

The Semantic Significance of Qur'anic Expressions in the Psychological Care of the Orphan

Mohamed Aziz Abdelmaksoud Sayed Ahmed^{*1}, Mohamed Ibrahim Hassan Osman², Reda Owis Hassan Serour³, Mohamad Hazli Bin Ismail⁴, Mohd Sani Bin Harun⁵, Ummu Hani Binti Abas⁶ and Zamakhsyari Bin Hasballah Thaib⁷

^{1,2,3,4}Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah International Islamic University, (UniSHAMS), Malaysia, ⁵Pengurus Wilayah Selatan Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia,

⁶Foundation Center at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Malaysia, ⁷Universitas Dharmawangsa, (UNDHAR), Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: mohamedaziz@unishams.edu.my

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v16-i3/27854>

Published Date: 05 March 2026

Abstract

The Qur'an accords particular attention to the orphan, seeking to protect this vulnerable group from injustice, preserve their rights, and integrate them into a compassionate and just community. This article examines the semantic significance of Qur'anic expressions related to the psychological care of the orphan and situates these expressions within earlier divine scriptures and contemporary institutional practice. The study pursues three main objectives: to elucidate how Qur'anic terminology constructs a discourse of psychological protection and emotional reassurance for the orphan; to analyze selected terms associated with the orphan in previous revealed legislations; and to highlight the role of modern social institutions in operationalizing these textual directives. Adopting a descriptive, analytical, and semantic approach, the research engages lexical works, Qur'anic exegesis, and jurisprudential sources in order to clarify the meanings, connotations, and contextual functions of key expressions. The findings indicate that the Qur'an articulates an integrated methodology for safeguarding the orphan's rights, including psychological security and social dignity, and that its diction reveals a close interrelationship between legislative directives and semantic construction. The study further demonstrates that social institutions play a pivotal role in translating Qur'anic guidance into concrete programmes that provide comprehensive care and empowerment for orphans. It concludes by recommending extended investigation of Qur'anic and Prophetic expressions that address the economic and developmental dimensions of the orphan's life.

Keywords: Semantic Significance, Qur'anic Expressions, Psychological Care, Orphan

Introduction

The Qur'an has continuously attracted scholarly attention across diverse fields of inquiry, and its verses remain a living source of guidance and reflection for all times and contexts. Among the social categories that receive sustained Qur'anic concern is the orphan, whose vulnerability exposes him or her to various forms of material and psychological deprivation. Numerous verses emphasize the duty of the community to protect orphans, safeguard their property, and speak to them in ways that affirm their dignity and sense of belonging (Ibn Kathir, 1992; Qutb, 1994).

Contemporary Muslim societies are witnessing a significant rise in the number of orphans due to war, socio-economic instability, and family disintegration. While many studies have examined the legal rights and material care of orphans, less attention has been paid to the semantic and psychological dimensions embedded in Qur'anic discourse. This article therefore focuses on the semantic significance of Qur'anic expressions that address the orphan and explores how these expressions contribute to a framework of psychological care and emotional protection.

The central problem addressed here is the relative scarcity of systematic semantic analyses of Qur'anic terminology relating to orphans. Existing works tend to discuss the general status of the orphan, financial rulings, or institutional mechanisms of support, without closely examining how specific lexical choices and rhetorical structures in the Qur'an shape the orphan's psychological experience (Al-Ghamdi, 2017; Istiti, 2007; Khammad, 2009). This study seeks to fill that gap through a focused semantic and contextual reading.

Accordingly, the research is guided by three questions: (1) What is the semantic import of Qur'anic expressions in relation to the psychological care of the orphan? (2) How did previous divine legislations conceptualize and care for the orphan? (3) What role do contemporary social institutions play in implementing the Qur'anic vision of orphan care? The objectives are to clarify the semantic significance of key Qur'anic terms related to orphans, to compare these with relevant expressions in earlier scriptures, and to highlight institutional mechanisms that translate these meanings into practice.

Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical semantic approach. It draws on works of Arabic lexicography (e.g., Ibn Faris, 1986; Ibn Manzur, 1990; Al-Zabidi, 1994), Qur'anic exegesis (Ibn Kathir, 1992; Qutb, 1994; Al-Harari, 2001), and jurisprudence (Al-'Adawi, 1994) to examine the lexical roots, morphological patterns, and contextual usages of expressions related to the orphan. Relevant Prophetic traditions are also consulted to clarify practical mechanisms of care and protection. Previous studies are reviewed to map the current state of research and delineate the specific contribution of this article.

Literature Review

Several contemporary works provide important background for the present study. Talib's (2023) investigation of Qur'anic expressions in Al-Farra's *Ma'ani al-Qur'an* focuses on the semantic analysis of selected names and terms but does not examine expressions related to the orphan (*al-yatīm* and its derivatives). Khammad (2009) analyzes the financial rules governing orphans in Islamic law and their application in Sharia courts, concentrating on legal procedures and safeguards rather than the psychological or semantic dimensions of orphan

care. Istiti (2007) explores the rights of the orphan in Islamic jurisprudence, with chapters on personal and civil rights; however, the linguistic and semantic analysis of Qur'anic terminology is treated only in a general manner. Al-Ghamdi (2017) discusses orphan care in light of the Qur'an, including references to previous divine laws, yet the focus falls on thematic exposition rather than detailed semantic study of the relevant lexicon.

These works collectively highlight the importance of orphan care in Islamic law and ethics, but they tend to privilege legal and institutional aspects over linguistic analysis. The present study contributes by offering a systematic semantic examination of Qur'anic expressions concerning orphans and by linking this analysis to the psychological well-being and social integration of the orphan.

