

QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS: A THEMATIC INTERPRETATION STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Research Objectives - This study aims to examine the Qur'anic perspective on Human Rights (HR) and identify principles that can guide their implementation in modern society.

Method - This study employs a normative qualitative approach using the thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) method. Data were collected through library research on the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentaries, *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* literature, and human rights references, and analyzed using thematic analysis and interpretive synthesis.

Research Findings - The findings reveal that the Qur'an recognizes human rights as inherent to human dignity bestowed by Allah. Key principles include the right to life, justice, freedom of religion, equality, education, and socio-economic protection. These principles form an integrated framework aimed at safeguarding human welfare and dignity.

Theory and Practical Implications - The study demonstrates the compatibility between Qur'anic human rights values and universal humanitarian principles, providing a foundation for inclusive public policies, education, and legal systems.

Novelty - This study integrates Qur'anic human rights principles within a thematic interpretive framework based on *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, highlighting the balance between rights, obligations, and social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights (HR) continue to be a global issue of increasing relevance within contemporary social, political, and legal dynamics. In recent years, various international reports have highlighted growing attention to the protection of vulnerable groups, freedom of religion, gender equality, and social justice amid complex social transformations. Discussions concerning human rights are no longer confined to the domain of positive law but have expanded to encompass ethical, cultural, and religious dimensions as sources of legitimacy for humanitarian values. Within Muslim societies, the study of human rights has become increasingly important due to the need to establish a dialogue between universal human rights principles and Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an. Previous studies have demonstrated that values such as human dignity, justice, freedom, and equality possess strong foundations within Islamic teachings (Kamali, 2003; Auda, 2008). Furthermore, international scholarship has emphasized that religion can serve as a significant instrument in strengthening respect for human rights through the internalization of universal moral and ethical values (Bielefeldt, 2011; An-Na'im, 2008).

Nevertheless, the relationship between modern human rights concepts and the teachings of the Qur'an remains an unresolved academic debate. Some studies argue that the human rights principles embedded in the Qur'an are substantially compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), particularly regarding the rights to life, justice, and freedom of religion (Saeed, 2006; Abu Zayd, 2004). However, other scholars criticize this perspective for being overly normative and for generalizing without adequately considering the epistemological differences between the secular human rights paradigm and the revelation-based ethical framework of Islam (Hallaq, 1997; An-

Na'im, 2008). This research gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive study capable of explaining how the Qur'an constructs the concept of human rights through an interpretative approach that takes into account historical contexts, the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-shari'ah*), and the challenges of modern life.

In addition, most previous studies have examined human rights primarily from the perspective of Islamic law (*fiqh*), while research specifically employing the thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawdu'i*) approach to map human rights principles within the Qur'an remains relatively limited. In fact, thematic interpretation enables a more systematic and integrative exploration of human rights values dispersed across various Qur'anic verses. Critiques of earlier studies also suggest that many investigations remain confined to a normative-textual level without adequately explaining the practical relevance of these principles in addressing contemporary issues such as discrimination, intolerance, social inequality, and the protection of vulnerable groups (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2005). According to the theory of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, the primary objectives of Islamic law are the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, all of which are substantively linked to the protection of fundamental human rights (Auda, 2008). Therefore, an approach is required that not only understands the Qur'anic text literally but also captures the universal values embedded within it in order to address the needs of modern society.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to integrate the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an with the perspectives of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* and contemporary human rights discourse within a comprehensive analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus either on normative aspects or on conceptual debates between Islamic and modern human rights, this research seeks to identify the human rights principles contained in the Qur'an while simultaneously explaining their relevance to contemporary social challenges. Consequently, this study not only offers a textual understanding of human rights in the Qur'an but also provides an ethical and practical foundation for the development of public policies, educational initiatives, and legal enforcement mechanisms oriented toward the protection of human dignity.

This study aims to analyze how the Qur'an conceptualizes and affirms human rights and to identify the human rights principles that may serve as guidelines for modern society through a thematic interpretative approach. It also seeks to explain the relationship between human rights values in the Qur'an and the objectives of Islamic law, which are directed toward human welfare and well-being. Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations, as it employs a normative qualitative approach focusing on the analysis of Qur'anic texts and supporting literature without incorporating empirical data regarding the implementation of human rights within Muslim societies. Therefore, future research is expected to expand this study through empirical approaches that examine the application of Qur'an-based human rights principles across various social, legal, and public policy contexts.

