



## Formulating The Concept of Mufassir: A Critical Study

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### Abstract

Establishing the concept of a mufassir is an important issue that greatly influences the understanding of the character of those who perform tafsir as well as the criteria and distinctive features of their work. This discussion is also related to determining the levels of mufassir and the criteria that distinguish who belongs to this category and who does not. Unfortunately, this concept has not received adequate attention in heritage studies, and contemporary efforts to explore this issue are still limited and often face various challenges. This article aims to present a critical analysis in formulating the concept of mufassir, so that the forms of tafsir work that qualify someone to be recognized as a mufassir can be identified. Furthermore, this article will discuss the categorization of mufassir and provide a general explanation of their levels based on the methods they employ. This research is based on library study with a critical analytical approach. Among the results of this research, there are two main points: (1) The work of tafsir has various forms and does not exist at the same level, which generally includes various categories such as author of tafsir works, explainer of the difference between correct and weak understandings, compiler of tafsir materials, summarizer of tafsir works, explainer of tafsir works, teacher of tafsir, and transmitter of tafsir; (2) The use of the term mufassir allows for a lot of tolerance, where generally mufassir can be categorized into two groups, namely practical mufassir and participatory mufassir

**Keywords:** The forms of tafsir work; The concept of mufassir; Levels of mufassir; A critical study

### Article Info

Article History:

Received: 2025-05-31 Accepted: 2025-06-15 Publish: 2025-06-30



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:10.51590/waraqat.v10i1.1081

## Introduction

The Quran, the principal revelation from Allah in Arabic, possesses profound and diverse meanings. Consequently, understanding is essential to elucidate the significance of the words in the Quran.<sup>1</sup> Tafsir is one of the sciences most intimately associated with the Qur'an. The term tafsir etymologically signifies to explain and elucidate.<sup>2</sup> Al-Jurjâni asserted that the etymology of the term "tafsir" encompasses the connotations of 'opening' and 'giving birth'. Tafsir refers to the elucidation of the meanings of verses, their context, associated narratives, and the reasons for their revelation, articulated with clarity and precision.<sup>3</sup>

According to Az-Zarkasyî,<sup>4</sup> tafsir is defined as the elucidation of the meanings of the Qur'an and the extraction of the rules and wisdom embedded within it. Sheikh al-Thahir al-Jazâ'iri<sup>5</sup> asserts that tafsir primarily seeks to elucidate terms that are challenging for the audience to comprehend. This explanation is achieved by elucidating the term's meaning, either by referencing its synonyms, analogous phrases, or through cues that direct it to the intended interpretation.

The discipline of Tafsir aims to elucidate and comprehend the entirety of the Quran's contents.<sup>6</sup> Tafsir can be comprehended as the interplay between the Quranic text, which possesses multiple interpretations, and human understanding, while also addressing evolving and dynamic issues in life. Consequently, the depth and importance of the Quranic text are significantly influenced by the scholastic accomplishments of its interpreters. As interpreters' knowledge and expertise expand, the meanings generated become more profound and substantial.<sup>7</sup>

Tafsir fundamentally involves elucidating the meanings of words in the Qur'an, so clarifying its intent and purpose for comprehension and application. Tafsir fundamentally involves a gradual process of applying the Qur'an's teachings to everyday life, and authentic tafsir will persistently evolve with the advent of new information to yield superior tafsir works.<sup>8</sup>

Despite variations in terminology concerning the understanding of tafsir among scholars, there is a general consensus on its significant benefits. Comprehending tafsir enables one to prevent errors in the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Most scholars assert that tafsir is distinct from ta'wil. Tafsir is defined as the elucidation of a term, which occurs in the intellect through comprehension, whereas ta'wil pertains to the intrinsic nature of something that exists in reality, rather than in the mind<sup>9</sup>. Some assert that tafsir pertains to the elucidation of words and terminology, whereas ta'wil pertains to the interpretation of meanings and sentence structure<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> I Jaya, "Tafsir Muqaran," *At-Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 1, no. 1 (2016): 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rumba Triana, "Desain Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir," *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2019): 198–218, <https://doi.org/10.30868/AT.V4I02.598>.

<sup>3</sup> Ali as-Syarif Al-Jurjâni, *Al-Ta'rîfât*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1983), p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Badruddin Al-Zarkasyi, *Al-Burhân Fî Ulûm Al-Qur'an*, ed. Abu al-Fadhl Al-Dimyathi (Cairo: Dâr al-Hadits, 2006), vol. 2, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> Thahir Al-Jazâ'iri, *Taujîh Al-Nazhar Ilâ Ushul Al-Atsar*, ed. Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 1st ed. (Aleppo: Maktabah al-Mathbu'at Al-Islamiyyah, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> Badruzzaman Muhammad Yunus, *Perkembangan Tafsir Al-Qur'an Dari Klasik Hingga Modern* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Eni Rahman, Abdul and M. Yunus, Badruzzaman and Zulaeha, *Corak Tasawuf Dalam Kitab-Kitab Tafsir Karya K.H. Ahmad Sanusi*, 1st ed. (Bandung: Prodi S2 Studi Agama-Agama UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Agus Salim Hasanudin and Eni Zulaiha, "Hakikat Tafsir Menurut Para Mufasssir," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 2 (June 7, 2022): 203–10, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i2.18318>.

<sup>9</sup> Fahd. Al-Rumi, *Bubuts Fî Ushul Al-Tafsir Wa Manahijuhu*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Tawbah, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Manna' Al-Qatthan, *Mabahits Fî Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Maktabah ar-Risalah, 2016), p. 336.

An individual who undertakes the task of tafsir is commonly referred to as a mufassir. A mufassir is a person who elucidates the Qur'an. The definition of the idea of mufassir is crucial, as it influences the comprehension of the attributes of individuals who engage in tafsir, along with the standards and qualities of their activity.<sup>11</sup> The discourse concerning the classifications of mufassir and the criteria that ascertain membership within this group is likewise crucial to this matter. This idea has not garnered adequate attention in *turats* studies, and current endeavours to investigate it remain constrained and frequently encounter numerous problems<sup>12</sup>.

This article seeks to enhance comprehension of the idea of mufassir. This article will delineate the methodologies employed to elucidate the notion and define its parameters. We shall also present diverse sorts of tafsir that qualify an individual to be acknowledged as a mufassir. The classification of mufassir will be examined broadly, with an explanation of their levels according to the methods they employ.

