

Analysis of Misinterpretations of Seven Verses in Surah Al-Baqarah: A Study from the Perspective of Quranic Exegesis

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ABSTRACT

Background. The Quran, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) over 23 years in Arabic, serves as a comprehensive guide for humanity. Its preservation and reliable transmission make it central to Islamic teachings. However, understanding the Quran requires Tafsir (exegesis), which provides essential context, linguistic insights, and explanations. Despite this, many interpret Quranic verses without proper knowledge of Tafsir, resulting in widespread misinterpretations. Surah Al-Baqarah, a chapter covering diverse themes, is particularly vulnerable to such misunderstandings.

Purpose. This study aims to address common misinterpretations of seven selected verses in Surah Al-Baqarah by relying on established Tafsir works. The objective is to rectify these errors, promote accurate understanding of the Quran, and emphasize the necessity of using scholarly resources to interpret its teachings.

Method. The research employs a qualitative literature review method. Data is sourced from books, scholarly articles, and journals that discuss Quranic exegesis. The study examines interpretations of the chosen verses using classical Tafsir works, including those by renowned scholars, to clarify their meanings and provide contextual understanding.

Results. The analysis identifies key causes of misinterpretation, including neglect of historical and textual context, linguistic misunderstandings, and cultural biases. By referring to authoritative Tafsir, the study provides accurate explanations of the seven verses, reinforcing their intended meanings.

Conclusion. The study highlights the risks of misinterpreting Quranic verses and underscores the importance of Tafsir for accurate understanding. By clarifying misconceptions in Surah Al-Baqarah, this research contributes to better public comprehension of the Quran and reinforces the need for scholarly guidance in interpreting its verses.

KEYWORDS

Misinterpretation, Qur'an, Tafsir

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INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the Word of Allah SWT, unmatched and unparalleled, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, through the Angel Jibril. The Quran serves as a guide for life and the primary source of law in Islam, and its authenticity has been preserved throughout the ages. (As-Shabuni, 2016) It is the foremost and ultimate guidance for Muslims, revealed in the Arabic language.



However, differences in understanding arise due to the limitations of human capacity, even among those proficient in Arabic, including the companions of the Prophet, let alone non-Arabs. These difficulties made the companions and subsequent scholars aware of the importance of understanding the Quran correctly. They felt the need to create guidelines for understanding the Quran, especially as Islam continued to spread widely, and the urgent need for accurate comprehension grew. The efforts of these scholars resulted in various branches of Quranic sciences, which are crucial as tools to uncover divine messages and gain a correct understanding of the Quran.

Misinterpretations of the Quran can lead to significant misunderstandings of Islamic teachings and principles. There is limited research on the specific misinterpretations of certain verses in Surah Al-Baqarah and the underlying causes of these errors. The nuances and complexities in the language of the Quran require a deep understanding of the context and classical Arabic, which many readers may lack. This gap highlights the need for a detailed study focusing on common misinterpretations and their implications on the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and theology.

Further analysis is required to understand how these misinterpretations arise among different groups of people, including those with varying levels of proficiency in Arabic. Identifying the reasons behind these misinterpretations can help scholars develop more effective educational tools and resources for studying the Quran. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the specific verses in Surah Al-Baqarah that are frequently misunderstood and providing a comprehensive exegesis to clarify their meanings.

The influence of cultural and regional differences on the interpretation of the Quran is another area that requires more exploration. Misinterpretations can stem from projecting cultural or contemporary values onto the ancient text, leading to anachronistic understandings. By examining how different communities interpret these seven verses, the study can shed light on the extent to which cultural contexts impact Quranic interpretation.

There is also a need to investigate the role of modern translations and commentaries in either perpetuating or correcting these misinterpretations. Analyzing the fidelity and clarity of these translations can provide insights into how they influence the reader's understanding of the Quran. This study will critically assess various modern translations of Surah Al-Baqarah to identify any inconsistencies or errors that may contribute to misunderstandings.

Understanding the educational background and methodological approaches of individuals interpreting the Quran is crucial. Different interpretative methodologies, such as literal, contextual, and thematic approaches, can lead to varying understandings of the same text. This research will examine the methodological approaches taken by different scholars and readers to identify which methods are more prone to misinterpretation and why.