METHOD

Served as the primary source of analysis for identifying human rights principles, including the right to life, justice, freedom of religion, equality, education, and social protection. The thematic interpretation method was chosen because it enables researchers to examine Qur'anic verses dispersed across different chapters yet connected by a common theme, thereby generating a comprehensive and contextual understanding of human rights from an Islamic perspective (Saeed, 2006). Similar approaches have been widely employed in studies of Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic law to explain the relevance of Qur'anic teachings to contemporary social issues (Az-Zuhaili, 1986).

Data were collected through library research by reviewing various primary and secondary sources relevant to the research theme. Primary data consisted of Qur'anic verses related to the concept of human rights, while secondary data were obtained from classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsir*), hadith literature, works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, books on Islamic law, and scholarly articles discussing human rights from both Islamic and international perspectives. Library research was selected because it allows researchers to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data regarding the normative concepts that constitute the focus of the study (Zed,

2018). Furthermore, the use of diverse literature sources was intended to strengthen the validity of interpretations and enrich perspectives in understanding the relationship between Qur'anic teachings and modern human rights concepts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The first stage involved identifying and selecting Qur'anic verses related to human rights. The second stage consisted of categorizing the verses according to major themes, such as the right to life, justice, freedom of religion, equality, the right to education, and social protection. The third stage involved interpreting the verses by considering linguistic aspects, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), and the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), ensuring that the interpretation was not merely textual but also contextual. Subsequently, an interpretive synthesis was conducted by integrating the findings from the analysis of Qur'anic verses with supporting literature to construct a comprehensive understanding of human rights from the Qur'anic perspective and their relevance to modern society (Auda, 2008; Saeed, 2006). Operationally, the research process was carried out through the stages of problem identification, data collection, thematic classification, thematic interpretation analysis, integration with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* perspective, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Right to Life as the Foundation of Human Rights. The findings of the thematic analysis indicate that the right to life (*ḥaqq al-ḥayāt*) constitutes the most fundamental human rights principle in the Qur'an. This principle is reflected in Qur'an 5:32, which states that the killing of an innocent person is equivalent to killing all humankind. This affirmation demonstrates that human life possesses the highest value and must be protected regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, race, or social status. From the perspective of thematic interpretation, this verse not only prohibits murder but also emphasizes the collective obligation to preserve and protect human life. This finding is consistent with the view of Kamali (2003), who argues that the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafṣ*) is one of the primary objectives of Islamic law and serves as the foundation for safeguarding other human rights.

This study further reveals that the concept of the right to life in the Qur'an extends beyond mere physical protection. It encompasses the right to security, health, and a social environment that supports human survival and well-being. This finding expands upon the work of An-Na'im (2008), which primarily emphasizes the compatibility between Islamic and international human rights frameworks. Through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, this study demonstrates that the protection of human life forms part of an ethical system that integrates individual rights with social responsibilities. Therefore, the right to life in the Qur'an is not merely a legal principle but also embodies profound moral and spiritual dimensions.

The Principles of Justice and Equality in the Qur'anic Perspective. Analysis of Qur'an 4:58 indicates that justice (*al-'adl*) is a central principle governing social, political, and legal relations within society. The verse commands that trusts be rendered to those entitled to them and that judgments be made fairly. The findings demonstrate that the concept of justice in the Qur'an is not limited to judicial matters but extends to all aspects of human life. Justice is positioned as an instrument for ensuring the fulfillment of individual rights while simultaneously maintaining social order. This finding supports Hallaq's (1997) argument that the Islamic legal tradition is founded upon substantive justice, with human welfare serving as the ultimate objective of the law.

In addition to justice, the findings reveal that the Qur'an strongly emphasizes the principle of human equality, as expressed in Qur'an 49:13. The verse affirms that human dignity is not determined by race, ethnicity, gender, or social status, but rather by moral character and piety. This finding reinforces the work of Barlas (2002), who argues that the Qur'an embodies egalitarian principles that reject all forms of discrimination and group superiority. Nevertheless, this study finds that equality in the Qur'an is not identical to the concept of absolute sameness found in some modern human rights discourses. Rather, equality is understood as the recognition of equal human dignity before God, accompanied by acknowledgment of social differences that remain grounded in justice and respect for individual rights.

Freedom of Religion as Recognition of Human Autonomy. Based on the analysis of Qur'an 2:256, this study finds that the Qur'an provides strong recognition of freedom of religion. The principle that "there shall be no compulsion in religion" demonstrates that belief belongs to the personal sphere and cannot be imposed by individuals, groups, or the state. This finding indicates that religious freedom in the Qur'an is rooted in respect for the human capacity to choose and to bear responsibility for those choices. This perspective aligns with the findings of Saeed (2006), who emphasizes that freedom of religion constitutes one of the universal values embedded within the Qur'an and remains highly relevant in contemporary pluralistic societies.

