speech Acts and Associated Emotions in verses of Juz’ 26–28 of the Qur’an

Row	Assertive Acts	Frequency	Emotions (Frequency)
1	Emphatic Statement	70	Warning (25); Dominance (22); Fatalism (21); Awe and Fear (19); Providence (18); Friendship (12); Hope (8); Expectation (5); Disgust (4); Anger (3); Blame (3); Pessimism (3); Regret (2); Submission (2); Curiosity (2); Optimism (2); Acceptance (1); Anticipation (1); Caution (1); Sin (1); Despair (1); Joy (1)
2	Statement of Occurrence	27	
3	Statement of Result	25	
4	Motivation and Awareness	23	
5	Conditional Statement	9	
6	Statement of Doubt	3	
7	Total	157	

Given the descriptive nature of assertive speech acts_which function to convey the truth or falsehood of a statement, and to describe states and conditions_God, frequently employs such acts to depict events, circumstances, and human conditions in the Qur’an. As shown in the table

1, among the various types of assertive speech acts found in the Qur'an, emphatic assertion (*al-ta'kīd*) occurs with the highest frequency. Most of these emphases involve clearly defined subjects about humanity, which God states with insistence and emphasis. Following emphatic assertions, a significant portion of assertive acts in the verses studied focus on depictions of the Day of Judgment, aiming to evoke motivation and awareness in human beings. Regarding the relationship between assertive acts and the associated emotions within the Qur'anic discourse, it should be acknowledged that a reciprocal and harmonious connection exists between these acts and their emotional continuum. Most of the emotions relate to divine warnings to humankind, the supremacy of God over humanity, and a sense of divine determination regarding the Resurrection and awareness of the Hereafter. These elements, primarily expressed through assertive acts emphasizing eschatological awareness, indicate that, affectively, a two-way relationship exists between assertive speech acts and their emotional continuum.

5.2. Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are those through which the speaker seeks to influence the listener's behavior, urging them to perform or refrain from a specific action. In the Qur'anic discourse, this category encompasses divine commands, prohibitions, invitations, and exhortations directed toward humankind. Such acts are not merely linguistic imperatives but carry profound emotional undertones, ranging from compassion and encouragement to warning and admonition, which reflect the divine intention to guide, reform, and awaken moral consciousness. In this section two instances of directive speech acts are examined:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ لْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
(الحشر/18)

O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do (Q. 59:18).

In the verse Q. 59:18, God urges human beings to fear Him and to remain mindful of the Hereafter. The propositional content consists of God's call upon the believers to practice God-consciousness and reflect on the Resurrection. It is worth noting that requesting, commanding, and inviting are typical forms of directive speech acts, often implied through the situational context. In the second part of the verse, God not only reaffirms the directive but also warns the believers by emphasizing His complete awareness of their deeds. This is another form of directive speech

act_warning_where God cautions humanity about His omniscience. Thus, the verse conveys a directive speech act with the dual function of exhorting mindfulness of the Resurrection and warning about divine awareness.

From the perspective of Plutchik's emotional wheel, the fusion of surprise and fear gives rise to the emotional states of alarm, awe, or terror. Terror is an irrational and prolonged fear of a person, object, or situation, where the individual either avoids the cause or endures it with intense anxiety. In this verse, God explicitly warns about the arrival of the Day of Judgment and accountability for deeds. Therefore, the emotional reading of this verse reflects the emotions of alarm and dread in response to divine knowledge of human actions and the imminence of the Resurrection. In the verse Q. 56:57, another instance of directive speech acts is observed:

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (الواقعة/57)

We created you. Then why do you not acknowledge it? (Q. 56:57)

The use of the interrogative *fa-lawlā* (why not), combined with the negative verb *tuṣaddiqūn*, forms a rhetorical question, which is not intended to elicit an actual answer; rather, God employs it to encourage human reflection. In other words, this rhetorical question indirectly requests a particular action from humans: to affirm faith in God as their Creator. Hence, questioning, especially of the rhetorical type, is one of the forms of directive speech acts and is clearly and explicitly observable in this verse. The speech act here identifies it as a directive aimed at stimulating reflection and belief in the audience.

According to Plutchik's emotional theory, the combination of surprise and sadness produces the emotional state of despair. In this verse, God expresses disappointment at human beings who fail to acknowledge their creation. This emotion arises from God's astonishment at human denial, ultimately manifesting as divine despair. Furthermore, combining sadness and anticipation results in pessimism, which is also retrievable from the phrase *fa-lawlā tuṣaddiqūn* (why do you not believe?). Thus, the emotional interpretation of this verse reflects God's disappointment in humankind (specifically disbelievers) and His pessimistic outlook toward them. However, based on the situational context, the dominant emotion in this verse is divine despair.

Table 2. Frequency of Directive Speech Acts and Associated Emotions in verses of Juz' 26–28 of the Qur'an

Row	Directive Acts	Frequency	Emotions (Frequency)
1	Glad tidings	57	Friendship (32); Warning (30); Hope (16); Submission (10); Providence (9); Shame (9);
2	Invitation to Reflection	36	Fatalism (8); Threat (6); Pessimism (6);

3	Imperative	25	Surprise (6); Curiosity (5); Expectation (4); Lesson (4); Regret (4); Dominance (4); Acceptance (4); Despair (3); Anger (3); Disgust (3); Awe and Fear (2); Optimism (1)
4	Cautionary	23	
5	Warning	18	
6	Pre-announcement	7	
7	Total	166	

Given the nature of Qur'anic verses which were revealed to guide humanity and encourage piety and righteous deeds, directive speech acts are frequently observable throughout the Qur'an. As shown in table 2, glad tidings among the various types of directive speech acts, occurs most frequently, which refers to the act of conveying divine mercy and promising reward. Regarding the emotional continuum represented in the verses, it can be observed that, as the discourse progresses, the emotional tone often shifts toward negative affect, culminating in despair, wrath, dread, and awe. Nevertheless, the dominant emotional theme within the continuum remains that of friendship, affection, and hope. It is worth noting that one particular emotional response found in the verses in question is not included in Plutchik's model: the emotion of *al-tadbīr* (divine planning and providence). The entire cosmos, in its grandeur, hierarchy, and purposeful interconnectivity, is governed and created by the omniscient and wise design of God Almighty.

5.3. Expressive Speech Acts

The expressive speech acts are intended to reveal the speaker's psychological state concerning certain events or conditions specified in the propositional content. In this type of act, the speaker neither attempts to conform the external world to their words, nor to conform their words to the external world. Rather, the truth value of the utterance is assumed to be self-evident and indisputable (Searle 1976).

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ (المجادلة/16)

They make a shield of their oaths and bar [people] from the way of Allah; so there is a humiliating punishment for them (Q. 58:16).

In the verse Q. 58:16, God states that the hypocrites have used religion as a means against religion: they have taken their oaths as a shield. To mislead and deter people from the path of truth, demonic forces from among humans and jinn employ various tactics, including false oaths, as evidenced in the above verse. Hence, those hypocrites who allied themselves with the Jews and opposed God and His Messenger are threatened with a humiliating and painful punishment. This divine threat constitutes one of the implied forms of expressive speech acts, where the emotional force of disapproval

and anger is evident through the surrounding context. God's wrath toward the disbelievers on account of their alliance with the hypocrites and obstruction of divine guidance also qualifies as another instance of expressive speech acts, specifically anger, which is retrievable from the situational context. Therefore, the speech act of the verse identifies it as an expressive act, reflecting God's condemnation of disbelievers and hypocrites for hindering others from the path of truth.

The Qur'an's warnings are intensely serious. This severity stems from the hypocrites' conspiracies against religion. A threat is the expression of an intent to cause harm to another, and it reflects an emotional state directed at instilling fear. It should be noted that threat is one of the emotional states found in the Qur'an but not listed in Plutchik's emotional wheel. It may be derived from the combination of two emotions: anger and fear. Additionally, based on Plutchik's model, the fusion of surprise and fear results in emotions such as alarm, awe, or terror. In this verse, God promises the hypocrites a humiliating punishment for their false oaths, thus combining threat and warning as affective responses. However, based on the semantic context, the dominant emotion in this verse is divine threat. Therefore, the emotional reading of this verse is the emotion of divine threat against the hypocrites for their deceit and misguidance.

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا (الطلاق/9)

So it tasted the evil consequences of its conduct, and the outcome of its conduct was ruin (Q. 65:9).

In this verse, God refers to the emotional experience of human beings in response to their own deeds. Turning away from divine commandments brings about loss, ruin, and remorse: the outcome of their affair was loss. By mentioning the consequences of disobedience, God prompts reflection, stating that the final outcome of defying God and His Messenger is loss, and reminds human beings of the remorse they will feel in the Hereafter due to their worldly actions. It should be noted that contemplation and regret are both forms of expressive speech acts, which can be implicitly retrieved from the context. Furthermore, an implicit message of the verse is to discourage attachment to ephemeral success, and to encourage prioritization of ultimate consequences. Thus, the speech act of this verse includes both expressive act (reflecting regret) and directive act (urging contemplation of one's end). According to Plutchik's emotional model, the combination of sadness and disgust gives rise to the emotion of remorse, which is a deeply human feeling that signifies sorrow over a committed (or omitted) action. God emphasizes that the disbelievers will be destroyed in this world by divine punishment, and in the Hereafter, their ultimate fate will be remorse and regret. Therefore, the emotional interpretation of this verse is the disbelievers'

remorse on the Day of Judgment for their past deeds.

Table 3. Frequency of Expressive Speech Acts and Associated Emotions in verses of Juz' 26-28 of the Qur'an

Row	Expressive Acts	Frequency	Emotions (Frequency)
1	Blame	62	Shame (17); Disgust (17); Warning (7); Regret (7); Sadness (6); Fatalism (6); Joy (6); Curiosity (5); Fear (4); Threat (4); Friendship (4); Hope (4); Providence (4); Awe and Fear (3); Despair (3); Surprise (2); Pride (2); Submission (2); Anger (1); Dominance (1); Remorse (1); Humiliation (1); Yearning (1); Expectation (1)
2	Drawing Attention	21	
3	Praise	14	
4	Curse	6	
5	Remorse	6	
6	Total	109	

Concerning the relationship between expressive acts and emotions in the studied verses, it should be noted that, just as the acts of blame and drawing attention have the highest frequency among expressive acts, the emotions of shame and disgust are the most frequent among the emotions (table 3). This parallelism is preserved along the emotional continuum; for instance, in correspondence with expressive acts such as cursing and lamentation, emotions such as fatalism, fear, yearning, and remorse appear. Therefore, from an affective standpoint, there exists a consonant relationship between expressive speech acts and the emotional continuum associated with them.