Further research is very important to fill the knowledge gap regarding the misinterpretation of the seven verses in Surah Al-Baqarah. Understanding the causes and mechanisms behind these misinterpretations will help develop more effective learning methods for the study of the Quran. This study aims to analyze and correct misinterpretation by providing a comprehensive exposition based on the science of Quranic interpretation.

The use of in-depth interpretation is needed to identify and overcome these misinterpretations. By examining the historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts, this research will provide a more accurate understanding of these verses. The hypothesis of this study is that misinterpretation can be minimized through a holistic and data-based interpretation approach.

The study also aims to develop guidelines that can be used by Qur'anic educators and researchers in understanding and teaching these verses. By identifying common errors and their causes, this research will contribute to improved accuracy and understanding in the study of the Quran. The results of this research are expected to be the basis for the development of a more effective curriculum and teaching materials in teaching Quranic interpretation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is a literature study based on literature sources using a qualitative approach. This study aims to analyze the misinterpretation of seven verses in Surah Al-Baqarah from the perspective of Quranic interpretation. Data will be collected from various references such as books, articles, and journals that discuss the interpretation of the Quran and related sciences.

Population and samples include interpretation texts that are widely recognized and used by scholars and researchers. The sample will be purposively selected to ensure that the analyzed texts cover a wide range of interpretive approaches, including classical and contemporary interpretation. The number of samples will be determined based on the relevance and importance of the text in explaining the verses studied.

The instruments used in this study include text analysis guides and qualitative tools to evaluate and interpret the collected data. This guide will be designed to identify misinterpretations, historical contexts, and the original language used in the interpretation of the Quran. The instrument will also include relevant tools to evaluate the accuracy and validity of the interpreted interpretation.

Procedures begin with the collection of primary data through literature review and analysis of interpretation texts. The data collected will be analyzed thematically to reveal misinterpretation and the context that led to the misinterpretation. Furthermore, the results of the analysis will be used to provide clarification and accurate explanation regarding the seven verses in Surah Al-Baqarah. All data collected will be comprehensively analyzed to produce in-depth conclusions about misinterpretations and how to correct them.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Definition of Al-Quran

Linguistically, the word "Al-Quran" originates from Arabic and is derived from the root word "qara'a," which means to read. Another opinion suggests that "qara'a" also means "al-jam'u," which means to gather and compile. Therefore, the words "qur'an" and "qira'ah" carry the meaning of assembling and gathering letters and words together. According to Quraish Shihab, the literal meaning of "Al-Quran" is a complete reading, implying that the Quran is a recitation or something that is read.(Shihab, 1998) Terminologically, the Quran is the word of Allah SWT containing miracles, revealed to the seal of the prophets and messengers through the intermediary of Angel Jibril (AS). It is written in the mushaf in a continuous and consistent manner and is considered an act of worship for those who recite it. The Quran begins with Surah Al-Fatihah and concludes with Surah Al-Nas.(Mardan, 2009)

The Definition of Tafsir

The word "tafsir" is the noun form of the verb "fassara." Tafsir means explanation, elaboration, interpretation, or commentary. This word appears only once in the Quran, specifically in Surah Al-Furqan, verse 33.(Al-Baqiy, n.d.)

وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا

In simple terms, tafsir is the knowledge of understanding the Quran, as well as deriving its laws and wisdom. It differs from ta'wil, which is deeper and involves searching for hidden or contained meanings within the text. A brief variation in Quranic tafsir.

Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur: Also known as tafsir bi-riwayah and an-naql, this is an interpretative approach that uses explanations from the Quran itself, the Prophet Muhammad, the companions, and the Tabi'in. This method relies on direct quotations or references from the Quran, Hadith, and the opinions of the companions and Tabi'in to understand the meaning of verses accurately. Examples include the tafsir of Ibn Jarir, Al-Baghawi, and Ibn Kathir. (Ash-Shiddieqy, 1980)

Tafsir bi al-Ra'y: Also known as tafsir bi-dirayah, this interpretation uses personal opinions and ijtihad (independent legal reasoning) of scholars to explain the meanings of Quranic verses. Examples include the tafsir books of Jalalayn, Al-Kabir, and Al-Mazhari. (Faudah, 1987)

Tafsir Ijmaliy: Tafsir Ijmali is a method of Quranic interpretation that explains the meaning briefly but comprehensively, using general and easily understandable language. Examples include the works of Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Al-Tafsir Al-Wasith, and Taj al-Tafsir. (M. Alfatih Suryadilaga, n.d.)

