

***AL-BAKHS* IN *TAFSĪR AL-MUNĪR*: CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTI-*BAKHS* PRINCIPLE FROM AL-ZUḤAYLĪ'S INTERPRETATION**

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Abstract: Justice in the Qur'an is expressed through both commands to fulfil rights and prohibitions against their unjust diminution. This study examines the contextual meanings of *al-bakhs* in Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* and reconstructs a specific anti-*bakhs* principle. It employs qualitative library research, theory-guided content analysis, Charles J. Fillmore's Frame Semantics, and limited exegetical comparison. The primary corpus comprises al-Zuhaylī's interpretations of seven Qur'anic occurrences of the root term *al-bakhs*. Each occurrence is analyzed through its grammatical construction, participants, object, standard of comparison, realization relationship, polarity, and normative evaluation. The findings identify three configurations. Four occurrences prohibit the diminution of acknowledged debts and other people's rights, forming the violation configuration. One characterizes the price in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 as falling below its commensurate value, forming the assessment configuration. Two negate diminution in worldly recompense and the reward for good deeds, forming the guaranteed configuration. These uses share a relationship between an identifiable object, a contextually grounded standard, and a shortfall that is prohibited, described, or explicitly excluded. The study designates this relationship the normative-deficit frame. By interpreting the prohibitions against under-fulfilment alongside the relevant standards of rights and value, it reconstructs the anti-*bakhs* principle: legitimately grounded rights and values should be fully and proportionately realized without unjustifiable diminution. This principle offers a specific perspective on justice rather than a comprehensive account of Qur'anic justice. Applications for employment, professional recognition, and institutional procedures are distinguished from direct exegetical findings and require independently defensible standards.

Keywords: *Al-Bakhs*, Frame Semantic, Justice, Normative-deficit frame, Wahbah al-Zuhaylī.

Abstrak: Keadilan dalam Al-Qur'an diungkapkan melalui perintah pemenuhan hak dan larangan

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pengurangannya secara tidak adil. Penelitian ini mengkaji makna kontekstual *al-bakhs* dalam *al-Tafsir al-Munir* karya Wahbah al-Zuhayli dan merekonstruksi prinsip anti-bakhs yang bersifat khusus. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan kualitatif, analisis isi berbasis teori, Semantik Bingkai Charles J. Fillmore, dan perbandingan tafsir secara terbatas. Korpus primer mencakup penafsiran al-Zuhayli atas tujuh kemunculan akar kata *al-bakhs* dalam Al-Qur'an. Setiap kemunculan dianalisis berdasarkan konstruksi gramatikal, partisipan, objek, standar perbandingan, relasi realisasi, polaritas, dan evaluasi normatif. Temuan mengidentifikasi tiga konfigurasi. Empat kemunculan melarang pengurangan pengakuan utang dan hak pihak lain, sehingga membentuk konfigurasi pelanggaran. Satu kemunculan menggambarkan harga dalam Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 yang berada di bawah nilai sepadannya, sehingga membentuk konfigurasi penilaian. Dua kemunculan menegaskan pengurangan balasan duniawi dan pahala amal baik, sehingga membentuk konfigurasi jaminan. Seluruh penggunaan tersebut memperlihatkan hubungan antara objek yang dapat diidentifikasi, standar yang berlandaskan konteks, serta kekurangan pemenuhan yang dilarang, digambarkan, atau secara eksplisit ditiadakan. Hubungan ini disebut bingkai defisit normatif. Melalui pembacaan larangan kekurangan pemenuhan bersama standar hak dan nilai yang relevan, penelitian merekonstruksi prinsip anti-*bakhs*: hak dan nilai yang memiliki dasar sah harus direalisasikan secara penuh dan proporsional tanpa pengurangan yang tidak dapat dibenarkan. Prinsip ini menawarkan perspektif khusus atas keadilan, bukan penjelasan menyeluruh tentang keadilan Al-Qur'an. Penerapannya pada hubungan kerja, pengakuan profesional, dan prosedur institusional dibedakan dari temuan tafsir langsung serta memerlukan standar yang dapat dipertanggungjawabkan secara mandiri.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Al-Bakhs*, Bingkai Defisit Normatif, Keadilan, Semantik Bingkai, Wahbah al-Zuhayli.

Introduction

Justice constitutes one of the principal foundations of the Qur'anic value system. This principle is expressed not only through commands to act with *'adl*, uphold *qist*, and maintain *mīzān*, but also through prohibitions against actions that prevent rights, values, measures, or compensation from being accorded as they ought to be. Expressing this principle through prohibitions serves an important function because it reveals the negative boundary of justice, namely, the forms of conduct that cause a relationship to cease operating properly and proportionately. Accordingly, the Qur'anic concept of justice cannot be adequately examined solely through terms that explicitly denote justice; it must also be understood through vocabulary that describes deviations from justice.