5.4. Commissive Speech Acts

Commissive speech acts involve the speaker's commitment to perform a future action. The aim of such acts is to align the external world with the propositional content of the hearer's future actions. In this type of act, the speaker asserts that they will perform a particular act in the future (Searle 1976) as it can be observed in the verse Q. 53:1-2:

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ * مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ (النجم/1-2)

By the star when it sets, your companion has neither gone astray, nor gone amiss (Q. 53:1-2).

This verse represents a commissive speech act, as God affirms His commitment and oath to a specific proposition. Commissive acts often involve oaths, which are frequently observed in Qur'anic discourse. Here, God swears by the stars, which symbolize divine majesty and cosmic order, to emphasize the righteousness of the Prophet's path and to negate any accusation of deviation. The oath serves as a declaration of commitment to the truthfulness of the Prophet's guidance, thus qualifying this verse as a clear example of a commissive speech act, specifically the act of swearing.

From the lens of Plutchik’s emotion wheel, the combination of anger and surprise results in emotions such as boldness, resentment, and disgust. In this verse, God expresses displeasure at the disbelievers who accused the Prophet of speaking from whims. The statement, “*your companion has not gone astray nor is he deluded,*” reflects God’s disgust and disapproval of their baseless accusations. Furthermore, God defends the Prophet against slander and upholds his truthfulness. Hence, the emotional reading of this verse centers on God’s disgust toward the disbelievers for doubting the Prophet’s integrity. The verse Q. 46:33 is also another instance of commissive speech acts:

أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَ لَمْ يَعْزِبْ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ بَلَىٰ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (الاحقاف/33)

Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and[who]was not exhausted by their creation, is able to revive the dead? Yes, indeed He has power over all things (Q. 46:33).

In this verse, God guarantees the resurrection of the dead and affirms the possibility of human re-creation. This is a clear example of a commissive act, specifically guaranteeing, where God assures the resurrection of the dead in the Hereafter. The second part of the verse emphasizes God's omnipotence, thereby functioning as an assertive speech act that stresses divine capability. The use of the word *balā* (indeed/surely) reinforces this assertive function. Thus, this verse includes a commissive speech act (guaranteeing the resurrection) and an assertive speech act (emphasizing divine omnipotence). From the emotional perspective, the use of *a-wa-lam* (have they not) draws attention to the incomprehensibility of denial by the disbelievers. According to Plutchik’s wheel, the combination of surprise and fear produces emotions such as alarm, awe, or dread. This verse functions as a warning to disbelievers concerning the certainty of resurrection and accountability. Hence, the emotional reading of the verse is the divine warning to disbelievers regarding resurrection and judgment.

Table 4. Frequency of Commissive Speech Acts and Associated Emotions in verses of Juz’ 26–28 of the Qur’an

Row	Commissive Acts	Frequency	Emotions (Frequency)
1	Oath	10	Providence (6); Warning (3); Fatalism (2); Disgust (2); Dominance (2); Pride (1); Anticipation (1)
2	Certainty of the Subject Matter	6	
3	Total	16	

Table 4 shows a congruent correlation between the commissive speech acts identified and the emotions present in the verses under study. Most of the speech acts used appear in the form of oaths and certainty of the matter,

while the most frequently occurring emotion pertains to God's providence in creation. This emotional continuum is sustained through themes of divine warning and sovereignty, reflecting God's boundless dominion over all matters and His comprehensive knowledge, which are manifested in the form of warnings and His control over all aspects of creation. Therefore, a consistent connection between commissive speech acts and the emotions identified in these verses is clearly evident.

5.5. *Declarative Acts*

The non-expressive function of declarative acts is to announce new conditions to the audience. Through these announcements, the speaker brings about real changes in the world. Such acts simultaneously reflect a dual correspondence between language and reality. A declarative act occurs when the speaker possesses the authority and competence to enact such statements (Searle 1976).

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَ هَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانِآءِ عَرَبِيَّآ لِيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
وَبُشْرَى لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ (الاحقاف/12)

Yet before it the Book of Moses was a guide and a mercy, and this is a Book which confirms it, in the Arabic language, to warn those who do wrong, and is a bearer of good news for the virtuous (Q. 46:12).

At the beginning of the verse, reference is made to the revelation of a divine book to Prophet Moses. One of the prerequisites for a declarative act is the creation of real-world changes, which is fulfilled here through the revelation of the Torah. Like previous speech acts, declaratives may also carry both direct and indirect meanings. The verse reports the revelation of the sacred book and the nature of the prophetic mission. Therefore, acts such as appointing and revealing can be considered as underlying declarative speech acts implicitly retrievable from this verse. As such, this verse contains a declarative act in the sense that it conveys the appointment of prophets by God to deliver divine revelation. In response to the disbelievers who deny the Qur'an, the verse cites the revelation of the Torah to Prophet Moses and emphasizes that the Qur'an is consistent with the signs and content of that earlier Scripture. In essence, the revelation of divine books is intended as guidance for humanity, and according to divine providence, they were revealed to the prophets. Hence, the emotional interpretation of this verse centers on God's providence in guiding humanity through both warning and glad tidings. In the next example of declarative speech acts (Q. 50:20), it is stated that the angels, by the command of God, blow the trumpet:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعْدِ (ق/20)

Then the Trumpet will be blown: "This is the promised day" (Q. 50:20).

The phrase, “*the day of the threat,*” refers to the actualization of divine warnings and represents a manifestation of God’s command to announce the Day of Resurrection. It is the moment when it will be declared to humankind that this is what you used to flee from and this is the fulfillment of the promised punishment. Thus, the divine promise of a Day of Punishment is publicly declared. In this verse, a clear instance of a declarative speech act is the announcement of the Day of Judgment, directly conveyed through the act of blowing the trumpet (*naḥkh fī al-ṣūr*). Accordingly, the verse incorporates a declarative act by proclaiming the commencement of the Resurrection. In the second part of the verse, it states: “*That is the Day of the Threat,*” referring to the Day of Resurrection, when every human being—righteous or corrupt—will enter the arena of judgment, accompanied by a witness who will testify to their deeds. In terms of Plutchik’s emotion wheel, the combination of surprise and fear produces the compound emotion of awe or dread. Hence, the emotional tone of the verse conveys a sense of terror and divine awe experienced by humans on the Day of Resurrection.

Table 5. Frequency of Declarative Speech Acts and Associated Emotions in verses of Juz’ 26–28 of the Qur’an

Row	Declarative Acts	Frequency	Emotions (Frequency)
1	Creation	9	Providence (11); Warning (2); Hopefulness (2); Fatalism (1); Threat (1); Dominance (1); Regret (1); Humiliation (1); Fear (1)
2	Declaration	8	
3	Revelation	2	
4	Naming	2	
5	Total	21	

Table 5 shows that the majority of declarative acts found in the Qur’an pertain to creation, the revelation of divine scriptures, and the commission of prophets—all of which correspond with the emotion of *al-tadbir* (divine providence), which has the highest frequency. Hence, the creation of all beings, the revelation of divine books, and the appointment of prophets all reflect God’s providential order in creation and the governance of the universe. In the emotional continuum, the emotions of threat, dominion, and fear follow, corresponding to declarative acts of naming (in the context of naming idols). Therefore, there exists a consistent and parallel relationship between the declarative acts and the emotions employed in the verses under study.

Table 6. Relationship between Types of Speech Acts and Dominant Associated Emotions

Speech Acts	Frequency	Dominant Emotion	Frequency	Discursive Goal
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Directive	166	Friendship	32	Encouraging righteous deeds
Assertive	157	Warning	25	Emphasizing awareness
Expressive	109	Shame	17	Condemning disobedience
Declarative	21	Providence	11	Announcing creation and revelation
Commissive	16	Providence	6	Commitment to divine order

As shown in table 6, emotions are significantly aligned with the types of speech acts. In particular, directive and assertive acts exhibit the highest emotional frequency, emphasizing both emotional engagement and cognitive awareness with the audience. The emotions of friendship and warning are especially prominent, representing respectively the positive/empathic and cautionary/inhibitory dimensions of divine speech.

The relationship between speech acts and emotions in the verses in question demonstrates a harmonious interconnection designed to guide, enlighten, and reform the audience's behavior. This relationship is confirmed through both qualitative analysis of linguistic context, communicative intent, and emotional effects and quantitative analysis of the frequency of speech acts and emotions. Directive acts (166 instances) align with positive emotions such as friendship (a blend of joy and acceptance) and hopefulness (a blend of joy and anticipation), which foster empathy and encourage righteous action. Assertive acts (157 instances) correspond to the emotion of warning, combining surprise and fear, thereby invoking both alarm, and awe. Expressive acts (109 instances) are associated with shame (fear and disgust) and repentance (sadness and disgust), evoking remorse for wrongdoing. Commissive acts (16 instances) relate to providence and dominion (anger and acceptance), reflecting divine authority expressed through oaths confirming prophetic truth. Declarative acts (21 instances) are linked to providence and warning, culminating in the emotion of fear associated with the announcement of the Resurrection.

This correspondence demonstrates that speech acts function as vehicles for divine intent, working in concert with emotions to amplify both cognitive and affective impact guiding the audience toward piety, moral responsibility, and awareness of divine order.

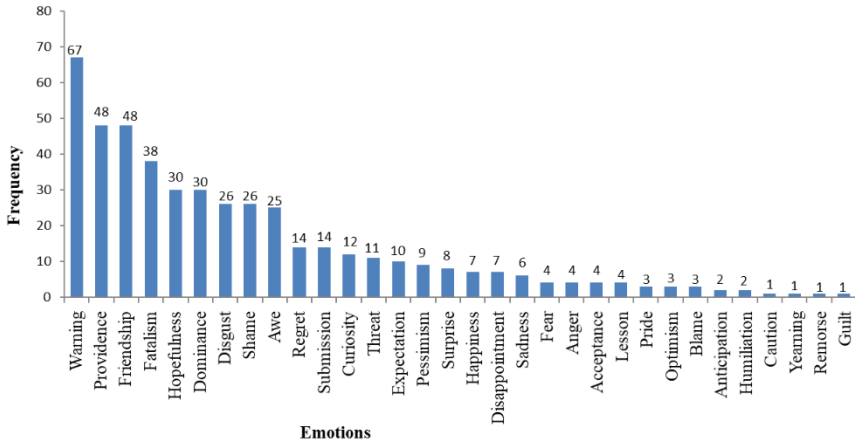


Figure 2. Comparison of the frequency of different emotions appearing in Juz' 26–28 of the Qur'an

Figure 2, which illustrates the frequency of emotions, highlights the prominence of the emotion of warning, rooted in eschatological and punitive themes such as the Resurrection and divine chastisement. This emotion, arising from the combination of surprise and fear in Plutchik's model, functions as an awakening mechanism, prompting reflection on one's actions and their consequences. The emotion of friendship, prevalent in directive verses, plays a key role in establishing emotional connection with the audience and reinforcing a sense of belonging to divine values. The low frequency of other emotions indicates the dominance of warning over glad tidings, which corresponds to the historical and social context of revelation, often characterized by confrontation with the deniers of faith.