This study is a library-based investigation of several literatures, both classical and contemporary, aimed at critically determining who qualifies as a mufassir, depending on the nature of their interpretative activity, whether remote or proximate.

This essay employs a critical analytical method, wherein the author aggregates both classical and contemporary writings, which written in Arabic, that examine the definition of a mufassir and the characteristics of the tafsir produced by a mufassir. The works are thereafter studied and compared against known theory and actual societal issues using a critical method.

This article is methodically segmented into two significant sections; the initial section pertains to a critical analysis of the endeavors to define and establish the concept of Mufassir, wherein the conclusions drawn from both classical and modern studies regarding the definition of mufassir and the nature of a mufassir's work are encapsulated, whether sourced from prominent tafsir texts or from the domains of *ulum al-Qur'an* and *ushûl al-Tafsir*. In the subsequent section, the proposed methodology for defining the notion of mufassir is analyzed, highlighting the originality of the research findings.

## Result and Discussion

### A Critical Review of the Efforts to Establish and Define the Concept of Mufassir

The study of *turath* exegesis encompasses numerous definitions that elucidate the concept of exegesis and its parameters (Islami, 2022). Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding the term 'mufassir' reveals solely the explicit references to mufassirs in various classifications, together with deliberations on the requisite criteria, etiquette, and responsibilities that a mufassir must uphold. This is typically located in the introductions of various tafsirs and texts on Quranic studies (Al-Zarkasyi, 1430 H; Al-Suyuthi, 1434 H).

Consequently, it may be asserted that the examination of *turats* revealed no explicit definition of mufassir, as demonstrated by several researchers (Al-Harbi, 1417 H). Nonetheless, the existing knowledge, particularly that contained in biographical texts and classifications of mufassir (Al-Yamani, 2024), is highly valuable in delineating the parameters of this notion from the academics' viewpoints. They offer insights into the criteria for identifying a mufassir by analysing the qualifications of the mufassirs documented in those texts.

Nevertheless, elucidations regarding the core of tafsir frequently do not disclose the authentic nature of tafsir's function, leading to inquiries about whether individuals engaged in diverse

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<sup>11</sup> M. Agus Yusron, "Memahami Tafsir Dan Urgensinya," *ZAD Al-Mufassirin* 4, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 61–81, <https://doi.org/10.55759/zam.v4i1.35>.

<sup>12</sup> Khalil Mahmud Al-Yamani, *Ta'sîs 'Ilm Al-Tafsîr Muqârabah Ta'Sîsiyyah Muqtarabah*, 1st ed. (Yaman: Nama' Center, 2024), p 233.

activities pertaining to Qur'anic interpretation merit the designation of mufasssir. Indeed, nearly all academics concur that not all tafsir writings possess equivalent levels of scientific merit and contribution, despite all being designated as mufasssir.

Contemporary scholars have sought to define the concept of mufasssir. Dr. Mustafa Muslim defines a mufasssir as an individual proficient in interpreting and elucidating the meanings of the Qur'an in accordance with human understanding (Muslim, 1415 H). Dr. Hussein Al-Harbi (1417 H) offers a more expansive definition: "an individual who possesses the complete ability to comprehend the will of Allah as conveyed through His words recited in worship, in accordance with their inherent capacity." He has acquainted himself with the methodologies of the mufasssirun and has achieved proficiency in various dimensions of Quranic exegesis. Moreover, he engages in tafsir through both teaching and writing. Dr. Al-Harbi (1417 H) highlighted the significance of this limitation, asserting that individuals with profound knowledge of tafsir who teach without written contributions can still be recognised as mufasssir and included among the esteemed scholars of the ummah.

Furthermore, there is an absence of foundational and comprehensive discourse from the proponents of those definitions. The proposed definition appears to neglect significant elements of the interpretative activity that ought to be an integral component of this idea. The notion of mufasssir cannot be confined, as elucidated in the initial definition, solely to individuals who endeavour to reveal and interpret meaning. The tafsir conducted by the mufasssir is far more extensive and intricate. The term mufasssir is important when discussing individuals who compose tafsir, such as al-Thalabi, al-Mâwardi, and Ibn al-Jawzi, as well as scholars who specialise in meanings, such as al-Îji and others. Moreover, it is challenging to exclude from this concept—similar to the second definition—those who endeavour to elucidate and elaborate on the interpretation, which will be addressed further in the ensuing explanation.

Consequently, defining a mufasssir should extend beyond the notion of mere interpretation, as numerous interpretations offered by individuals often consist solely of citations from prior generations, without a thorough assessment of the diverse methodologies of tafsir that pertain to the interpretative process, whether directly or indirectly.

The foremost endeavour in discussing the notion of mufasssir in the modern context was executed by Dr. Musâid Al-Tayyar in his work entitled "*Maḥbûm al-Tafsîr wa al-Ta'wîl, wa al-Istinbath, wa al-tadabbur, wa al-Mufasssir*" (Concept of Tafsir, Ta'wil, Istinbat, Tadabbur, and Mufasssir). In this study, he thoroughly examines the notion of mufasssir, investigating its multiple dimensions and referencing Al-Suyûti's taxonomy of the numerous varieties of mufasssir.

No doubt that theoretical efforts are necessary to systematize the knowledge and information pertinent to each department, along with the requisite methods for them to execute their jobs efficiently. This necessitates the consideration of many theories that can successfully contribute to the development of mufasssir. These efforts are crucial both practically and theoretically, as they will aid in the organization of their applied work. This research section must be integrated into the science of ushûl al-tafsir to develop and enhance, particularly with the third pillar that rules the practice of tafsir. Concurrently, the discourse on the concept of tafsir is more suitably situated within the primary pillar of this discipline, which emphasizes the practice of tafsir and associated issues, consistent with the foundational perspective we have delineated concerning the science of ushûl al-tafsir and its governing methodologies, including the characteristics of these pillars.

Dr. Al-Tayyar<sup>13</sup> articulated that, according to the perspectives of Al-Suyûti and later scholars concerning the classifications of mufassir, one can deduce that "a mufassir is an individual who engages in the study of tafsir or authors on the subject." He noted that this represents a form of tolerance in the use of the term, albeit lacking a comprehensive explanation. Additionally, he stated that "the texts in the books addressing the ranks of mufassir are not meant to delineate the identity of a mufassir, but to acknowledge those who have contributed to the field of tafsir, without evaluating the nature of their contributions, whether they are simple reproductions or the outcome of ijtihad from the mufassir."