One term that occupies such a position is *al-bakhs*. Lexically, Ibn Fāris traces the root *bā'-khā'-sīn* to a single semantic origin, namely *al-naqṣ*, or diminution (Fāris 1972, 205). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī provides a more specifically normative definition by explaining *al-bakhs* as the diminution of something through an act of injustice (Aṣfahānī 1992, 110). Ibn Manẓūr associates the root with the diminution of rights, measures, values, and recompense (Manẓūr 1994, 24). Whereas Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī distinguishes it from *nuqṣān* ('Askarī 1997, 179). According to al-'Askarī, *al-bakhs* refers to a diminution resulting from injustice, while *nuqṣān* may occur either because of injustice or for other reasons. These explanations demonstrate that *al-bakhs* conveys more than the idea of a quantitative decrease. It also raises questions concerning the right that ought to be fulfilled, the standard used as a point of comparison, the party subjected to the diminution, and the normative

evaluation of the act concerned.

The root *bakhs* occurs seven times in the Qur'an, comprising five verbal forms and two nominal forms. These seven occurrences are found in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 85, Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 and 85, Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20, Q.S. Ash-Shu'arā' [26]: 183, and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 (Quran.com, n.d.) Their distribution demonstrates that a single lexical root is employed in diverse contexts. Some verses concern the recording of debts and the fulfilment of rights in transactions. Others appear within the account of the preaching of the Prophet Syu'ayb concerning the economic life of his community. One occurrence describes the price involved in the story of the Prophet Yūsuf, while another concerns recompense for human actions. This diversity raises a semantic problem because forms derived from the same root are used to describe different events, participants, objects, and normative relationships.

The central research problem is how semantic unity can be maintained without erasing contextual variation. Translating every occurrence of *bakhs* simply as "diminution" leaves unexplained the differences among a prohibited act, an assessed price, and a diminution whose occurrence is negated. Conversely, treating these uses as unrelated meanings obscures the relationship suggested by their shared roots. The analytical task is therefore to establish, from al-Zuḥaylī's explanations, which relationships remain stable across the seven occurrences and which elements vary with their participants, objects, grammatical constructions, and polarity. A unified frame is justified only if it can account for these differences without treating a prohibited or negated deficit as an actual event.

The contemporary relevance of this problem lies in the distinction between formally recognizing a right and actually fulfilling it. The issues discussed later in this article, including remuneration, acknowledgment of professional contributions, and access to institutional procedures, raise comparable questions about what is due, how it is assessed, and whether its realization falls short. A contextual analysis of *bakhs* can clarify the conditions under which such a shortfall warrants normative criticism. These issues are introduced as possible fields of application, however, rather than as empirical cases examined in this study or as direct lexical meanings shared by all seven verses.

This issue is examined through Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī's *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*. The selection of this work is based on its methodological characteristics. In the introduction, al-Zuḥaylī explains that the commentary was composed by combining interpretation based on transmitted reports with rational analysis, drawing upon classical and modern exegetical sources that he regarded as authoritative, and paying close attention to meanings consistent with the Arabic language and the context of the verses. His exegetical system includes grouping verses into thematic units, presenting an overview of each surah, explaining vocabulary, discussing the circumstances of revelation, interpreting and

elucidating the verses, deriving legal rulings, and examining *balāghah* and *i'rāb*. Al-Zuḥaylī also states his interest in thematic interpretation by bringing together verses related to a particular issue. These features are particularly relevant to the present problem because the analysis must connect the grammatical variation of *bakhs* with the rights, values, and obligations identified in its exegetical contexts. The commentary's treatment of vocabulary and syntax supports the differentiation of individual occurrences, while its contextual explanations and discussion of rulings provide evidence for reconstructing their normative relationships. Its selection therefore rests on its suitability for examining the connection between linguistic meaning and normative interpretation within a single exegetical work. It is not intended to establish that *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* uniquely represents the entire exegetical tradition.

The use of *Tafsīr al-Munīr* as the primary source does not mean that every analytical formulation in this study is attributed directly to al-Zuḥaylī. The study must distinguish at least three analytical layers. The first consists of al-Zuḥaylī's explicit explanations of a word, syntactic construction, verse context, or legal ruling. The second consists of relationships among these explanations that may be inferred through a comparative reading of his interpretations of the seven verses. The third consists of the theoretical constructions employed by the researcher to organize those relationships. This distinction is necessary to prevent modern analytical instruments from being mistaken for theories formulated by al-Zuḥaylī and to ensure that contextual implications are not treated as direct lexical meanings.