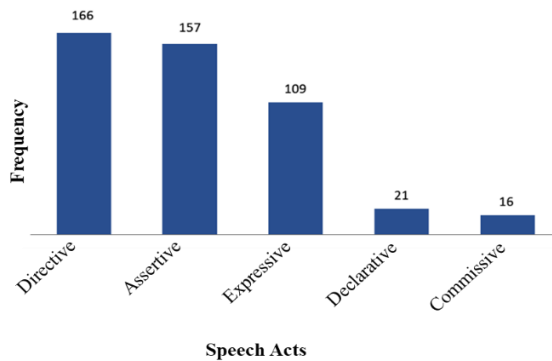


Figure 3. Comparison of the frequency of different Speech Acts appearing in Juz' 26–28 of the Qur'an

Figure 3 shows that the directive and assertive speech acts in the verses in question are the most dominant types. This distribution reflects the Qur'anic strategy of prioritizing practical guidance and intellectual enlightenment. Directive acts serve as the pillar of behavioral guidance, while assertive acts, such as emphasizing the salvation of believers, strengthen the epistemological and doctrinal foundations. These two types of acts, functioning as complementary elements, guide the audience toward both inner and outward transformation. Speech acts of the expressive, declarative, and commissive types, though less frequent, also play significant roles: expressive acts evoke emotional responses, declarative acts announce fundamental changes, and commissive acts instill confidence in divine order.

Together, these figures depict a dynamic communicative system in which speech acts and emotions operate as an interconnected network. This network maintains a balance between positive motivation (through friendship and hope) and moral warning (through fear and shame), guiding the audience through a multistage process of intellectual awareness, emotional transformation, and practical action. The correlation between each speech act and emotion reflects the integration of discourse and affect, designed to create a comprehensive experience of divine guidance. Thus, the Qur'anic audience is addressed not merely as an individual but as a member of a community engaged in interaction with divine order, benefiting from the interplay of diverse speech acts and emotions.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating Searle's Speech Act Theory with Plutchik's Model of Emotions provides a more nuanced understanding of the implicit meanings and emotional effects of verses from *Juz* ' 26 to 28 of the Qur'an. The directive speech act (166 instances), as the most frequent type, underscores the Qur'an's guiding role, calling believers to righteous action and accompanied by the dominant positive emotion of friendship. This act reflects an inspirational and motivational approach aimed at attracting the audience emotionally and encouraging virtuous behavior. The assertive act, employed to inform or warn, corresponds to the dominant emotion of warning, playing a vital role in intellectual awakening and moral admonition. Its high frequency (157 instances) underscores the Qur'an's emphasis on awareness and reflection. Expressive acts convey the emotional response of the text to the audience's negative actions. Their dominant emotion, shame, indicates the text's intention to evoke remorse and repentance, guiding the audience back to the righteous path. The overall

frequency (109 instances) highlights the Qur'an's emphasis on behavioral reform through emotional engagement. Commissive acts, representing commitment to divine order, express the speaker's (God's or the Prophet's) pledge to carry out future actions. The dominant emotion of providence, signifies forethought, order, and divine planning. With a moderate frequency (16 instances), these acts refer to commitment to the structure of creation and divine programs. Regarding declarative acts, the announcement of prophet hood and creation accompanied by the emotion of providence possess an executive and reality-altering nature. Their overall frequency (21 instances) illustrates their significance in conveying foundational and transformative messages.

Within the emotional continuum observed in the analyzed verses, the emotion warning is the most frequent due to repeated references to the Resurrection and divine punishment, revealing the Qur'an's emphasis on human awakening and awareness. Conversely, emotions such as *joy* or *trust*, appearing in verses of mercy and glad tidings, occur less frequently_likely due to the predominance of admonitory themes in these sections. From a psychological perspective, the integration of speech acts and emotions in the Qur'an exerts a profound affective impact on the audience. For instance, a directive act combined with the emotion of warning reinforces responsibility and constructive fear, aligning with the Qur'an's purpose of guiding humanity toward piety.

Moreover, many Qur'anic speech acts carry a social dimension. Divine oaths, for example, not only express God's commitment but also invite humans to engage with creation and comprehend their position within it. This dimension is often reinforced by emotions such as *curiosity* or providence. Overall, the findings highlight the multi-layered semantic and emotional structure of the Qur'anic discourse, in which cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions coalesce to form a holistic framework of divine communication.

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A Methodological Analysis of Interdisciplinary Studies on the Qur'an and Psychology in Iranian Scholarly Articles

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ABSTRACT:

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This study aims to analyze the research methodologies employed in interdisciplinary studies of the Qur'an and psychology published in Iranian scholarly journals from 2011 to 2024. Initially, 346 articles were selected, and after closer examination, 136 articles that specifically addressed interdisciplinary studies between the Qur'an and psychology were chosen as the main corpus of analysis. A total of 157 instances of research methods were identified across the corpus. These methods were analyzed based on an expert-approved classification of research methodologies into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed categories. The findings revealed that descriptive-analytical methods and qualitative content analysis were the most frequently employed approaches, whereas mixed methods, survey methods, and the Qur'an-by-Qur'an method were the least common. The analyses indicate that attention to paradigmatic coherence and innovation in methodological development were among the strengths, while the use of low-yield methods, methodological chaos, and insufficient attention to interdisciplinary requirements were among the key methodological weaknesses observed in these studies.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and psychology, Research methods; Methodology of interdisciplinary studies; Qur'anic-psychological studies.

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1. Introduction

One of the principal pathways for theoretical advancement in Qur'anic studies is the adoption and refinement of methodological approaches that enable the development of new research methods. Within this academic field, the scholarly article holds a distinctive position, as it embodies innovation, problem-orientation, and methodological precision. As the primary medium for intellectual exchange among experts, scholarly articles serve both as instruments of scientific production and as channels of academic communication (Alibeik et al. 2015). Consequently, the methodological framework of an article constitutes the foundation of its scientific credibility, defining how the research is structured, executed, and evaluated. A rigorous methodological design ensures replicability, facilitates peer review, and fosters reader confidence_making it the core of any credible scientific contribution.

Given this, the examination of research methods used in Qur'anic scholarship is essential for evaluating the validity, reliability, and generalizability of findings. The importance of methodological analysis becomes even more pronounced in interdisciplinary studies that connect the Qur'an with other human sciences. In such contexts, methodology serves as the central link bridging distinct epistemological traditions. The human sciences, with their well-established and diverse research methods, offer a fertile ground for methodological innovation in Qur'anic studies. Indeed, the very rationale for pursuing interdisciplinary research lies in expanding the methodological capacity of Qur'anic scholarship through the adaptation of humanistic and social-scientific approaches. However, the increasing breadth and diversity of interdisciplinary Qur'anic studies have created a fragmented research landscape, lacking a unified methodological framework. Therefore, a systematic review and methodological evaluation of existing interdisciplinary research are crucial for synthesizing a coherent understanding of the field and charting future directions.

Among the various human sciences that have intersected with Qur'anic research, psychology occupies a prominent place, particularly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The methodological pluralism inherent in psychology has naturally influenced Qur'anic-psychological studies, leading to the application of diverse approaches and research designs. Analyzing these methodological trends offers critical insights into both the strengths and deficiencies of current research, while also revealing how effectively the two disciplines interact at the epistemological and theoretical levels.

The significance of the present research rests on four main pillars. First, methodological rigor forms the basis of scientific credibility, enabling accurate evaluation and replication. Thus, assessing the quality of methods in published Qur'an–psychology articles directly enhances the scholarly reliability of the field. Second, by systematically mapping the methodological landscape, this study aims to construct an integrated overview of existing research, identify knowledge gaps, and highlight promising approaches for future inquiry. Third, the essence of interdisciplinary work lies in fostering reciprocal enrichment between fields; hence, it is necessary to determine whether the methodologies used in Qur'anic–psychological research have indeed facilitated productive dialogue and theoretical innovation.

Finally, the findings of this investigation will serve as a methodological guide for future scholars, promoting the use of valid, innovative, and impactful research methods while avoiding weak or inappropriate designs. In summary, this study seeks to evaluate the methodological strengths and weaknesses of interdisciplinary scholarly articles on the Qur'an and psychology, thereby contributing to the establishment of a coherent, rigorous, and forward-looking methodological foundation for future research in this field.

2. Literature Review

Given that this study is an interdisciplinary methodological investigation of the Qur'an and psychology, it is necessary that the literature review include studies whose primary focus is the research methods used in Qur'anic and psychological articles. For example, Lotfabadi (2007) examined the epistemological and methodological foundations of psychological research in Iran, focusing on works published before 2007. Mahram and Tavanaei Shahroudi (2009) conducted a content analysis of seven Iranian psychological research journals for the period 2005–2007, identifying the most frequent topics and research methods.

Alipour et al. (2018) provided statistical information on articles in the Journal of Educational Psychology, including authors' academic rank and degrees, institutional affiliations, the most commonly used research methods, and sampling approaches. Ostadzadeh et al. (2019) performed a quantitative content analysis of 19 issues of the journal Studies in Islam and Psychology for 2007–2016. Rahimzadeh et al. (2018) reviewed the structure of Iranian psychological research articles_ especially their methodological aspects_ over 2007–2010 and concluded that some research methods are widely used while others are rarely or never employed.

Therefore, the present study differs from earlier work in at least three respects. First, temporally: the most recent review in the field of Qur'an and psychology (Ostadzadeh et al. 2019) covered articles up to 2016; the current study includes articles through 2024, thus encompassing at least eight more years of publications. Second, in content: prior studies in psychology (e.g., Lotfabadi 2007; Rahimzadeh et al. 2018) critiqued methodological issues but did not address interdisciplinary studies that bridge the Qur'an and psychology. By contrast, the present research treats both disciplines and is explicitly interdisciplinary. Third, in research method: whereas most previous studies relied solely on quantitative approaches and reported frequencies of research methods, this study employs a primarily qualitative design_ aimed at explicating the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used in the articles_ and is supported by quantitative analysis.