Conceptual and Linguistic Framework

In classical Arabic lexicography, the term *yatim* denotes a child who has lost his father, while the feminine form is *yatimah* and the plurals include *yatāmā* and *aytām* (Ibn Manzur, 1990; Ibn Faris, 1986). Lexicographers distinguish between human and animal usage, noting that in the case of humans the reference is to the loss of the father, whereas in animals it refers to the loss of the mother (Al-Zabidi, 1994). Jurisprudentially, an orphan is defined as a minor whose father has died before the child reaches puberty (Al-'Adawi, 1994). These linguistic and legal definitions underscore a state of vulnerability that extends beyond material deprivation to psychological fragility.

From a semantic perspective, the various morphological forms of *yatim* and its derivatives in the Qur'an communicate different shades of meaning and emphasis. The alternation between singular, dual, and plural, as well as the broader syntactic environment of each occurrence, contributes to a nuanced discourse that both individualizes and collectivizes the orphan's experience. This framework provides the basis for the subsequent analysis of Qur'anic expressions.

Qur'anic Expressions and Psychological Care

The Qur'an employs the term *al-yatīm* and its related forms in multiple contexts that highlight care, protection, and moral responsibility. Quantitatively, the terminology appears in singular, dual, and plural forms, indicating attention to orphans both as individuals and as a social category. Qualitatively, several verses foreground the psychological aspect of orphan care through specific lexical choices and rhetorical constructions.

For example, in Surah al-Duhā (93:6–9), God reminds the Prophet Muhammad of his own experience of orphanhood, “Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?”, and then commands, “So as for the orphan, do not oppress.” Commentators emphasize the tenderness and reassurance conveyed by the verb *āwā* (“gave shelter”), whose elongated vowels evoke warmth and security (Qutb, 1994; Al-Harari, 2001). The subsequent prohibition against oppressing the orphan (*fa-ammā al-yatīma fa-lā taqhar*) not only forbids material exploitation but also proscribes any form of humiliation or psychological harm (Ibn Kathir, 1992).

Similarly, Surah al-Nisā' (4:8) links material support with kind speech: “Provide for them and speak to them words of appropriate kindness.” Exegetes note that the juxtaposition

of *farzuqūhum* (provide for them) and *qūlū lahum qawlan ma'rūfan* (speak to them a recognised good word) indicates that psychological reassurance through gentle speech is an essential complement to financial assistance (Al-Qanawi, 1999). In Surah al-Ma'un (107:1–2), rough treatment of the orphan is presented as a sign of denying the religion, thereby elevating the ethical treatment of orphans to a criterion of genuine faith (Ibn Kathir, 1992; Qutb, 1994).

These and other examples suggest that Qur'anic expressions do not merely legislate rights; they construct an affective environment in which the orphan experiences care, respect, and social inclusion. The semantic fields of shelter, mercy, kindness, and non-oppression collectively form a discourse of psychological protection.

The Orphan in Previous Scriptures

Divine concern for the orphan predates Islamic law and is attested in earlier scriptures. In the Hebrew Bible, for instance, God warns against harming widows and orphans and threatens severe punishment if their cries are ignored (Exodus 22:22–24, Exodus 22:22–24, The Old Testament). The Epistle of James in the New Testament describes “pure and undefiled religion” as visiting orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27, The New Testament). These passages emphasize both protection from harm and active social engagement.

When the Qur'an addresses the Children of Israel, it recalls covenants that include kind treatment of orphans alongside parents, relatives, and the needy (al-Baqarah 2:83; al-Nisā' 4:36). The continuity of concern across successive revelations highlights the centrality of orphan care within the Abrahamic religious heritage while the Qur'an offers a more elaborated semantic and legislative framework.

Social Institutions and the Implementation of Qur'anic Guidance

Contemporary social institutions, such as zakat bodies, waqf foundations, and specialized orphan-care organizations, serve as practical mechanisms for realizing Qur'anic directives. Their roles extend beyond financial sponsorship to encompass moral, educational, health, recreational, and developmental support. When such institutions provide structured educational programmes, monitor academic progress, ensure access to healthcare, and facilitate participation in sports and cultural activities, they contribute directly to the psychological stability and social integration of orphans (Al-Ghamdi, 2017).

Development-oriented projects that empower orphans and their mothers further reflect the Qur'anic emphasis on human dignity and self-reliance. By promoting sustainable livelihood initiatives and financial literacy, these programmes move orphans from passive recipients of charity to active participants in society.

Findings and Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this study leads to several key findings. First, the semantic configuration of Qur'anic expressions related to the orphan reveals an integrated framework of psychological care in which notions of shelter, mercy, gentle speech, and non-oppression are central. Second, there is a strong correlation between legislative context and semantic construction: the language of command and prohibition is consistently framed in ways that protect the orphan's emotional well-being and social dignity. Third, previous scriptures share a foundational concern for orphans, but the Qur'an develops this concern into a more

comprehensive discourse that encompasses spiritual, social, and psychological dimensions. Fourth, social institutions constitute a vital bridge between Qur'anic guidance and lived reality, offering multi-dimensional support that can transform orphans into confident and productive members of society.

The study recommends further research on Qur'anic and Prophetic expressions that address the economic and developmental aspects of the orphan's life, with particular attention to contemporary models of institutional care and empowerment. It also encourages the establishment of integrated service institutions that provide holistic support, educational, moral, physical, medical, and recreational, in accordance with the semantic and ethical vision of the Qur'an.

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