Tafsir Tahlili: This interpretation involves analyzing each verse and surah individually, covering vocabulary, sentence structure, the context of the revelation of the verses, their relation to other verses, and related viewpoints from figures like the Prophet, companions, and other scholars. There are two forms of this analytical method: the ma'tsur (based on narration) and the ra'y (based on reasoning). Examples of tafsir books that use both methods include Jami' al-Bayan'an an Ta'wil Ayi Al-Qur'an by Ibn Jarir al-Thabari, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim by Ibn Kathir, and Al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'tsur by al-Suyuti (Rosalinda, 2019).

Tafsir Maudhu'i: The tafsir maudhu'i method interprets Quranic verses based on a specific theme by gathering all related verses, tracing the context of revelation, analyzing vocabulary, examining various interpretive opinions, and objectively analyzing the subject. Examples of tafsir works using this method include "Al-Insan fi Al-Qur'an" and "Al-Marat fi Al-Qur'an" by Mahmud al-Aqqad, and "al-Riba fi Al-Qur'an" by al-Maududi (Baidan, n.d.).

Tafsir Muqaran: The tafsir muqaran method compares Quranic verses with similar or identical wording, as well as comparing verses with Hadith and various opinions from tafsir scholars. This method involves broad comparisons between verses, Hadith, and scholarly interpretations to understand deeper meanings. A contemporary example of a tafsir book using this method is "Qur'an and Interpreters" by Mahmud Ayub (Pasaribu, 2020).

Verses of the Quran that are often misinterpreted.

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 46:

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رُجْعُونَ

Meaning: "Who are certain that they will meet their Lord, and that they will return to Him."

يَظُنُّونَ The word above means "they are certain." (At-Thabari, n.d.) This is a rare usage in the Arabic language today. The term does not imply complaining or lamenting. (As-Sanid, 2018) Its meaning is that they firmly believe that they will be gathered and presented before Him on the Day of

Judgment, and they will return to Him. That is, all their affairs will be subjected to His will. They have decided to comply with what He has ordained with justice. Since they believe and are certain of the existence of the Hereafter and the Day of Judgment, it becomes easy for them to perform acts of obedience and refrain from prohibited things. (Al-Sheikh, 2004)

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 49:

وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ

Meaning: "And leaving your daughters alive."

وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ This word does not mean they are ashamed, but rather it means they leave them. (Tafsir At-Thabari, n.d.) This verse explains that they spared the lives of their daughters, allowing them to live, but they killed the male children. This story begins when Pharaoh dreamed of fire emerging from Baitul Muqaddas, entering all the houses of Egypt except for the houses of the Children of Israel. The interpretation of the dream indicated that his rule would be destroyed by a man from the Children of Israel. After Pharaoh heard that the Children of Israel predicted the emergence of a leader from among them who would free them, he ordered that every male child of the Children of Israel be killed, while only the female children were spared, and he forced the men of the Children of Israel to perform hard and degrading labor as a form of oppression and surveillance over them. (Tafsir Ibnu Kathir, n.d.-a)

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 58:

وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا

Meaning: "And enter the gate bowing (humbly)."

The word (سجدا) here does not mean to enter while prostrating, but rather it means to enter the gate while showing humility, as interpreted by Ibn Abbas. Al-Razi and others reject interpreting it as prostration on the ground, as it is impossible to interpret it literally based on the context of language or literature. (Tafsir Ibnu Kathir, n.d.-b)

This verse recounts Allah's command to the Children of Israel to enter a city with a humble attitude (in a state of humility) and to seek forgiveness for their sins. However, they did not properly obey the command. Instead of entering the city as instructed, they crawled on their bellies and replaced the words they were supposed to say with meaningless words, such as "Habbah fi sya'rah" (a grain in a strand of hair). This phrase was used to show that they were belittling or not taking Allah's command seriously, replacing the prayer for forgiveness with something meaningless or inappropriate. As a result, Allah sent down punishment from the sky to the unjust among them because they had crossed the limits of the law and violated Allah's commands. (Tafsir Ibnu Kathir, n.d.-c)

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 61:

فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا

Meaning: "So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic."