Dr. Al-Tayyar<sup>14</sup> noted that explicit criteria for the inclusion of a scholar in the mufassir list are seldom established. By analysing mufassir documented in categorisation texts and evaluating their contributions to tafsir, he asserted that mufassir can be broadly classified into four categories.

The initial category is *Thabaqah al-Mujtahidîn al-Awwal* (First Class of Mujtahid), comprising mufassir from the salaf, including the companions, tâbi'in, and tâbi' tâbi'in. They are recognised for their distinct ijtihad in tafsir and possess several divergent perspectives on the subject.

The second category is *Naqalah al-tafsir* (Copyists of Tafsir), comprising a cohort of hadith scholars and those who solely replicate tafsir from their forerunners. They lack opinions, ijtihad, critique, or discourse concerning their narratives. They may be designated as "participants in tafsir."

The third category is *Al-Mufassir al-Nâqid* (critical exegete), denoting an exegete who compiles narratives from many exegetes and evaluates them in comparison to one another. This style of exegete forms an opinion by analysing numerous claims inside the verse and subsequently selecting the one he deems most compelling. By selecting one sentence over the others, he simultaneously conveys his opinion and ijtihad.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth type is *Al-Mufassir al-Mutakhayyir Qaulan Wâhidan* (the interpreter who selects a singular opinion). He is famous for selecting a singular interpretation without considering alternative perspectives. This decision corresponds with the methodology of a critical exegete; yet, it is distinguished by the critical exegete's incisive critique of the alternatives he rejects.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequently, he elucidated the notion of a mufassir, asserting that it is "an individual who holds a perspective in tafsir and endeavours to actualise it".<sup>17</sup> He stated, "If an individual fulfils only one of the two criteria, they cannot be regarded as a mufassir in the conventional understanding of tafsir, which involves elucidating the meaning of the Qur'an." For instance, certain participants in tafsir may lack personal perspectives, such as the narrators who only compile stories from predecessors; they cannot be classified as individuals who elucidate the words of Allah. Likewise, if an individual solely reads a tafsir book without offering any commentary or elucidation, they do not contribute to tafsir and cannot be regarded as a mufassir in this context. Individuals with a constrained opinion do not qualify under such designation.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Musâid's perspective on mufassir and their classifications appears to neglect the category of mufassir who compile tafsir and those who engage in teaching tafsir. This group is already

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<sup>13</sup> Musâid Al-Tayyar, *Mafhûm Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Ta'wîl Wa Al-Istinbath Wa Al-Tadabbur Wa Al-Mufassir*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dâr Ibn al-Jauzi, 2006), p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Tayyar, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Musâid Al-Tayyar, *Mafhûm Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Ta'wîl Wa Al-Istinbath Wa Al-Tadabbur Wa Al-Mufassir*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dâr Ibn al-Jauzi, 2006), p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Tayyar, p.214.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Tayyar, p. 215.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Tayyar, p. 216.

acknowledged in biographical literature and classifications of the mufasssir. Dr. Hussein Al-Harbi<sup>19</sup> remarked, "Frequently, readers encounter in the biographies and classifications of the mufasssirun individuals who instructed the interpretation of the Qur'an in mosques and schools, despite not being documented as authors of tafsir texts."

Dr. Musâid has enhanced his description by include the educators of tafsir. In his book "*Al-Tabrîr fî Ushûl al-Tafsîr*," he characterises a mufasssir as a person who elucidates the meaning of the Qur'an. He further stated, "This definition encompasses all individuals who possess an opinion in tafsir, including those engaged in its composition or instruction".<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Musâid appears to restrict ijtiḥād in tafsir exclusively to the early mufasssirun. It is important to acknowledge that their endeavours in defining meanings were not undertaken in isolation; numerous subsequent exegetes appeared, albeit with differing perspectives on the works, methodologies employed, and outcomes attained—both those that were embraced and those that were dismissed. Consequently, ijtiḥād in the generation of meaning should not be confined just to the early mufasssirun.

Moreover, Dr Musâid concentrates primarily on persons directly engaged in tafsir, while neglecting the diverse alternative types of participation that arise in practice. This involvement is crucial, particularly in elucidating and critiquing the interpretation. While not directly associated with the tafsir text, their contributions are crucial for enhancing accessibility, popularising, and broadly disseminating tafsir information. A significant number possess a profound comprehension of tafsir, and numerous opinions they offer are pertinent viewpoints inside the framework of tafsir itself. Consequently, they should not be disregarded in the classification of mufasssir as defined by Dr. Musâid.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that delineating a mufasssir based on interpretations found in tafsir and its treatment lacks definitive parameters. In light of this, it is imperative to enquire: how many viewpoints are requisite and what methodology should be employed for an individual to be acknowledged as a mufasssir?

Dr. Musâid asserted that, were he to adhere to the writers in *thabaqât al-mufasssirîn*, he would encompass under the definition of mufasssir every individual who contributes to or authors works in the discipline of tafsir. He elucidated his rationale for abstaining from participation in this context, asserting that it pertained to the tolerance of words. He underscored that the authors within the category of mufasssirun did not aim to delineate mufasssir in a literal sense; they merely enumerated persons who authored tafsir without scrutinising the nature of their writing.

Nonetheless, that assertion becomes contentious as every author contributing to the works of the mufasssirûn, even in the absence of an explicit definition of a mufasssir, implicitly conveys their stance on the notion and its inclusivity. This is apparent from the reference to particular names under designated words. Consequently, if they choose to participate in a discussion, it would be prudent to directly reference their comprehension of the notion of mufasssir that has been previously addressed and to underscore the deficiencies in that comprehension. Methodological concerns can be examined from the standpoint of what is appropriate and should be encompassed within that notion, rather than solely concentrating on their objectivity in defining mufasssir. This approach is pertinent in theoretical debates and contrasts with the methodology utilised by Dr. Musâid.