The findings further indicate that religious freedom in the Qur'an extends beyond the freedom to choose one's beliefs and includes respect for diversity and peaceful coexistence. This conclusion differs from some previous studies that primarily focus on normative debates concerning the relationship between Islam and human rights. Through the thematic interpretation approach, this study demonstrates that freedom of religion in the Qur'an possesses a social orientation aimed at fostering harmony and tolerance within multicultural societies. Consequently, this principle remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges related to intolerance and identity-based conflicts.

Socio-Economic Rights and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups. Analysis of Qur'an 2:177 reveals that the Qur'an places considerable emphasis on socio-economic rights. The verse highlights the importance of wealth distribution to vulnerable groups such as orphans, the poor, travelers, and others in need of assistance. The findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic concept of human rights is not confined to civil and political rights but also encompasses economic and social rights as integral components of human dignity. This finding supports Auda's (2008) argument that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* functions to ensure human welfare through the protection of multidimensional fundamental rights.

Unlike liberal approaches that often prioritize individual rights, the Qur'an situates socio-economic rights within a framework of collective responsibility. Social welfare, therefore, is not solely the responsibility of the state but also a moral obligation of society. The novelty of this study lies in its explanation that socio-economic rights in the Qur'an form part of an ethical system that integrates spiritual, social, and economic dimensions. This approach demonstrates that social justice in Islam is intended not only to alleviate poverty but also to preserve human dignity in a comprehensive manner.

The Right to Education as an Instrument of Human Empowerment. The findings indicate that Qur'an 96:1–5 serves as the normative foundation for recognizing the right to education in Islam. The command to read, which constituted the first revelation, signifies that knowledge is the primary instrument for human development. The analysis suggests that education in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely a means of acquiring skills but also a process of moral, spiritual, and intellectual formation. This finding is consistent with Halstead (2004), who argues that Islamic education aims to develop individuals who are both knowledgeable and morally upright.

The study further finds that the right to education occupies a strategic position because it serves as a prerequisite for the realization of other rights. Individuals with access to education are better equipped to understand their rights and responsibilities, participate in social life, and advocate for justice within society. This finding offers a new perspective by demonstrating that education in the Qur'an is not only a fundamental right but also an empowering instrument that strengthens the implementation of human rights as a whole. In this regard, education functions as a bridge between the normative values of the Qur'an and contemporary social realities.

Human Rights in the Qur'an: A Holistic and Multidimensional Framework. Overall, the findings demonstrate that human rights from the Qur'anic perspective are holistic and multidimensional. The rights to life, justice, equality, freedom of religion, socio-economic welfare, and education are not viewed as isolated entities but rather as interconnected values aimed at preserving human dignity. Unlike some previous studies that primarily emphasize normative dimensions or debates between Islamic and Western conceptions of human rights, this research shows that the thematic interpretation approach effectively reveals the interrelationship among

human rights principles within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. These findings suggest that the Qur'an not only provides a theological foundation for human rights but also offers an ethical and practical framework that remains relevant for addressing contemporary social, legal, and humanitarian challenges.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Qur'an views Human Rights (HR) as inherent rights bestowed upon every human being by virtue of their dignity as creations of Allah SWT. Through a thematic interpretation approach, this study identifies several fundamental human rights principles affirmed in the Qur'an, including the right to life (*ḥaqq al-ḥayāt*), justice (*al-'adl*), freedom of religion, human equality, the right to education, as well as socio-economic rights and the protection of vulnerable groups. These principles do not exist independently but are interconnected within a unified framework of values aimed at preserving human dignity and promoting human welfare. Therefore, the Qur'an not only provides a normative foundation for the protection of human rights but also offers practical guidance that can be implemented through legal systems, public policies, education, and equitable as well as inclusive social development in modern societies.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research demonstrating that human rights values possess a strong foundation within Islamic teachings (Kamali, 2003; Saeed, 2006; Auda, 2008). However, the novelty of this research lies in its integration of various human rights principles dispersed throughout the Qur'an into a single thematic interpretative framework oriented toward *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Unlike previous studies that tend to discuss human rights in a fragmented manner or focus primarily on conceptual debates between Islamic and modern human rights perspectives, this study demonstrates that the Qur'an presents a holistic, multidimensional, and contemporary-relevant conception of human rights. Consequently, human rights from the Qur'anic perspective should not be understood merely as a set of individual rights, but rather as a comprehensive value system that balances rights, obligations, and social responsibilities in order to foster a just, dignified, and civilized human society.

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