3. Research Methodology

The study population comprised all interdisciplinary Persian-language articles on the Qur'an and psychology published in Iranian journals between 2011 and 2024. These articles appeared in peer-reviewed academic journals with recognized scientific status_ either in Qur'anic studies, psychology, or both. The journals were identified based on the latest edition (October 2024) of the list of accredited scientific journals issued by the Deputy of Research and Technology of the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.

From the total corpus of Qur'anic and psychological journals published nationwide, 31 accredited journals that fell within the specified timeframe were selected as the research base. Access to their articles was obtained through major Iranian academic databases, including Magiran, the Scientific Information Database (SID), Noormags, the Comprehensive Humanities Portal (Ensani), and the Regional Information Center for Science and Technology (RICeST), as well as through the official websites of the respective journals.

During the initial screening phase, 346 articles were identified. After detailed examination, 248 articles were excluded because they did not meet the criterion of being interdisciplinary studies between the Qur'an and psychology. Consequently, the final analysis was conducted on 138 articles. Among these, two articles did not specify their research method, while 136 articles explicitly reported the methodological approach adopted. The titles and bibliographic characteristics of the journals included in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Journals Included in the Study

	Journal Title	Publication Type	Affiliation	Date of Establishment
1	Studies in Islam and Psychology	Biannual	Research Institute for Hawzah and University	December 2011
2	Cultural Psychology	Biannual	Institute for Research and Development in the Humanities	June 2017
3	Counseling Culture and Psychotherapy	Quarterly	Allameh Tabataba'i University	Spring 2010
4	Research in Religion and Health	Quarterly	Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences	February 2016
5	Qur'an and Social Sciences	Quarterly	University of Qur'anic Sciences and Teachings	Spring 2021
6	Qur'anic Teachings	Biannual	Razavi University of Islamic Sciences	Autumn 2011
7	Psychology and Religion	Quarterly	Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute	June 2011
8	Applied Family Therapy	Quarterly	Iranian Association for Women's Studies	Spring 2020
9	Culture in the Islamic University	Quarterly	Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought	January 2012
10	Strategic Studies on Women	Quarterly	Cultural and Social Council for Women and Family	August 2008
11	Revelatory Ethics	Quarterly	Maarej Research Institute of Revelation Sciences	March 2015
12	Applied Issues in Islamic Education and Training	Quarterly	Institute for Educational Studies, Ministry of Education	August 2017
13	The Knowledge Studies in the Islamic University	Quarterly	Research Institute of Culture and Islamic Thought	December 2012
14	Journal of Researches of Qur'an and Hadith Sciences	Quarterly	AlZahra University	Summer 2003
15	Women and Society	Quarterly	Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch	June 2011
16	Islamic Studies in Health	Quarterly	Tehran University of Medical Sciences	2017
17	Islamic Studies on Women and Family	Biannual	Jāmi' at al-Zahrā	June 2018
18	Journal of Social Psychology Research	Quarterly	Iranian Association of Social Psychology	April 2011
19	Islamic Lifestyle with a Focus on Health	Quarterly	Ministry of Health and Medical Education	May 2013
20	Religion and Health	Biannual	Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences	May 2017
21	Journal of Positive Psychology	Quarterly	University of Isfahan	August 2014
22	Cultural-Educational Journal of Women and Family	Quarterly	Imam Husayn University	September 2012
23	Gender and Family Studies	Quarterly	Institute for Women and Family Studies	February 2016
24	Psychological Studies	Quarterly	AlZahra University	February 2014
25	Qur'anic Researches	Quarterly	Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought	January 2015
26	Islamic Education	Quarterly	Research Institute for Hawzah and University	2005
27	Qur'an and Medicine	Quarterly	Ministry of Health and Medical Education	November 2012
28	Islam and Psychological Research	Quarterly	Institute of Higher Education for Ethics and Training	March 2020
29	Islamic Journal of Women and Family Studies	Quarterly	Al-Mustafa International University	June 2017
30	Qur'an and Science	Biannual	Al-Mustafa International University	April 2019
31	Behavioral Sciences Research	Quarterly	Isfahan University of Medical Sciences	August 2008

As shown in the table 1, some of the journals under review were not initially categorized as scientific–research journals at the beginning of 2011, but obtained their official research accreditation during the studied period. The inclusion criterion for this study was therefore based on the date of their acquisition of scientific–research status.

This study employed a mixed-method approach: quantitative content analysis in the first phase and qualitative analytical examination in the second. In the quantitative content analysis phase, the context unit was the article, and the recording unit for methodological identification was the word. The context unit refers to the broadest textual boundary within which a recording unit can be identified, while the recording unit denotes a specific segment of content that can be classified under a distinct analytical category (Holsti 1969). Quantitative content analysis was used to identify, categorize, and measure the frequency distribution of research methods. In contrast, qualitative analytical analysis was applied to interpret the nature and quality of methodological applications, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the most frequently used methods, and provide evaluative insight.

The primary research instrument was a researcher-developed data collection form, designed to capture various types and categories of research methods. This instrument was reviewed and validated by experts in methodology, Qur'anic studies, and psychology, and the final version was implemented after incorporating their revisions and feedback. The coding process involved classifying all articles that explicitly stated their research methodology into predefined categories based on the methodological typology table. Articles that used more than one method were assigned multiple methodological codes accordingly. The frequency of each explicitly mentioned research method in interdisciplinary studies of the Qur'an and psychology published between 2011 and 2024 was subsequently recorded and analyzed.

In the next stage, the strengths and weaknesses of these methods were critically examined. The rationale for selecting this time frame (2011–2024) was twofold: first, it reflects the growing trend of applying modern research methodologies and the increasing expansion of Qur'anic and psychological scholarly journals, particularly in interdisciplinary domains; second, it provides a more realistic representation and precise analysis of the current status, thereby enabling more effective policy formulation and strategic planning for future methodological advancement.

Data were collected through library-based research. The researcher carefully examined various sections of each article including the abstract, introduction, statement of the problem, literature review, conceptual and

theoretical framework, main body, and conclusion_ to identify the research method explicitly stated or implied by the authors.

4. Classification of Research Methods

Various classifications of research methods have been proposed in methodological and epistemological literature. Hafeznia (2007) categorizes scientific research according to its purpose into fundamental, applied, and practical, and based on its nature and method into historical, descriptive, correlational, experimental, and causal types. Iman (2007) identifies three overarching approaches_ quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods_ and lists major qualitative approaches such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, action research, historical-comparative, and feminist research. Similarly, Mohammadpour (2011) considers ethnography, phenomenology, feminist studies, grounded theory, historical-comparative, and participatory action research as the main qualitative methodologies.

Pakatchi (2012) divides all research into two primary types, explanatory and exploratory, and further subdivides explanatory research into historical, comparative, and analytical categories, each with several subtypes. Faramarz Qaramaleki (2016) classifies religious studies approaches into intra-religious, extra-religious, and integrative categories. The intra-religious methods include tradition-based, Qur'an-by-Qur'an, and Qur'an-by-hadith approaches, as well as semantic and hermeneutical paradigms. The extra-religious methods encompass empirical, analytical, historical, phenomenological, and existential approaches, while the integrative category covers comparative and interdisciplinary methods.

Within the quantitative paradigm, Babbie (2013) identifies experimental and survey research as the two most prominent methods. Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) classify quantitative research into descriptive, correlational, causal-comparative, and experimental, while Krippendorff (2004) also recognizes quantitative content analysis as part of the quantitative domain. In qualitative research, Marshall and Rossman (2014) identify narrative analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, action research, cultural studies, and feminist research as key approaches. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) propose case study, ethnography, interpretive inquiry, grounded theory, action research, and clinical research as major qualitative designs. Merriam (2009) offers a sixfold classification: basic qualitative research, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, and critical inquiry. Creswell (2013) categorizes qualitative designs into five principal types:

narrative, phenomenological, ethnographic, case study, and grounded theory. As in other paradigms, the mixed-method approach also presents multiple classification schemes within the research methodology literature.

The classification of research methods was developed through a process of revision and synthesis based on major methodological typologies presented in specialized research methodology literature as well as Qur'anic and psychological methodological works. The aim was to establish a typology that, while avoiding excessive fragmentation, would maintain comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of diverse methodological traditions. The principal sources consulted included: Hafeznia (2007); Sarmad et al. (2005); Ary et al. (2010); Krippendorff (2004); Delavar (2006); Hsieh & Shannon (2005); Strauss & Corbin (1998); Shabani Varki (2006); Stringer (1999); Hooman (2006); Mahoney & Rueschemeyer (2003); Pakatchi (2012); Faramarz Qaramaleki (2016); Malekian (2005); Rafipour (2003); Saroukhani (2003); Iman (2007); and Mohammadpour (2011). The initial classification draft was reviewed by five subject-matter experts, and the final version was determined based on expert consensus. Table 2 presents the resulting typology of research methods employed in Qur'an and Psychology articles.