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<sup>19</sup> Husein Al-Harbi, *Qawâid Al-Tarjîḥ Inda Al-Mufasssirîn: Dirâsah Naẓhariyyah Tatbîqîyyah*, ed. Manna' Al-Qatthan, 2nd ed. (Kingdom Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Qasim, 2008), p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Musâid Al-Tayyar, *Al-Tabrîr Fî Ushûl Al-Tafsîr*, 1st ed. (Jeddah: Markaz al-Dirâsât wa al-ma'lûmât bi ma'had a-Imam al-Syâtîbi, 2014), p. 16.

Dr. Nâýef Al-Zahrâni<sup>21</sup> offers a succinct elucidation of the term mufasssir in his publication "*al-Ta'rîf bi al-Mufasssir*" (Definition of Mufasssir). He categorises the interpreters of the Qur'an into three distinct groups.

The initial category is *Al-Mufasssir*, denoting persons with profound expertise in tafsir, encompassing knowledge of the evidences and their application. Dr. Nâýef contends that those under this category are the genuine authorities in tafsir and ta'wil, and no others merit the designation of mufasssir.

The second group is *Al-Musyârik*, denoting persons who possess a commendable proficiency in interpretative tools, although their comprehension does not fully equate to that of Al-Mufasssir, despite their retained skill.

The third group is *Al-Muqallid*, denoting persons who adhere to others due to a deficiency of interpretative skills or resources.

Dr. Nâýef observes that the name "mufasssir" is particularly designated for certain groups, whilst other mufasssirs are typically referred to by alternative titles, such as participants or followers. This signifies that no overarching name exists to include all tafsir practitioners, so they cannot be collectively addressed. This matter will be examined in further detail in the subsequent section.

### **Establishing the Concept of Mufasssir; Proposed Approach**

Historically, numerous exegetes have articulated their perspectives on exegesis. By analysing their methodologies, we may classify these approaches into two primary categories:

#### **Initial Approach: Participating in the Act of Interpretation**

Interpretation practice include the implementation and engagement in the interpretation process. The interpreters who select this path are those actively engaged in the practice of interpretation through the use of diverse methodologies. This practice encompasses several aspects:

1. *Intâj al-tafsir* (Production of Tafsir): Engaged in the formulation of tafsir material.

The discussion regarding the process of producing tafsir aims to determine the nature of the tafsir approach related to the clear presentation of tafsir. This aspect is certainly not related to the debate of modern philosophical hermeneutics, which states that texts do not have clear and definite meanings. In that view, the interpreter is considered to create meaning based on their prejudices and preconceptions, and then project it onto the text. However, we argue that meaning is predetermined and contained within the text itself. In the process of producing an interpretation, the interpreter plays a role in explaining and revealing the meaning that already exists in the text.

2. *Tabrîr al-tafsir* (Editing Tafsir): Harmonising the content of tafsir and offering a more profound elucidation of both.
3. *Jam'u al-tafsir* (Compilation of Tafsir): The aggregation and systematic arrangement of diverse tafsir materials.
4. *Iktishâr al-Tafsir* (Summary of Tafsir): Compiling a concise overview of the tafsir material to enhance comprehension.

It does not need further explanation here that what is meant is the rejection of the summary of the interpretation itself, as well as the rejection of the compilation of interpretations, which is different from the rejection of the compilation of the opinions of one or several

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<sup>21</sup> Nayef Al-Zahrâni, *Shinâat Al-Tafkîr Fî Ilm Al-Tafsîr*, 1st ed. (Britain: Markaz Takwin lil Dirasat wa al-Abhats, 2019), p. 16. Nayef Al-Zahrâni, *Matan Al-Dalîl Fî Ilm Al-Tafsîr*, 1st ed. (Britain: Markaz Takwin lil Dirasat wa al-Abhats, 2021), pp. 24-25.

interpreters. Likewise, summarizing one of the interpretations is not an act of exegesis, and the person who does so cannot be categorized as an exegete.

Interpreters can engage in the profession of interpretation through a variety of intriguing approaches, including:

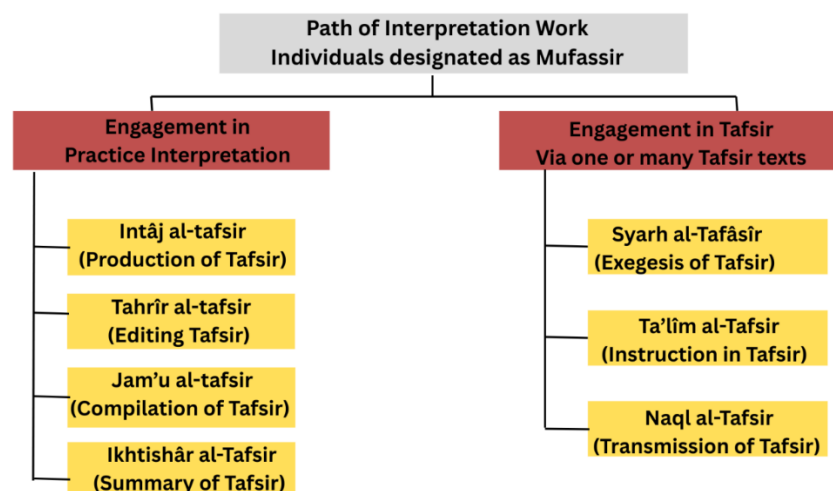
1. Composing a tafsir book autonomously, allowing the interpreter the liberty to articulate their insights without the constraint of a specific deadline.
2. Performing oral interpretation, subsequently recorded and collated at a later date. The collection phase may be conducted by the interpreter or by another individual. This frequently occurs with numerous exegetes from the Salaf and others, whose writings have been meticulously gathered.
3. Composing interpretations individually, thereafter amalgamated into a unified compilation. For instance, some authors produce critiques for magazines or analogous media and subsequently compile their writings, either by themselves or by others.

The alternative approach involves examining diverse existing interpretations, encompassing multiple aspects as follows:

1. *Syarh al-Tafâsir* (Exegesis of Tafsir): This activity entails a thorough commentary and discourse on tafsir, alongside the provision of essential explanations, clarifications, and rectifications.
2. *Ta'lim al-Tafsir* (Instruction in Tafsir): This component emphasises the endeavour to impart the science of tafsir to students and learners, enabling them to comprehend its content and context effectively.
3. *Naql al-Tafsir* (Transmission of Tafsir): This section emphasises the dissemination of tafsir material to others, facilitating broader understanding and accessibility of this knowledge.