A number of previous studies have discussed *al-bakhs* from different perspectives. Ahmed Allaithy situates *bakhs* within the semantic and translational problems associated with Qur'anic terminology. He demonstrates that the term does not merely refer to a reduction in something but may describe giving another party less than what that party is entitled to receive. His attention is directed primarily towards the semantic scope of the term and the problem of finding an appropriate equivalent in translation (Allaithy 2014, 28). His study provides a basis for questioning the adequacy of a single translational equivalent, but it does not seek to reconstruct an individual exegete's interpretation of every occurrence of *bakhs*.

Akbar Sajedi and Hasan Panahi-Azad examine the relationship between *bakhs* and *tatfīf* in connection with the practice of underworking, namely, providing work or services below the quality and quantity stipulated in an agreement. Through semantic analysis and legal argumentation, they extend the application of the prohibition against diminution from transactions involving goods to the quality of work and services (Sajedi and Azad 2022, 202). The contribution of their study lies in broadening the normative application of *bakhs*. Nevertheless, extending a legal prohibition to new cases is different from identifying the semantic structure of all occurrences of *bakhs* within a single work of Qur'anic exegesis.

Other studies have devoted particular attention to Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20. Fanny Wahyunisa' Romadloni compares *Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarī* and *Tafṣīr al-Munīr* in her discussion of verses that she considers depicting human trafficking. Her study demonstrates the relevance of the account of the sale of the Prophet Yūsuf to the issue of human exploitation, although the terminology of human trafficking constitutes a contemporary category used to interpret the narrative context (Romadloni 2022, 81). Majid Chehri and Ahmad Omidvar subsequently re-examine exegetical reports concerning the sale of the Prophet Yūsuf by considering the linguistic structure, narrative coherence, the identities of the parties involved in the transaction, and the meaning of the price mentioned in the verse (Chehri and Omidvar 2024, 184). These two studies deepen the analysis of one context in which *bakhs* is used, but they are not intended to explain its relationship with the use of *bakhs* in the recording of debts, the prohibition against diminishing people's rights, and the negation of any diminution in recompense.

Previous studies have therefore examined *bakhs* in the fields of translation, the development of legal applications, human exploitation, and the interpretation of a particular verse context. However, no study has yet been identified that simultaneously treats all seven occurrences of *bakhs* as a single corpus, restricts its primary source to Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's interpretation, distinguishes lexical meaning from contextual implications, and codes its semantic elements through Frame Semantics. This gap is significant because the conclusion that *bakhs* means "diminution" or "injustice" does not, in itself, explain how diminution in the recording of debt, diminution of rights, an inadequate or disproportionate price, and the negation of diminished recompense can be understood as interrelated uses of the same lexical root.

On the basis of this gap, the present study offers three forms of novelty. First, it offers corpus-based novelty by compiling Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's interpretations of all seven occurrences of the root *bakhs* into a single analytical corpus. Second, it offers methodological novelty through the application of Frame Semantics to identify the participants, objects, standards, realisations, and evaluations involved in each context. Third, it offers conceptual novelty by examining the possibility of reconstructing a principle of justice from the patterns of affirmation and negation associated with *bakhs*. This reconstruction is not assumed from the outset to constitute a doctrine formulated directly by al-Zuhaylī. Rather, it is treated as an analytical proposition that must be demonstrated through the data contained in his interpretations.

Accordingly, this study is directed towards answering three questions. First, what are the distribution, forms, and contextual meanings of *bakhs* in *Tafṣīr al-Munīr*? Second, what stable semantic relationship connects these occurrences, and how can it be reconstructed without erasing their contextual and grammatical differences? Third, how can a principle of justice be reconstructed based on

the relationships among these frame configurations? In accordance with these questions, the study aims to identify all exegetical data relating to *bakhs*, its stable and variable elements, and explain the contribution of its semantic structure to an understanding of justice.

This study employs Charles J. Fillmore's Frame Semantics as its principal theoretical framework. Frame Semantics maintains that the meaning of a lexical expression cannot be adequately understood through an isolated dictionary definition but must be interpreted in relation to a structured body of background knowledge involving events, participants, objects, circumstances, relations, and consequences (Fillmore 1976, 32). Applied to the seven Qur'anic occurrences of the root *bakhs*, this framework enables each occurrence to be examined as a context-bound lexical realization rather than presumed to possess an entirely uniform meaning solely because it derives from the same root. The analysis therefore focuses on grammatical construction, semantic participants, object subjected to diminution, legitimate standard of comparison, actual or potential realization, polarity, and normative evaluation activated in each verse. Recurring relations among these elements provide the basis for inductively reconstructing what this study designates as the normative-deficit frame," while contextual differences are retained through the violation, assessment, and guarantee configurations. The term normative-deficit frame" is an analytical construct developed by the researcher, rather than a direct translation of *bakhs*, an established category in FrameNet, or a concept explicitly formulated by Wahbah al-Zuhayli; accordingly, al-Zuhayli's interpretations constitute the primary semantic evidence, whereas the anti-*bakhs* principle represents a second-order normative reconstruction derived from the resulting frame.