Table 2. Classification of Research Methods in Qur'an and Psychology Articles (Ahmadzadeh & Bakhshi 2020)

Approach	Method	Definition
Based on Purpose	Fundamental	Seeks to discover truths and realities, and to understand phenomena and objects (Hafeznia 2007).
	Applied	Aims to address practical needs and improve tools, patterns, and systems to enhance human welfare and quality of life (Hafeznia 2007).
	Practical	Focused on solving specific problems without high generalizability (Hafeznia 2007).
Quantitative Approach	Survey	Includes field studies, attitude measurements, and epidemiological investigations (Sarmad et al. 2005).
	Correlational	Examines relationships among two or more variables using correlation coefficients, regression models, or causal multivariate designs such as structural equation modeling (Mahram & Tavaneai 2009).
	Causal-Comparative	Investigates causes through observed effects using retrospective comparison (Mahram & Tavaneai 2009).
	Experimental	Studies conducted under controlled conditions involving manipulation of independent variables (Ary 2010, as cited in Mahram & Tavaneai 2009).
	Quantitative Content Analysis	An objective, systematic, and quantitative analysis of communication content for interpretive purposes (Krippendorff 2004).
	Meta-Analysis	Statistical integration of multiple quantitative studies addressing a common topic to derive a new cumulative finding (Delavar 2006).
	Descriptive	Systematic portrayal and organized description of existing conditions,

		phenomena, or variables, sometimes exploring their interrelationships (Hafeznia 2007).
Qualitative Approach	Ethnography	Investigates a specific cultural or social group through field immersion and first-hand observation (Mahram & Tavanaei 2009).
	Historical	Explains shared and general characteristics of historical phenomena and their underlying causes (Hafeznia 2007).
	Qualitative Content Analysis	The subjective interpretation of textual data through systematic coding and theme identification (Hsieh & Shannon 2005).
	Phenomenological	Provides a rigorous and critical description of lived experience to reveal the essence and structure of a phenomenon (Mohammadpour 2011).
	Grounded Theory	Generates or discovers theory through inductive abstraction from data obtained in a specific context (Strauss & Corbin 1998).
	Narrative Research	Collects and reinterprets stories or narratives to construct a coherent and meaningful account of a phenomenon (Shabani Varki 2006).
	Action Research	A participatory, reflective, and systematic inquiry designed to address practical issues and promote improvement (Stringer 1999 as cited in Iman 2007).
	Case Study	Provides an in-depth analysis of an individual, group, or social institution (Hooman 2006).
	Historical–Comparative	Compares social processes across cultural or historical contexts to facilitate conceptualization and theory development (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer 2003, as cited in Mohammadpour 2011).
	Participatory Action Research	A democratic and collaborative process aimed at developing practical knowledge rooted in shared human values and a participatory worldview (Mohammadpour 2011).
	Analytical	Explores the function of smaller components within a larger unit of analysis (Pakatchi 2012).
	Comparative	Examines a phenomenon or viewpoint through identifying similarities and differences to achieve deeper understanding (Faramarz Qaramaleki 2016).
	Semantic Analysis	Investigates the meaning of linguistic units at both lexical and syntactic levels (Malekian 2005).
	Descriptive–Analytical	Depicts the current state of affairs and analytically explains causal or structural relationships through logical reasoning (Hafeznia 2007).
Explanatory	Seeks to identify causal mechanisms and logically infer occurrences from general principles (Rafipour 2003).	
Mixed-Method Approach	Integrative (Combined)	Employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a complementary fashion (Saroukhani 2003).
	Interdisciplinary	Represents methodological pluralism grounded in dialogical engagement between disciplinary perspectives to address a shared research problem (Faramarz Qaramaleki 2016).

5. Findings

The findings indicate that among the 136 analyzed articles, the authors employed a total of 157 research methods. The number of methods exceeds the number of articles because several authors utilized two or more methods in their studies. Notably, a few researchers incorrectly labeled their methodology as “analytical–descriptive,” whereas the correct term should be “descriptive–analytical.” The frequency distribution of research methods

used in Qur'an and Psychology articles is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of Research Methods Used in Qur'an and Psychology Articles

	Methods	Frequency
1	Mixed Method (Grounded Theory & Delphi)	1
2	Traditional-Scriptural Method	1
3	Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis	1
4	Documentary Study	1
5	Ex Post Facto	1
6	Descriptive-Comparative Analysis	1
7	Intertextual Qur'anic Analysis (Qur'an-by-Qur'an)	1
8	Rational/Ijtihadi Paradigm of religious study	1
9	Case Study	1
10	Exploratory Analysis	1
11	Analytical and Rational Approaches to Religious and Psychological Literature	2
12	Psychological and religious reasoning/ijtihad	2
13	Descriptive	2
14	Exploratory Study	2
15	Causal-Comparative	2
16	Survey Research	3
17	Quantitative Content Analysis	3
18	Delphi	3
19	Experimental	3
20	Grounded Theory	3
21	Semi-Experimental	4
22	Quasi-Experimental	4
23	Thematic Analysis	5
24	Qualitative Content Analysis of Religious Texts	5
25	Analytical Study	5
26	Correlational	7
27	Linguistic/Semantic Analysis	8
28	Qualitative Content Analysis	36
29	Descriptive-Analytical Study	41
30	Total	157

The descriptive-analytical method was the most frequently employed approach, appearing in 41 instances. This method is commonly used in the

humanities across academic disciplines in Iran and has become a default choice, often included merely to avoid manuscript rejection for lacking an explicitly stated research method. Its widespread use reflects a general weakness among students and some faculty members in applying contemporary and rigorous methodological approaches in interdisciplinary Qur'anic studies. The qualitative content analysis method, used in 36 cases, ranked second in frequency. Although some of these studies lacked methodological rigor or failed to follow a systematic and step-by-step process, most authors applied this method with reasonable adequacy. The popularity of this method can be attributed to several factors: Its conceptual compatibility with the interpretive foundations of the Qur'an; The availability of numerous methodological sources, especially in Persian, explaining the implementation steps of qualitative content analysis; the relative familiarity of instructors and researchers in both Qur'anic studies and psychology with its conceptual and procedural framework.

After these two methods, other approaches were used far less frequently. Linguistic/semantic (8), correlational analysis (7), analytical method (5), qualitative content analysis of religious texts (5), thematic analysis (5), quasi-experimental (4), and semi-experimental (4) methods followed in descending order of frequency. Other methods were used three times or fewer. Only one author employed a mixed-method design, indicating that most researchers were not familiar with or did not apply mixed methodological frameworks.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in roughly equal proportions. Quantitative methods included semi-experimental (4), quasi-experimental (4), survey (3), experimental (3), and causal-comparative (2) designs, while qualitative methods included thematic analysis (5), analytical (5), grounded theory (3), Delphi (3), and comparative (1) approaches.

However, specialized Qur'anic methodologies, such as analytical and rational method (2), Intertextual Qur'anic Analysis (Qur'an-by-Qur'an) (1), and traditional-scriptural method (1), were rarely used. Similarly, innovative and generative methods, such as qualitative content analysis of religious texts (5) and rational/ijtihadi Paradigm of religious study (1), were not often applied, reflecting a limited awareness among Qur'an and Psychology researchers regarding newer methodological developments. Moreover, researchers in this field have not utilized a range of diverse methods including meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, phenomenological, narrative, action research, integrative, historical, or semiotic approaches which further indicates a lack of familiarity with the broad spectrum of available methodologies and their potential applications in interdisciplinary Qur'anic-psychological studies.

5. *Methodological Analysis of the Articles*

Following the quantitative examination of research methodologies, this section presents a qualitative and analytical evaluation of the methodological strengths and weaknesses observed in Qur'an–Psychology interdisciplinary studies.

5.1. *Paradigmatic Compatibility*

Interdisciplinary scholars consistently emphasize the necessity of paradigmatic congruence between disciplines engaged in an interdisciplinary study. Such congruence is particularly crucial in the integration of Qur'anic exegesis and psychology, where paradigmatic divergence can significantly undermine methodological validity. Some authors have shown an awareness of the dual-paradigm tension between the epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations of Qur'anic interpretation and psychology, and have deliberately sought to avoid collapsing into those contradictions. However, others—either due to limited understanding of paradigmatic distinctions or neglect of their methodological implications have failed to maintain such coherence. Consequently, the findings of their studies lack robustness or, in some cases, become invalid altogether.

A clear indicator of paradigmatic awareness lies in the contrast between the use of quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods. Quantitative content analysis, which arises from the positivist paradigm, was used only three times, whereas qualitative content analysis, rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, appeared 36 times—approximately twelve times more frequently. This pattern reveals an interesting inversion: while the field of psychology in Iran traditionally operates within a positivist framework, heavily reliant on quantitative methods, Qur'an–Psychology studies demonstrate a distinct methodological shift toward interpretivism. From a paradigmatic perspective, this reflects the greater compatibility of the interpretivist paradigm with the epistemological and hermeneutical foundations of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, researchers versed in both Qur'anic studies and psychology have tended to favor interpretive methodologies—such as qualitative content analysis—over positivist ones. The latter, including quantitative content analysis, are often deemed epistemologically misaligned with the theological and teleological objectives of the Qur'an. In other words, positivist methods—given their ontological and epistemological

assumptions are largely incompatible with the Qur'an's interpretive worldview. Nevertheless, in limited cases, quantitative approaches can be employed under strict methodological conditions provided that interpretive principles are meticulously observed. In such cases, however, the validity of findings remains contextually bound to those specific applications and cannot be generalized across the broader field of Qur'anic research.

5.2. Innovation in the Development of Scientific Methods

The methodological analysis further reveals a growing enthusiasm among scholars, faculty members, and seminary students for interdisciplinary research in the fields of the Qur'an and psychology. The increasing number of such studies indicates both intellectual curiosity and a rising inclination toward employing novel research methods in this domain. A diachronic review of published Qur'an–Psychology articles shows that qualitative content analysis has been rapidly adopted, especially in recent years, suggesting a strong adaptive capacity among researchers. This methodological expansion indicates that when research methods are effectively and systematically taught, their adoption accelerates naturally across academic and seminary settings.

In other words, the potential for methodological growth, diversification, and innovation in Qur'an–Psychology interdisciplinary research is remarkably high. Encouragingly, the recent scholarly endeavors of university and seminary scholars toward developing Islamic and Qur'anic paradigms have begun to bear fruit, resulting in the formulation of novel theoretical and methodological frameworks (Iman & Kalateh Sadati 2013). Similarly, significant contributions have been made to the field of Qur'anic methodology (Kafi 2016), and a number of new methods for interdisciplinary Qur'anic studies have been proposed (Rezahosseini & Alipour 2011; Shojaei 2020), which can serve as valuable foundations for further Qur'an–Psychology integration.

The application of these newly developed methods in the reviewed articles is noteworthy from several perspectives. First, the very act of producing innovative methods particularly in the humanities and Islamic studies is a vital national necessity and should be pursued with greater urgency. Second, the adoption of these methods by both their originators and other scholars signals their academic legitimacy and growing acceptance, marking the beginning of their potential transfer to international scholarly discourse. Third, the practical implementation of these methods in actual studies exposes both their strengths and weaknesses, thereby facilitating critical reflection, refinement, and contextual adaptation. This

process fosters the localization and institutionalization of these methods within the academic and research infrastructures of the Islamic world.

5.3. Utilization of Low-efficient Research Methods

Approximately one in every three reviewed articles employed the descriptive–analytical method, a simplistic and overly generalized approach that has become a default refuge for authors seeking to avoid critical scrutiny from reviewers regarding methodological rigor. As previous methodological surveys in Qur'anic studies have also confirmed (Ahmadzadeh & Bakhshi 2020), this method has been excessively overused by Qur'an scholars. Although psychology as a discipline is comparatively methodologically rich, offering a wide array of research designs and boasting extensive literature on methodology with students typically acquiring solid methodological training at undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, this diversity is not reflected in Qur'an–Psychology interdisciplinary articles.