In the context of the undisciplined practice of interpretation that will be discussed, there is no definite final result from the interpretation process itself. Meaning becomes the most important, serving as the core and foundation of all components of interpretation.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, some exegetes do not only focus on explaining the meaning, but also provide ijtihad and opinions on various other aspects of the components of tafsir, such as law, guidance, and various other matters.

The subsequent figure depicts their professional trajectory referred to as a mufasssir.



<sup>22</sup> Al-Yamani, *Ta'sîs 'Ilm Al-Tafsîr Muqârabah Ta'Sîsiyyah Muqtarahah*, p 181.



(Picture 1: Path of Interpretation work)

Individuals who reflect on the pathways and their associated imagery will recognise that engagement with the notion of the interpreter is wholly valid, and there are no concerns regarding this issue. This discussion will be abstract in nature with the aim of demonstrating the logical validity related to the inclusion of the same path and form in the concept of mufassir. However, these paths and forms still require determinants that can indicate the levels of the interpreter within them, as well as terms that can reflect those levels

The act of interpretation is distinctly apparent in the analyses of the commentators. This is justifiable as this effort consolidates the virtues inherent in the practice, and its advantages are directly perceivable.

A mufassir is anticipated to hold specialised knowledge and instruments that facilitate an in-depth exploration of practice, rendering it one of the most significant and esteemed forms of work, which will be elaborated upon later. The outcomes of practice and their expression in works inherently generate alternative career trajectories that are strongly associated with the practice itself and yield substantial advantages. Individuals engaged are regarded as members of the practitioner community, as evidenced by previously cited examples.

Engagement in elucidating interpretations is a crucial facet of practice that bridges essential and foundational works, necessitating a comprehensive array of knowledge tools, often akin to those held by exegetes directly engaged in interpretation, and occasionally exceeding them. Consequently, individuals involved in this domain are inextricably linked to the exegetes.

The previously stated points regarding the interpreters of tafsir are also applicable to the responsibilities of teaching and disseminating tafsir. This study is crucial in enhancing comprehension of interpretation for those who pursue it. The instructors require a profound comprehension of interpretation to execute this duty. Consequently, it is somewhat challenging to distinguish them from the cohort of interpreters.

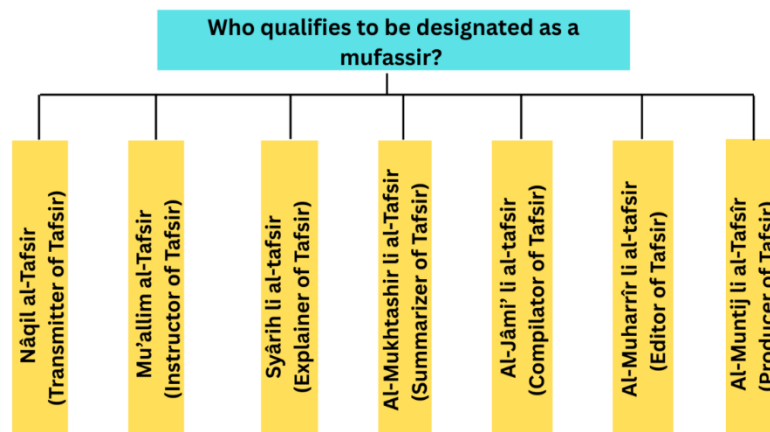
Conversely, with respect to the copyists of tafsir, it is indeed accurate that they are generally perceived as the weakest link and are less typically acknowledged as mufassir. Nonetheless, their function remains of considerable importance within the society. They are persons who comprehend interpretation and, through their creations, facilitate the transmission of interpretation to others in various manners, while also aiding in the expansion of that knowledge. As Dr. Musâid previously articulated, their presence cannot be disregarded within the realm of tafsir, despite their contributions not being equivalent to those of other interpreters. They maintain a crucial role in the realm of exegesis.

In the context of the previously stated several varieties of tafsir, we can define a mufassir as follows:

A mufassir is a person engaged in the practice of tafsir, encompassing the elucidation of their works, instruction, or the propagation of their knowledge. Participants in this activity actively engage in actions such as producing, editing, collating, or summarising interpretations. Simultaneously, the remaining components and elements in this definition have been thoroughly elucidated. Consequently, the notion of mufassir encompasses the subsequent particulars, as shown in picture no. 2 below:

1. Individuals accountable for production and labour.
2. Individuals who reconcile interpretative materials and elucidate the distinction between accurate and deficient comprehension.
3. Compilers of tafsir literature.
4. The author of a synopsis on the Science of Tafsir.
5. Elucidation of a specific interpretation.
6. Instructor of tafsir.

7. The transmitter of tafsir.  
The subsequent graphic will delineate the criteria for being designated as a mufassir.



(Picture 2: who qualifies to be designated as a mufassir?)

This conversation has some significant points that require attention.

Initially, authors that address tafsir and its associated issues, or those who examine the laws and principles of tafsir, do not qualify as mufassir. This is due to their lack of direct involvement in the composition of tafsir or associated actions, such as elucidating tafsir works and similar endeavours. They concentrate on several disciplines. Initially, there exist tafsir scholars who investigate matters pertaining to tafsir and its literature through research concentrated on certain difficulties; they are unequivocally not mufassir. Secondly, there exist specialists in ushul and tafsir theorists who contemplate the practice of tafsir inside an applicative framework to develop theories and define its operational guidelines. While certain tafsir researchers or ushul academics may fulfil the criteria to be considered mufassir, the essence of this discourse underscores that they cannot be designated as mufassir within the framework of the previously delineated tafsir activity.

Secondly, several texts delineating the prerequisites for a mufassir and the necessary procedures they should undertake outline a variety of criteria and knowledge. The authors underscore the necessity for a mufassir to possess a profound comprehension of language, grammar, derivation, semantics, rhetoric, aesthetics, and recitation, alongside the foundational principles of religion, including fiqh and ushul fiqh. Understanding the condition of mankind and other facets pertinent to the interpretation process becomes an integral component. This is especially pertinent for anyone engaged in the development or evaluation of interpretations.