The word (بَقْلَهَا) here refers to plants that grow in the spring and are consumed by both humans and animals. There are two interpretations regarding the meaning of (بَقْل):

Plants that grow in the spring and are eaten by humans and animals.

Plants that do not have stems.

It is important to note that (بَقْل) is not the same as (الْأَقْط), which is sometimes mistakenly referred to as (بَقْل). (الْأَقْط) is a traditional Arab food made from dried milk. The process involves collecting milk, curdling it, and drying it until it becomes like dried cheese. It is typically used as a long-lasting food and is often eaten by travelers or those living in desert areas. (As-Sanid, 2018)

This verse recounts when the Children of Israel, ungrateful for Allah's blessings and tired of the food sent to them namely, al-manna and as-salwa asked Prophet Musa to pray to Allah to give them vegetables, cucumbers, grains, lentils, and onions. Prophet Musa was astonished by their request because they wanted to replace superior and noble food with something inferior. Prophet Musa told them they could find what they asked for in cities or villages. Due to their stubbornness, as they continued to follow their desires and reject Allah's choices, they were punished with disgrace, poverty, and suffering. They incurred Allah's wrath for turning away from His religion, denying His verses, and killing His prophets unjustly—all because of their rebellion and transgression against His set limits.

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 62:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِيَّانَ مَن ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Meaning: "Indeed, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever among them believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous deeds, will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."

Some people misunderstand this verse and some are influenced by calls for religious unity and the equality of all religions, leading them to believe that this verse equates all religious followers in matters of wealth and every circumstance.

In reality, the meaning of this verse is that those who believe in Prophet Muhammad, the followers of Prophet Musa (before alterations and distortions occurred), and the followers of Prophet Isa (before alterations and distortions occurred)—these are the ones praised by Allah. Therefore, the People of the Book, after the changes and distortions, are not included among those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, and perform righteous deeds. (As-Sanid, 2018)

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 171:

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الْإِذَىٰ يَبْعُقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْىٰ فَلَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

Meaning: "And the example of those who call (the disbelievers) is like that of a shepherd calling animals that cannot understand anything except the sound of the call; they are deaf, mute, and blind; so they do not use their intellect."

In this verse, some people mistakenly think that Allah is comparing the disbelievers to a shepherd calling to his sheep. However, what Allah is actually doing is comparing the disbelievers to livestock that are called by the shepherd. In short, the disbelievers are likened to livestock that hear the call but cannot understand it. (Tafsir Ibnu Kathir, n.d.-d) Their ears cannot hear the truth, and they derive no benefit from it. Their mouths are mute, unable to speak the truth, and their eyes are blind, unable to see the truth. That is why they cannot comprehend the guidance being called to them.

Qs Al-Baqarah, verse 193:

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أَنتَهُوْا فَلَا عُدُوْنَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

Meaning: "And fight them until there is no more fitnah (trial), and the religion is for Allah alone. But if they desist, then there is no (more) hostility, except against the wrongdoers."

According to the Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, fitnah refers to false accusations or fabricated stories meant to tarnish someone's reputation, cause division, or incite hostility in society. However, in this verse, the term (فتنة) does not refer to these kinds of conflicts or disputes. Instead, it refers to disbelief (kufr), not to conflicts or quarrels. (Zad Al-Masir Fillmi Tafsir, n.d.) In short, this verse emphasizes the importance of fighting the disbelievers until they cease engaging in polytheism and stop preventing others from following the religion of Allah. Once they cease, there is no reason to continue fighting them, except if they return to committing acts of injustice.

CONCLUSION

This brief study is a comprehensive discussion about the Qur'an, the holy book that has been preserved until the Day of Judgment. The Qur'an is not only a holy book for Muslims, but also a comprehensive guide for life. There are various interpretations by scholars regarding the Qur'an that can be cited, reflecting the richness and depth of Islamic understanding from various perspectives. This study can only gather a small portion of these interpretations, as a modest effort by the writer to preserve the integrity of the Qur'an and to prevent people from interpreting the Qur'an hastily, which could lead to misinterpretations. This effort is also hoped to encourage further studies and a deeper understanding of the Qur'an, while emphasizing the importance of referring to the interpretations of reputable scholars in understanding the contents of the Qur'an.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation; Writing - original draft

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation; Writing - review and editing

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology..

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