A plausible explanation is that many contributors to such studies come primarily from Qur'anic scholarship backgrounds, and thus possess limited familiarity with the diverse methodological frameworks prevalent in psychology. However, this limitation also reflects a failure of academic gatekeeping on the part of editors, reviewers, and editorial boards of the journals in which these studies were published, as they appear to have accepted submissions without adequate attention to methodological validity.

In interdisciplinary research, the connection between different sciences, whether through method, theory, or concept, is vital. Yet, as the Qur'an does not prescribe empirical or data-collection techniques, the integration of psychological research methods becomes doubly significant: first, because the Qur'an provides no procedural method of its own, and second, because psychology offers a rich, diverse, and evolving methodological repertoire. Consequently, although Qur'an–Psychology interdisciplinary studies have expanded considerably in recent years, a strategic shift is now required from low-efficient and generic methods toward high-efficient and theory-generative methodologies. Such a transformation would substantially enhance the productivity and problem-solving capacity of interdisciplinary research in addressing the psychological challenges faced by contemporary societies.

5.4. Methodological Chaos

At one extreme of the methodological spectrum, some authors failed even to specify the research method employed in their studies. At the

opposite extreme, others used multiple unrelated methods within a single study—an instance of what may be termed methodological chaos.

It is well established that using multiple methods can, under appropriate conditions, yield more comprehensive and nuanced insights, as it allows different facets of a problem to be examined from multiple perspectives (Darzi & Faramarz Qaramaleki 2020). However, this principle does not justify the indiscriminate combination of several incongruent methods under one research design. There are clear methodological principles that must be observed. Each research question requires a specific methodological fit; not all methods are universally applicable. Methods are paradigm-bound, rooted in distinct ontological and epistemological assumptions, which in many cases are incompatible with one another. Even when methods are compatible, their integration (as in mixed-methods research) must follow explicit methodological rules and frameworks (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2009).

Some reviewed articles claimed to employ multiple heterogeneous methods, for example, fundamental, descriptive–analytical, interdisciplinary, Delphi, and survey methods, without providing any clear rationale for their joint use. Such inconsistency reveals a lack of methodological coherence both paradigmatically and procedurally. From the reader's perspective, this manifests as a visible disorder of method, where the conceptual and procedural dissonance among the chosen methods undermines the internal validity and interpretive reliability of the study's findings. This methodological incoherence ultimately diminishes scholarly credibility and restricts the impact of Qur'an–Psychology research within the broader academic community.

5.5. Neglect of Interdisciplinary Prerequisites

The issues addressed in these articles inherently required an interdisciplinary framework that integrates insights from the Qur'an and psychology. However, interdisciplinary research carries its own epistemological, methodological, and linguistic requirements, which must be observed consistently throughout a study. Almost all the reviewed articles failed to meet these interdisciplinary prerequisites. One key methodological requirement is the interdisciplinary research process, which, according to Darzi and Faramarz Qaramaleki (2020), involves two main stages (mapping disciplinary insights and integrating them) and proceeds through seven systematic steps. Yet, none of the examined studies provided a methodologically explicit account of how their interdisciplinary research process was conducted. Similarly, none of the authors referred to the techniques for creating common ground among disciplines, as identified by

Repko (2020), nor did any article define the type of interdisciplinarity it pursued, whether unidirectional or bidirectional, or whether methodological or theoretical in nature. Moreover, there was little to no serious engagement with the epistemological challenges that arise from the interaction between the language of religion and the language of science, particularly between the language of the Qur'an and that of psychology, and the philosophical implications of this interplay.

Taken together, these findings indicate that although the authors of these articles undertook interdisciplinary research, their awareness of the methodology of interdisciplinarity remains limited and superficial. Consequently, due to the lack of attention to interdisciplinary methodological requirements, many of these studies lack the credibility and academic rigor expected by both psychologists and Qur'an scholars. Despite the considerable number of published studies on Qur'an and psychology in Iran, their practical impact on social and psychological issues remains minimal. One of the major reasons for this ineffectiveness appears to be the neglect of methodological standards specific to interdisciplinary research, which ultimately undermines the validity and societal usefulness of these studies.

6. Conclusion

In Qur'an–Psychology interdisciplinary studies, the research method plays a crucial role in ensuring methodological soundness, the credibility of findings, and the acceptance of research outcomes within both academic communities. Encouragingly, in recent years, authors have shown an increasing awareness of methodological issues in their publications. Across the 136 articles reviewed, a total of 157 methodological approaches were identified, encompassing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods designs. The descriptive–analytical method (41 cases) and qualitative content analysis (36 cases) were the most frequently employed approaches. The methodological analysis revealed several strengths, including: growing attention to paradigmatic alignment between the Qur'anic worldview and the paradigms of psychology, and methodological innovation in developing contextually relevant research designs. However, several weaknesses were also evident: overreliance on low-efficient and generic methods, methodological chaos due to the unprincipled mixing of methods, and insufficient attention to the epistemological and methodological prerequisites of interdisciplinary research.

7. Recommendations

To enhance the methodological rigor and practical impact of interdisciplinary Qur'an–Psychology research, the following measures are recommended:

- Organize methodological workshops on interdisciplinary research for university professors, seminary scholars, and postgraduate students.
- Establish academic forums and debate sessions (including written critiques within the same journals) to promote critical reflection on published works.
- Develop formal guidelines and policies for editors, editorial boards, and reviewers of academic journals regarding interdisciplinary methodological standards.
- Host national and international conferences dedicated to interdisciplinary research, particularly in the field of Qur'an and psychology.
- Found a specialized academic association or research center for Qur'an and Psychology studies.
- Produce educational resources and textbooks on the methodology of Qur'an–Psychology research, tailored for undergraduate, graduate, and advanced seminary curricula.
- Recognize and reward outstanding interdisciplinary works, providing both moral and material support to their authors.
- Conduct televised and media-based expert panels featuring senior scholars to discuss current trends and future directions in Qur'an–Psychology research.
- Implement forward-looking policy frameworks, especially through the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, to align interdisciplinary research with societal needs and ensure effective oversight of its execution.

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The Qur'anic Style in Descriptions of Natural Phenomena: Corpus-Based Feature Annotation and Decision-Tree Analysis

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ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

The present study seeks to extract stylistic features of Qur'anic verses that address natural phenomena, some of which commentators have attempted to explain in scientific terms. To this end, seventy verses containing references to natural phenomena that had been claimed to constitute scientific miracles were selected. In addition, thirty verses were chosen which describe natural phenomena but from which no falsifiable propositions can be derived. As a third category, fifty verses whose central theme is supernatural were chosen for comparison. Consequently, three categories of verses were formed and, for brevity, labeled scientific verses, natural verses, and supernatural verses. Through an examination of existing scholarship on scientific verses, features potentially serving as stylistic markers of this category were identified. A corpus of 150 verses representing the three groups was then compiled and their features annotated. To analyze this corpus and extract distinctive stylistic traits of the first category, computational methods were applied, specifically a decision-tree analysis. The findings highlight linguistic characteristics of the Qur'an in its description of natural phenomena. The features with the highest probability of occurrence in scientific verses are, in

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descending order: multiple possible syntactic analyses, greater verse length, the presence of thought-provoking expressions, the use of augmented verb forms (*al-abwāb al-mazīd*), greater variety of letters, a higher number of derivational forms, and polysemy. A common underlying implication of these traits is that such verses require further inquiry and interpretive effort to construct a meaningful understanding. The study demonstrates that verses providing precise and falsifiable descriptions of natural phenomena display distinctive stylistic features that deserve further attention, ideally through interpretive approaches that are specifically sensitive to these linguistic markers.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and science, Natural phenomena, Qur'anic style, Scientific verses, Scientific interpretation, Thematic categories of verses, Decision-Tree analysis.

1. Introduction

The Qur'an contains numerous references to natural phenomena and to certain of their properties (e.g. Q. 45:5; 88:17; 10:5; 2:164; 13:3–4). As a result, many scholars have been inclined to employ findings from modern science to better understand the Qur'an and to demonstrate that this revelation originates from the One who knows the secrets of the natural world (Ma'rifat 1997, 2: 443). Although the primary purpose of divine references to nature is to direct humankind toward sound epistemological and theological foundations, in some cases the Qur'an also provides remarkably precise descriptions of natural phenomena which cannot be overlooked.

Scientific interpretation is a hermeneutical approach aimed at uncovering relationships between Qur'anic verses and empirical findings, using the natural sciences to provide a clearer understanding of the scripture (Rezaei Esfahani 2007). In contrast to most exegetical methods, this approach has faced serious objections. The central critique of opponents concerns the language of the Qur'an, which differs fundamentally from scientific discourse. Scientific language typically excludes figurative expressions, metaphor, and hyperbole, because its primary purpose is to convey concepts with precision and clarity; such linguistic devices would compromise that aim. The Qur'an, however, frequently employs these rhetorical strategies. Consequently, opponents of scientific exegesis argue that the Qur'an does not utilize scientific language when addressing natural phenomena, and thus cannot be considered to carry either positive or negative implications for the natural or life sciences (Damanpak Moghadam 2001).

It is correct that Qur'anic discourse differs from the idiom of science. No scholar has claimed that the Qur'an is couched in scientific language. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Qur'an repeatedly mentions natural phenomena and highlights many of their features. This leaves open the question of whether the characteristics mentioned align with empirical reality. Proponents of scientific exegesis argue that divine speech about natural phenomena does indeed correspond to reality, though expressed in the Qur'an's own linguistic register rather than in the specialized idiom of contemporary science (Mazaheri Tehrani et al. 2017).

The guiding question of this article, therefore, is whether it is possible to demonstrate through a methodological analysis that the Qur'an employs a distinctive style and register when describing natural phenomena, different from other thematic domains. If one can extract and present the Qur'an's stylistic features in this regard, the central challenge in the Qur'an and science debate namely the gap in language and style can first be explained in detail and then potentially resolved (Darzi 2022).