Despite the authors' aims about the idea of mufassir often being overlooked—typically focussing just on the highest level in this domain—a profound theoretical endeavour remains necessary to elucidate the particular conditions of the many elements discussed. Such endeavours are essential for the clear organisation of each aspect and the precise understanding of its bounds. Furthermore, it is essential to define terminology that precisely characterise the tiers of mufassir within a unified framework. This is crucial as each mufassir engaged in the creation of tafsir, comparison of sources, or transmission of information employs distinct methodologies.

Ibn Abbâs, who has transmitted thousands of tafsir hadiths, cannot be compared to other mufassirs such as Ibn Mas'ud and Ali bin Abi Talib, who have transmitted only a few hundred

hadiths, as mentioned in 'Tafsir Sahabat; Its Statistics- Its Main Methodological Characteristics - Classification of Its Figures - The Reality of Studies on It, in the Report Published on the Marshad al-Tafsir website.

A mufasssir possessing hundreds of tafsir hadith differs significantly from one who conveys fewer than a hundred opinions. Furthermore, a mufasssir who performs comparative analyses across diverse contexts, in addition to reviewing, discussing, and critiquing prevailing beliefs, is unequivocally superior than one who refrains from such endeavours. Likewise, individuals who gather and classify opinions cannot be conflated with those who simply collect without classification. Consequently, it is essential to possess descriptive terminology that accurately represents their distinctions, together with a pragmatic foundation for formulating these terms within the framework of this interpretation.

A theoretical framework is crucial for structuring the information and expertise necessary for each field. It is essential to comprehend the necessary measures to ensure optimal work performance by all individuals, while also emphasising additional factors that will contribute to the theoretical enhancement required for the development of proficient interpreters. All these efforts are essential in practical application, where theory significantly aids in structuring their applied job.

To enhance the depth and rigour of this research, the portion addressing the science of *ushûl al-tafsir* must concentrate on the third pillar, which pertains directly to the capacity for interpretative practice. The discourse on the concept of interpretation ought to be incorporated into the primary pillar of this discipline, which underscores the practice of interpretation alongside pertinent elements. This method corresponds with the core vision articulated concerning the science of *ushûl al-tafsir* and related disciplines that underpin these activities, as well as the comprehension of these foundational elements.

Moreover, the term "mufasssir" incorporates diverse varieties of tafsir that differ in character and significance. Consolidating all these forms into a singular idea is logical, as previously articulated, and it is essential to establish a comprehensive term (mufasssir) that encompasses all figures within the domain of tafsir. The aspiration is that, within the global industrial sector, all these metrics can be categorised under a singular designation.

Conversely, it is essential to elucidate the distinctions and hierarchies among the characters in the execution of their responsibilities. This seeks to guarantee that all individuals obtain their rights, without excluding anyone from the universal provisions applicable in the industry or restricting such provisions to specific groups. This method may lead to complications, as previously noted.

The mufasssirun are encompassed by this general term, however they are categorised according to their roles in the tafsir process. Each category encompassed by this general word will own a more precise designation that accurately represents their path features and confers a unique identity. The ranking of the mufasssir will be elucidated according to their career trajectories, which will be detailed in the subsequent lines.

This article's original contribution is the advancement of numerous methodologies proposed by prior researchers, including al-Tayyar, al-Harbi, and al-Zahrani. The author evaluates that, according to the interpretative work outlined by prior academics, mufasssir can be categorized into two primary types based on their methodologies., which can be divided into two primary groups, as illustrated in the picture no. 3 below:

1. *Mufasssir Mumâris* (Practical Exegete): This group comprises individuals actively engaged in the practice of interpretation. They not only generate interpretations but also endeavor to equilibrate the outcomes, consolidate them, or convey them more succinctly.

This group can be categorized into various forms, specifically:

- a. *Al-Muntij li al-tafsir* denotes those who create tafsir works, demonstrating their proficiency and capability in ijtihad while elucidating the verses of the Qur'an, with their interpretations significantly affecting later mufasssir. For instance, Ibn Jarir al-Thabari with his work *Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Ta'wîl Ây al-Qur'an*,<sup>23</sup> Az-Zamakhshari with *Tafsir al-Kassâyâf*<sup>24</sup> from older scholars, and Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha with *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Hakim*<sup>25</sup> from later academics.
  - b. *Al-Muharrir li al-Tafsir* denotes those who, although composing tafsir texts influenced by earlier scholars, possess the discernment to differentiate between sound and unsound interpretations from preceding generations. For instance, Ibn Kathir with his work *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azhim*<sup>26</sup> from the earlier cohort, and Muhammad at-Thahir Ibn Ashûr with his work *al-Tahrîr wa al-Tamwîr*<sup>27</sup> from the subsequent cohort.
  - c. *Al-Jâmi' li al-Tafâsir* denotes people who create tafsir works, wherein these works constitute a compilation of diverse tafsir perspectives articulated by preceding scholars, without delineating which of these positions are deemed the most robust and accurate. For instance, al-Qadhi al-Baidhawi with *Tafsir al-Baidhawî*<sup>28</sup> and as-Syaukani with *Tafsir Fath al-Qadir*.<sup>29</sup>
  - d. *Al-Mukhtasir li al-Tafsir* denotes individuals who compose summaries of exegeses derived from the mufasssir of earlier generations, regardless of whether the summary originates from a singular interpretation or several interpretation texts. For instance, the *Tafsir an-Nasafi*<sup>30</sup> predominantly encapsulates the essence of al-Kassâyâf, while the *Tafsir al-Muyassar*<sup>31</sup> by Aidh al-Qarni offers a succinct explanation that references numerous main exegeses.
2. Mufasssir Musyârik (Participatory Exegete): Members of this group consist of elucidators, educators, and distributors of tafsir. They are crucial in comprehending and conveying interpretation to the society.
- This group can be categorized into various forms, specifically:
- a. *Syârih li al-Tafsir* denotes those who lack original interpretations and solely elucidate the perspectives of other exegetes' writings. For instance, an individual instructing tafsir in a study group solely elucidates the interpretations and messages derived from a singular tafsir text.

<sup>23</sup> Saeed ibn Ghulaifish Al-Qahtani, "Al-Imam Ibn Jarir Al-Thabari Wa Manhajuhu Fi Al-Tafsir," *Majallah Al-Qira'ab Wa Al-Ma'rifah* 8 (2008): 14–61, <https://mrk.journals.ekb.eg/>.

<sup>24</sup> Turki Musthafa, Hamyatu; Abdurrahman, "Manhaj Az-Zamakhshari Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim: Dirasah Tahliliyah Muqaranah," *Majallat Al-Ulum Al-Ijtima'iyah Wa Al-Insaniyah* 7, no. 1 (2014): 11–28, <https://asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/59070>.

<sup>25</sup> Hajir Muhammad Ahmad Syabu, *Manhaj Tafsir Al-Manar Fi Al-Tafsir*, ed. al-Habr Yusuf Nuruddaim, 1st ed. (Khorthum: Khaortum University Press, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Sulaiman Ibrahim Al-Lahim, *Manhaj Ibn Katsir Fi Al-Tafsir*, 1st ed. (Riyadh: Dar al-Muslim, 1999), pp. 37-40.

<sup>27</sup> Nabil Ahmad Saqr, *Manhaj Al-Imam Al-Thahir Ibn Ashur Fi Al-Tafsir*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Ad-Dar al-Mishriyyah li at-Ta'lif wa at-Tarjamah, 2001), pp.44-45.

<sup>28</sup> Yusuf Ahmad Ali, *Al-Baidhawî Wa Manhajuhu Fi Al-Tafsir*, ed. Muhammad Syauqi Khudr As-Sayyid, 1st ed. (Makkah: Umm al-Qura University, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Abdullathif Lamanzham, *Manhaj Al-Imam Al-Syaukani Fi Tanwîf Qawa'id Al-Tafsir Min Khilal Tafsirihi Fath Al-Qadîr Min Anwalibi Ila Akhîr Surah an-Nisa'*, ed. Ahmad Nabih Al-Makkawi (Kuala Lumpur: International Madina University, 2010), pp. 28-30.

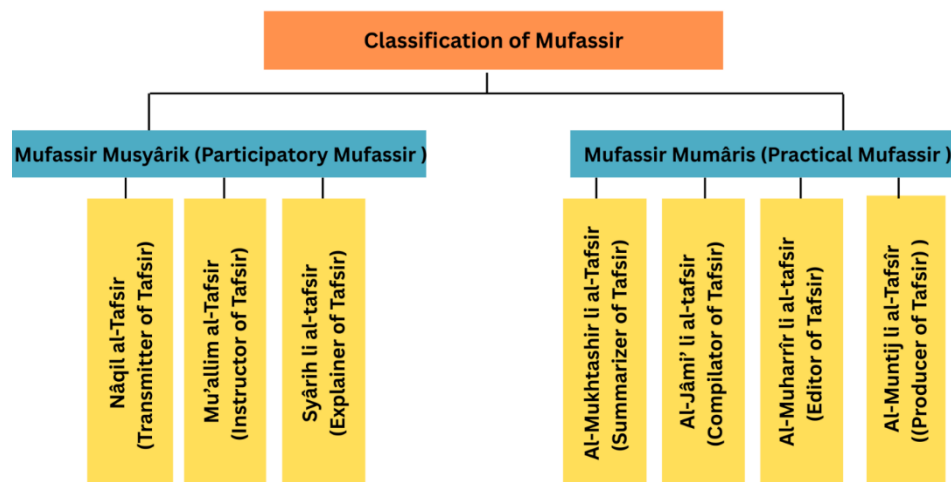
<sup>30</sup> Umaimah Rasyid Badruddin, *An-Nasafi Wa Manhajuhu Fi Al-Tafsir*, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Nawadir, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad ibn Rasyid Al-Barakah, *Al-Tafasir Al-Mukhtasharah: Ittijabatuha Wa Manahijuha* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 2016), p. .

- b. *Muallim al-Tafsir* denotes individuals who instruct on a tafsir text, irrespective of whether the material is inherently lucid and necessitates no further elucidation. For instance, an educator who solely imparts the material contained in a tafsir text without elucidating or critiquing the perspectives of the mufassir under examination.
- c. *Nâqil al-tafsir* denotes individuals who solely cite and relay the interpretations and writings of others, typically conveyed either orally or in written form, without engaging in a specialized analysis pertaining to the Qur'anic exegesis.

The practitioners of tafsir are designated as such because to their active engagement in tafsir activities, executing this task in a realistic manner. This term signifies their dedication to the practice of tafsir. They are pragmatic mufassir who establish a concrete legacy of tafsir throughout each of the specified paths, with some adeptly integrating many paths in a harmonious manner while offering novel interpretations. Their classification is determined by the predominant path they pursue, however they also engage in and contribute to alternative paths. Consequently, it is imperative to identify terminology that accurately characterises these endeavours and the principles that dictate the conditions for each mufassir's participation in each pathway. This is essential for constructing layers of scholarship for the mufassir, as already mentioned.<sup>32</sup>

Conversely, some mufassir, despite concentrating on practical applications and associated elements, fail to deliver interpretations that effectively adhere to the interpretative methodology employed by practical mufassir. Consequently, despite the variability in their efforts, their objective is primarily to offer contributions from a certain advantageous viewpoint rather than to engage in the act of interpretation itself. Nonetheless, they continue to engage in the realm of exegesis. The subsequent figure will depict the classifications of the mufassir.



(Picture no. 3: Classification of Mufassir)

### The level of the Mufassir

It is evident that those who examine the several methods of tafsir employed by the mufassir would recognise that while each method possesses distinct advantages, direct participation in the practice of tafsir is paramount. This engagement not only propels the progression of tafsir practice but also improves the outcomes and fosters their continued development. Consequently, the mufassirun engaged in the practice of tafsir have the preeminent position

<sup>32</sup> Al-Yamani, *Ta'sîs Ilm Al-Tafsîr Muqârabah Ta'Sîsiyyah Muqtarabah*, pp. 252-253.

among their peers. The preference focuses on showcasing the highest rankings of different types of work. Simultaneously, the practical endeavors undertaken by the mufassir are prioritized and categorized according to significance, shaped by diverse variables and settings.

Conversely, the role deemed less crucial is that of the copyists of tafsir, who are often seen as occupying a subordinate status among tafsir practitioners.