The primary aim of this study is to uncover the Qur'an's unique language in presenting falsifiable claims concerning natural phenomena. This requires comparison of various lexical, structural, and semantic features across distinct categories of verses. Accordingly, three categories were defined:

- Scientific verses: verses that reference natural phenomena and include one or more falsifiable propositions.
- Natural verses: verses that reference natural phenomena but from which no falsifiable proposition can be extracted.
- Supernatural verses: verses whose primary theme is the supernatural, with no reference to natural phenomena.

These categories form the comparative framework of this study.

2. Literature Review

The study of the Qur'anic language and style has long been one of the most debated issues in Qur'anic scholarship and has generated a wide range of perspectives. A number of foundational works have explored this subject in depth. Among them are Izutsu's (1964) *God and Man in the Qur'an*, Saedi Roshan's (2004) *Analysis of the Qur'an's Language and Methodology of Understanding It*, Farasatkah's (1997) *Language of the Qur'an*, and Sajjadi's (2001) *Language of Religion and the Qur'an*. These works reflect different approaches to understanding the Qur'anic discourse, ranging from the view that the Qur'an employs the innate, natural language of humankind, to interpretations emphasizing either the general or

specialized linguistic conventions in which the Qur'an operates.

Alongside these monographs, various articles have sought to clarify the stylistic dimensions of Qur'anic language. For example, Shakerin (2012) argued that the Qur'an possesses a unique fourfold comprehensiveness in its linguistic structure, while Naqib and Seyyedi (2020) examined the Qur'an's language in ethical propositions and identified distinctive stylistic features in its rhetorical mode. These studies demonstrate that, although there is no single consensus on the Qur'an's linguistic identity, scholars generally acknowledge its complexity and the need for specialized approaches to its interpretation.

A second line of inquiry in the literature has concerned the relationship between the Qur'an and science. Important contributions in this field include the *Al-Jawāhir fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by al-Ṭanṭāwī al-Jawhārī (2004), a monumental 26-volume work integrating scientific discussions into Qur'anic exegesis; Maurice Bucaille's (1976) *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*; Rezaei Esfahani's *Interaction between the Qur'an and the Science* (2005) and *The Qur'an and the Natural and Human Sciences* (2010); as well as Golshani's (1998) *The Qur'an and the Natural Sciences*. Each of these works, in its own way, explores how Qur'anic descriptions of the natural world may be understood in light of scientific discovery and empirical investigation.

In addition to these books, a growing body of articles has directly engaged with the problem of scientific exegesis. Faghfoor Maghrebi (2007; 2008) analyzed the relationship between Qur'anic and scientific propositions and discussed the aims of scientific statements in the Qur'an. Dallal (2010) considered the broader historical relationship between science and Islamic thought, while Rezaei Esfahani (2007) proposed strategies to resolve apparent contradictions between scriptural and scientific knowledge.

More recently, several case-based studies have provided detailed examples of scientific interpretation. Barati and Paymard (2022) analyzed Qur'anic references to hail in Q. 24:43, offering a meteorological explanation; Moradi (2022) investigated the *ṣayḥah* as a divinely inflicted punishment in the Qur'an and sought to frame it within a scientific account; Koutb (2022) addressed the Qur'an's reference to the breaking of water in photosynthesis and transpiration as a possible scientific miracle; Ayat (2016) reflected on the physiological features of the camel from both Qur'anic and scientific perspectives; and Mazaheri Tehrani et al. (2017) proposed a typology of scientific verses, thereby classifying Qur'anic references to natural phenomena according to their interpretive potential.

From this survey, it becomes evident that the majority of prior research

has been preoccupied with identifying either extreme or moderate positions toward scientific exegesis, tracing its historical development, evaluating arguments for and against it, and offering illustrative examples. While this scholarship has made valuable contributions, it has not yet produced a systematic attempt to extract the linguistic features of Qur'anic verses that describe natural phenomena. This gap highlights the importance of the present study, which not only seeks to articulate such features but also introduces a novel methodological approach by integrating data-mining techniques with classical stylistic and exegetical analysis. By employing the decision-tree algorithm to detect recurring linguistic patterns, this study provides a replicable framework capable of uncovering latent structures in Qur'anic discourse that have not been addressed in earlier works.

3. Methodology

The present study was designed to identify the linguistic features of Qur'anic verses addressing natural phenomena that contain falsifiable propositions. To this end, representative samples of verses were drawn from three categories_scientific, natural, and supernatural_and then analyzed through computational methods. Specifically, a decision-tree algorithm was employed to determine the features most predictive of a verse belonging to the scientific category. This section describes the methodology in detail.

3.1. Decision Trees

Decision trees constitute a widely used method for classification and prediction (Ahmad & Dey 2007). Decision analysis is employed to identify the strategy that is most likely to achieve a given goal, while decision trees can also be used to represent conditional probabilities. They require a training dataset in which all instances are characterized by a fixed set of features and a target class label. Decision trees are valued for their ease of implementation and their ability to generate transparent “if-then” classification rules (Tseng et al. 2015; Rokach 2023). Because classification methods rely on pre-specified class labels, the categories must be determined in advance. In this study, the three predetermined categories were scientific verses, natural verses, and supernatural verses (Ghazanfari et al. 2008).

3.2. Decision-Tree Algorithms

All decision-tree algorithms operate in a top-down manner. The

algorithm begins with a dataset whose category labels are already known and seeks to construct a tree capable of predicting the class label of new instances. At each stage, the algorithm poses a series of questions about the dataset; depending on the answers, new branches are created. If the questions are well chosen, the classification of new instances can be achieved using only a small number of questions.

Visually, the tree consists of nodes and branches, where internal nodes represent features, branches represent conditions on those features, and terminal nodes (leaves) represent predicted class labels. The central task in building a decision tree is to identify which feature to use at each node. The optimal split occurs when the resulting subsets are as homogeneous as possible with respect to class membership. This is typically measured by “diversity” (or impurity): high diversity indicates that a subset contains many different classes, whereas low diversity indicates that a subset is dominated by a single class. The algorithm evaluates all candidate features using a diversity metric (such as entropy or Gini index) and selects the feature that minimizes diversity. This process continues recursively until further splitting does not reduce diversity, at which point a terminal leaf is created (Ghazanfari et al. 2008).

3.3. *Cross-Validation*

Cross-validation is a method of model evaluation that tests how well the results of a statistical analysis generalize to unseen data. It is particularly useful in predictive modeling, as it provides an estimate of a model’s real-world performance. In this method, the dataset is divided into complementary subsets, with one subset used for training and the other for testing. To reduce variance, the process is repeated multiple times with different partitions, and the results are averaged.

In k -fold cross-validation, the dataset is partitioned into k subsets. Each subset is used once as a validation set, while the remaining $k - 1$ subsets are used for training. This process is repeated k times, ensuring that each observation is used both for training and for validation. The average performance across the k trials serves as the final estimate of the model’s accuracy. Typically, 5-fold or 10-fold cross-validation is used. In this study, 4-fold cross-validation was employed: the dataset was randomly partitioned into four subsets, with 75% of the data used for training and 25% for testing in each fold. This ensured that all 150 verses in the dataset were used in both training and testing, thereby increasing the robustness of the model.

3.4. Rule Extraction from Decision Trees

Knowledge represented in a decision tree can be expressed as classification rules in “if-then” form. Each path from the root to a leaf corresponds to one rule, with the conditions encountered along the path forming the antecedent (“if” clause) and the class label at the leaf forming the consequent (“then” clause). Features closer to the root generally have greater predictive importance. This property can be leveraged to identify which features are most characteristic of the scientific verses.

3.5. Features of the Verses

To identify the relevant features, initially, seventy verses widely recognized as “scientific,” thirty “natural” verses, and fifty “supernatural” verses were selected. Subsequently, a wide range of linguistic, structural, and semantic features were identified from the literature on scientific verses. Additional general features were also included, yielding a total of 23 features. Each verse in the corpus was annotated with values for these features, and the dataset was analyzed using the Orange data-mining software.⁴⁶

It is important to note that while many of the selected features were motivated by prior discussions of scientific verses, their inclusion was not limited to such cases. Instead, the expectation was that the computational method would determine which features were statistically most significant in distinguishing the scientific category. Together, these 23 features provided the basis for computational analysis. Each verse was coded according to these criteria, and the decision-tree algorithm was then applied to identify which features most strongly predicted membership in the scientific category. Below, the 23 features are defined along with the sources from which they were derived.

3.5.1. Polysemy

Polysemy occurs when a single word or phrase conveys multiple simultaneous meanings, all of which may be intended (Tayyeb Hosseini 2008). This feature was identified in Qur'anic studies through works such as *Qāmūs al-Qur'ān* (Qurashi 1992) and *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān* (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1992).

46- The dataset prepared for this research is available on the website of the Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies Research Institute of Shahid Beheshti University: quran.sbu.ac.ir/peykare

3.5.2. Ambiguity in Pronoun Reference

At times, the antecedent of a pronoun may be open to several possibilities, leading to interpretive indeterminacy (al-Suyūṭī 2001). This feature was noted in major exegeses including *al-Mīzān* (Tabataba'i 1996), *Tafsīr Nemūneh* (Makarem Shirazi et al. 1992), *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (al-Rāzī 1999), and *al-Kashshāf* (al-Zamakhsharī 1987).

5.3.3. Multiplicity of Exegetical Readings

Verses containing falsifiable descriptions often attract diverse exegetical readings across time. This feature is especially highlighted in *Al-Mīzān* (Tabataba'i 1996), *Tafsīr Nemūneh* (Makarem Shirazi et al. 1992), *Al-Kashshāf* (al-Zamakhsharī 1987), and *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (al-Rāzī 1999), as well as in *Treatise on Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an* (Talebpour et al. 2024).

5.3.4. Syntactic Multiplicity

Certain verses allow for multiple grammatical parses, a phenomenon frequently addressed in classical grammar and interpretations (al-Suyūṭī 2001). The feature was identified through exegetical works such as *Al-Mīzān* (Tabataba'i 1996), *Tafsīr Nemūneh* (Makarem Shirazi et al. 1992), *Al-Kashshāf* (al-Zamakhsharī 1987), and *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (al-Rāzī 1999).

5.3.5. Rhetorical Devices

The Qur'an frequently employs rhetorical figures such as simile, metaphor, allegory, irony, and ambiguity (Shaker 2003; Tayyeb Hosseini 2008). These were tracked across exegeses *Al-Mīzān*, *Tafsīr Nemūneh*, *Al-Kashshāf*, and *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* as well as the *Qur'anic Comprehensive Website* (quran.inoor.ir).