Despite the elevated qualifications of practicing mufassirs, discrepancies exist over the importance of their contributions. The generation of interpretative meaning is the foremost priority. Generating novel interpretations enhances the fundamental material that underpins diverse other works in this domain. The presence of the generated interpretative meaning underpins the justification for the existence and use of various forms, including the compilation of interpretive resources, comparison, summarisation, and adaption. This sustains the research, promotes follow-up, and facilitates the accumulation of effort. The follow-up in meaning generation via interpretative practice guarantees that the processes of gathering and comparison remain current, with writings perpetually developing to align with newly generated interpretive material.

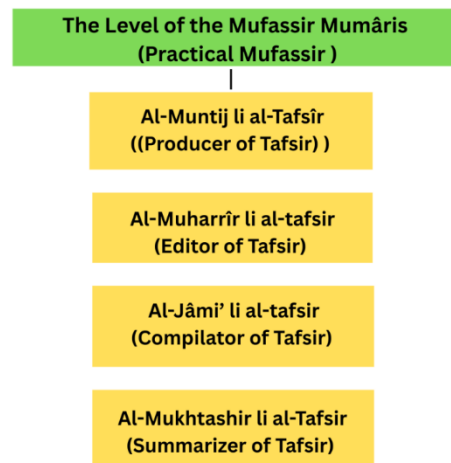
Following the production of exegesis, the crucial part of exegesis practice is to compare and assess the available exegetical resources. A comprehensive comprehension of the distinction between valid and flawed interpretations from many sources is fundamental to comprehending and directing the heritage of tafsir. It is essential to differentiate between the stronger and weaker elements, to discern right from wrong, and to present scientific explanations that substantiate those viewpoints. In the absence of meticulous study, the interpretative material will amass without clarity concerning its veracity. Consequently, this feature is crucial in the practice of interpretation, nearly equivalent to the act of generating the interpretation itself.

For a mediator to execute their responsibilities effectively, they must comprehend the available interpretative material, systematically organise it, identify its underlying evidence, and construct scientific arguments that illustrate the preeminence of one perspective over another. Furthermore, he must also engage in several additional pertinent endeavours.

Subsequent to that phase, the responsibility of collecting interpretative materials emerges. This is crucial for the preservation and organisation of tafsir legacy, which significantly impacts the facilitation of comprehension, acknowledgement, comparison, storage, memorisation, and aggregation of tafsir, along with other essential aims.

Ultimately, there exists the role of condensing tafsir. This summary, while not directly influencing the interpretation, serves to simplify and enhance accessibility, facilitate distribution, and promote education, thereby achieving various objectives that foster attention and awareness regarding the interpretation.

This picture illustrates the tiers of practical mufassir.



(Picture 4: The level of Practical Mufassir)

Historically, the activity of interpretation is not confined to certain topics or subjects, as elaborated in other settings (Al-Yamani, 2023).<sup>33</sup> Interpretation encompasses multiple facets, including the elucidation of meaning, layers of meaning, and elements that transcend meaning itself.<sup>34</sup> This process yields a range of outputs from interpretation, encompassing meaning, legislation, advice, and similar elements. Consequently, an interpreter is not obligated to achieve a particular result in their work.

This scenario is intricate, as previously articulated, and underscores the necessity for comprehensive conversations concerning the role of interpretative processes and the decisions associated with them. This will undoubtedly influence both the duration of the profession and its practitioners.

The framework of the mufassir we propose will elucidate this concept, irrespective of the subject matter that will be the focus of tafsir practice in the future. If the emphasis of tafsir practice transitions to elucidating the intended meaning and favours the *ta'wil* (hermeneutic) method over tafsir, as previously said,<sup>35</sup> the practitioners would be more appropriately designated as *muawwil* (hermeneutists) instead of mufassir. Nonetheless, the fundamental concept and its components will stay unchanged. We must merely modify the title of the individual executing the task and the terminology for the outcome, without changing its fundamental nature.

The practical implications of the suggested division of labor among mufassir significantly affect the education of tafsir and the curriculum of Quranic studies in academic institutions. What is the fundamental nature of the graduates' profile from the Qur'an and Tafsir program? Are they equipped to become practicing mufassirs, or are they only participating mufassirs? The categorization of mufassir into two classifications—mufassir mumâris and mufassir musyârik—indicates that the criteria for a mufassir mumâris to interpret the Qur'an are far more stringent and elevated than those for a mufassir musyârik. This necessitates modifications to the curriculum to ensure that the learning outcomes of each Quran and

<sup>33</sup> Khalil Mahmud Al-Yamani, *Ulûm Al-Qur'an: Naqd Al-Ilmiyyah Wa Muqârabah Fî Al-Binâ'*, 1st ed. (Yaman: Nama' Center, 2023), p. 285.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Yamani, *Ta'sîs 'Ilm Al-Tafsîr Muqârabah Ta'Sîsiyyah Muqtarabah*, pp. 59-120.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Yamani, *Ulûm Al-Qur'an: Naqd Al-Ilmiyyah Wa Muqârabah Fî Al-Binâ'*, p. 285.

Tafsir course may be precisely assessed concerning the tafsir work of both a mufasssir mumâris and a mufasssir musyârik.

## Conclusion

This work has thoroughly examined the concept of the mufasssir. The existing research has been evaluated, along with remarks and elucidations addressing the numerous critiques that have arisen concerning this notion. The objective is to delineate a mufasssir, characterize the categories of tafsir works that qualify as mufasssir, and categorize mufasssir according to their approaches in performing tafsir. The hierarchical layers among them have also been elucidated.

This article's recommended technique has substantial consequences for the study of ushûl al-Tafsir, which is essential for a mufasssir to guarantee an individual's proficiency in interpreting the Qur'an. The categorization of mufasssir into two classifications—mufasssir mumâris and mufasssir musyârik—indicates that the prerequisites for a mufasssir mumâris to interpret the Qur'an are far more stringent and elevated than those for a mufasssir musyârik. The author recognizes the constraints of this research, which exclusively examines Arabic-language tafsir literature, both classical and contemporary, omitting the analysis of tafsir literature in languages other than Arabic, thereby neglecting the viewpoints of non-Arab Muslims in defining the nature of the mufasssir.

Consequently, it is recommended that for the advancement of this research, analogous studies be undertaken on tafsir literature in languages other than Arabic, such as Indonesian/Malay, Persian, or Urdu. Moreover, this research necessitates subsequent empirical investigations into the role of musyârik mufasssir in pesantren and modern institutions, especially in Indonesia.

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