5.3.6. Thought-Provoking Expressions

Expressions that explicitly call the reader to reflection, such as *a-lam tara* and *a-wa-lam yara* (Did you not see?), mark certain verses as cognitively engaging. This feature was directly extracted from the Qur'an.

5.3.7. Tone

Verses may convey either a tone of warning (*indhār*) or encouragement (*tabshīr*). Classification of tone was made by analyzing the Qur'an contextually.

5.3.8. Oaths

The Qur'an often introduces natural phenomena by swearing oaths upon them. The presence of oaths was identified directly in the Qur'an.

5.3.9. Mention of the Term *Āyah* or *Āyāt*

Occurrences of the terms *āyah* or *āyāt* were directly counted in the Muṣḥaf.

5.3.10. Emphasis (*Tawkīd*)

This feature measures the presence of emphatic forms such as *inna*, *la-* of emphasis, repetition, and intensified structures. The coding followed Rabbani's (2003) classification of Qur'anic emphatic devices.

5.3.11. Meccan/Medinan Classification

Verses were categorized according to whether they were revealed in Mecca or Medina, based on Ma'rifat's (2008) *Al-tamhīd fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*.

5.3.12. Voice, Causatives, and Passive Constructions

The presence of passive verbs, causative voice, or figurative assignment of agency was analyzed with reference to Aisha Abd al-Rahman's (1997) *Al-I'jāz al-Bayānī lil-Qur'ān*.

5.3.13. Address to People of Reason

Expressions like *li-qawmin ya 'qilūn* (for people who think) or *li-qawmin ya 'lamūn* (for people who know) indicate direct appeals to rational reflection. These were identified directly in the Muṣḥaf.

5.3.14. Position of the Verse in the Surah

Each verse's position (early, middle, or late in a surah) was coded by dividing each surah into equal parts and recording the verse's location in the Muṣḥaf.

5.3.15. Total Number of Prepositions

The number of prepositions (*ḥurūf al-jarr*) in each verse was measured using the *Qur'anic Comprehensive website*.

5.3.16. Augmented Verb Forms (*al-Abwāb al-Mazīd*)

Morphological augmentation in trilateral roots was analyzed to detect

semantic intensification, following Ma'rifat's (2008) discussions in *Al-Tamhīd fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*.

5.3.17. Use of Verbal Nouns (*al-Maṣḍar*)

Instances where verbal nouns replace participles (for emphasis or intensification) were identified, with guidance from Ibn 'Āshūr (2000).

5.3.18. Number of Particles Similar to Verbs (*Ḥurūf al-Mushabbaha bil-Fi'l*).

Occurrences of particles like *inna* and its sisters were recorded for each verse.

5.3.19. Number of Verbs

The total count of finite verbs per verse was extracted using the Muṣḥaf and digital parsing tools.

5.3.20. Number of Derived Words

Lexical derivations (from trilateral or quadrilateral roots) were counted for each verse.

5.3.21. Verse Length (in Words)

Word counts were calculated from the Muṣḥaf.

5.3.22. Diversity of Letters (with Repetition)

The range of different Arabic letters used within each verse was measured using the *Qur'anic Comprehensive Website*.

5.3.23. Verse Length (in Characters)

The total character count of each verse was computed with the *Noor Comprehensive Tafṣīr Software*.

4. Analysis of Features across Scientific, Natural, and Supernatural Verses

After annotating the 150 verses with values for the 23 features described above, the dataset was subjected to computational analysis. The central objective was to identify which features most reliably distinguished the scientific verses i.e., those containing falsifiable propositions about natural

phenomena, from natural and supernatural verses.

4.1. Construction of the Decision Tree

To extract the stylistic features of scientific verses, a decision tree was constructed with a maximum depth of five levels. This ensured that the resulting model would be sufficiently detailed to capture complex interactions among features, while remaining interpretable.

The input consisted of seventy scientific verses, thirty natural verses, and fifty supernatural verses. Prior to training, the dataset was randomized to avoid order effects, ensuring that the model did not inadvertently learn from the sequence of the verses. As described earlier, four-fold cross-validation was used, with 75 percent of the verses allocated to the training set and 25 percent to the test set in each fold.

The procedure yielded four decision trees with varying accuracy levels. The model achieving the highest accuracy (75 percent) was selected as the final tree for interpretation. Figure 1 represents the simplified structure of the decision tree. Internal nodes indicate features, and branches represent conditions on those features. Terminal leaves correspond to the predicted category (scientific, natural, supernatural).

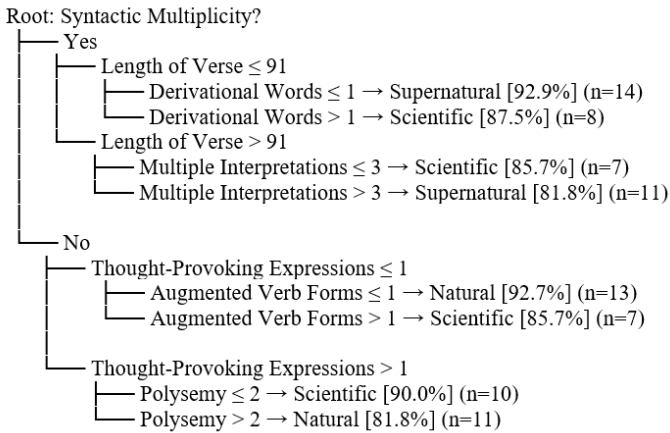


Figure 1. Decision Tree with 75% Accuracy

4.2. Rule Extraction

From the decision tree, a series of “if–then” rules were derived. These

rules were classified according to their strength and clarity:

- **Golden Rule:** If a verse exhibits multiple possible syntactic analyses *and* the verse is long, it is very likely to belong to the scientific category.
- **Silver Rule:** If a verse lacks syntactic multiplicity but contains a thought-provoking expression (e.g., “Do you not see?”) and also uses augmented verb forms, it is likely to belong to the scientific category.
- **Bronze Rule:** If a verse has syntactic multiplicity, then a combination of verse length, letter variety, and number of derivational forms moderately predicts its classification as scientific.
- **Brass Rule:** If a verse lacks syntactic multiplicity but contains a thought-provoking expression and polysemy, it may belong to the scientific category.
- **Copper Rule:** If a verse lacks syntactic multiplicity and does not contain thought-provoking expressions, but does include augmented verb forms and a high number of derivational words, it may still belong to the scientific category.

These rules show that no single feature is sufficient to classify a verse as scientific; rather, combinations of features are predictive.

4.3. *Salient Features of Scientific Verses*

The decision tree identified the following features as the most significant predictors of scientific verses, in descending order of importance:

1. Multiple syntactic analyses
2. Verse length (measured by number of words or letters).
3. Presence of thought-provoking expressions
4. Use of augmented verb forms
5. Variety of letters (alphabetical diversity)
6. Number of derivational words (participles, verbal nouns, etc.)
7. Polysemy

Taken together, these features strongly suggest that verses describing natural phenomena in falsifiable terms are stylistically distinct.

4.4. *Interpretive Implications*

An important outcome of this analysis is the recognition that such features impose interpretive demands on exegetes. For example, syntactic multiplicity requires advanced grammatical analysis; polysemy necessitates consideration of multiple semantic possibilities; and the presence of thought-provoking expressions directly calls upon the audience to reflect and engage in intellectual effort. The Qur'an's stylistic strategy, therefore, not only conveys information about natural phenomena but also deliberately constructs a discourse that invites continuous inquiry.

5. *Conclusion*

This study set out to identify the distinctive linguistic features of Qur'anic verses that describe natural phenomena in falsifiable terms, verses that some exegetes have labeled as "scientific." By analyzing a corpus of 150 verses (70 scientific, 30 natural, and 50 supernatural) across 23 linguistic, structural, and semantic features, and by applying a decision-tree algorithm with four-fold cross-validation, the study uncovered systematic stylistic patterns.

The analysis demonstrated that the most significant features characterizing scientific verses, in descending order of predictive power, are Syntactic multiplicity (the of multiple possible grammatical analyses); Verse length (with longer verses being more likely to belong to the scientific category); presence of thought-provoking expressions; Augmented verb forms (*al-abwāb al-mazīd*), which add semantic intensity; Variety of letters, reflecting greater lexical diversity; Number of derivational words, indicating morphological richness; and Polysemy, where a single expression carries multiple simultaneous meanings. These features, when combined, distinguish scientific verses from natural and supernatural verses. Importantly, the study showed that no single feature is decisive on its own; rather, it is the combination of features that signals the distinctiveness of the scientific category. The derived classification rules (Golden, Silver, Bronze, Brass, and Copper) illustrated how different pathways of features could converge on the identification of scientific verses.

The interpretive implications of these findings are significant. The presence of multiple syntactic and semantic possibilities, along with thought-provoking language, demonstrates that scientific verses demand sustained intellectual engagement and exegetical effort. In other words, the Qur'an's discourse on natural phenomena is deliberately constructed to stimulate reflection, inquiry, and reinterpretation as human knowledge

advances.

This study also highlights the value of integrating computational methods with traditional Qur'anic scholarship. By employing decision-tree analysis, it became possible to uncover latent structures in the Qur'an's stylistic patterns that might otherwise remain unnoticed. The findings thus contribute not only to the field of Qur'anic stylistics but also to the ongoing debate over the relationship between the Qur'an and science.

Future research could expand this approach by enlarging the corpus to include additional categories of verses, applying alternative machine-learning algorithms, or conducting comparative studies with other religious texts. Such efforts would further illuminate how sacred discourse encodes complex layers of meaning, and how computational linguistics can enrich the hermeneutics of scripture.

In conclusion, the study confirms that Qur'anic verses addressing natural phenomena with falsifiable descriptions possess a distinctive linguistic style that sets them apart from other categories. These features, far from being incidental, represent a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at inviting human beings into deeper intellectual and spiritual engagement with the signs of God in creation.

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ء	'	خ	kh	ش	sh	غ	gh	ن	n
ب	b	د	d	ص	ṣ	ف	f	ه	h
ت	t	ذ	dh	ض	ḍ	ق	q	و	w
ث	th	ر	r	ط	ṭ	ک	k	ی	y
ج	j	ز	z	ظ	ẓ	ل	l	ة	h
ح	ḥ	س	s	ع	'	م	m		

Short Vowels	
اَ	a
اُ	u
اِ	i

Long Vowels	
اَآ	ā
اُū	ū
اِī	ī

Diphthongs	
او	aw
ای	ay
یِی	iyy
وُؤ	uww

Persian Letters	
پ	p
چ	ch
ژ	zh
گ	g

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