This research adopts a qualitative library-research design using theory-guided qualitative content analysis and limited exegetical comparison. Its primary data comprise Wahbah al-Zuhayli's interpretations in *al-Tafsir al-Munir* of the seven Qur'anic occurrences of the root *bakhs*, namely Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 85, Q.S. Hud [11]: 15 and 85, Q.S. Yusuf [12]: 20, Q.S. Ash-Shu'ara' [26]: 183, and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13. Lexicographical works, the *Quranic Arabic Corpus*, selected classical and modern commentaries, al-Zuhayli's other writings on justice, and relevant scholarly studies are used as secondary and triangulating sources. The analysis proceeds through five stages: inventorying every occurrence and its morphological and syntactic form; extracting al-Zuhayli's explicit lexical, contextual, and normative explanations; coding each occurrence according to the source or agent of realization, affected party, object, standard of comparison, realization relationship, polarity, and evaluative configuration; comparing the coded units to identify stable and variable semantic elements; and reconstructing the normative-deficit frame and the anti-*bakhs* principle from the resulting patterns (Zuhayli 1991, 9). Analytical credibility is maintained through consistent coding

categories, cross-verification with the Arabic text and al-Zuḥaylī's explanations, limited comparison with other exegetes, source triangulation, and a clear distinction among al-Zuḥaylī's explicit statements, contextual inferences, and the researcher's theoretical reconstruction.

The limited exegetical comparison is used to identify continuity with earlier interpretations, clarify differences of emphasis, and cross-check the proposed semantic relationships against the selected exegetical evidence. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, and Ibn 'Āshūr are selected because the passages examined in this article provide complementary explanations relevant to these purposes. Al-Ṭabarī clarifies the diminution of rights and the negation of diminished recompense; al-Zamakhsharī contributes lexical and grammatical explanations of diminution and deficient valuation; and Ibn 'Āshūr clarifies the nominal use of *bakhs* in the description of the price in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20. The comparison is limited to these relevant passages and does not examine every occurrence systematically across all three commentaries. Other exegetes are not included because the study concentrates on reconstructing al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation rather than providing an exhaustive account of the exegetical tradition. Agreement provides corroborating evidence, while differences indicate interpretive emphases without necessarily establishing their uniqueness. A contemporary study provides methodological support for comparing exegetical emphases. Since it does not examine *bakhs*, it is used to support the comparative approach rather than as evidence for the lexical meaning of *bakhs* (Zulkarnain and Khasanah 2024, 102).

The Distribution and Contextual Meanings of *Bakhs* in *Tafsīr al-Munīr*

This section presents Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī's interpretations of all occurrences of the root *bakhs* in the Qur'an. The discussion is limited to the linguistic forms, the contexts of the verses, and the meanings assigned by al-Zuḥaylī. The construction of the semantic frame elements and their implications for the principle of justice are not yet addressed in this section in order to avoid repetition with the subsequent analytical section.

The Quranic Arabic Corpus records seven occurrences of the root *bakhs*. Five occur in verbal forms derived from the basic stem, or Form I, while the other two occur in nominal forms. Four of the verbs appear in active prohibitive constructions, one verb occurs in a passive-negative construction, one nominal form describes the condition of a price, and another nominal form functions as the object of a verb expressing fear (Quran.com, n.d.). The distribution of these forms may be mapped as follows:

Table 1. Distribution, Morphological Forms, and Grammatical Constructions of the Root *Bakhs* in the Qur'an.

Verse and Form	Morphological Category	Grammatical Construction	Context
Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282 (<i>Yabkhas</i>)	<i>Fi'l muḍāri'</i> , third-person masculine singular, active.	Jussive after <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> .	Dictation and documentation of debt.
Q.S. Al-A'rāf [7]: 85 (<i>Tabkhasū</i>)	<i>Fi'l muḍāri'</i> , second-person masculine plural, active.	Prohibition with <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> .	Transactions and the rights of the people of Madyan.
Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 (<i>Yubkhasūn</i>)	<i>Fi'l muḍāri'</i> , third-person masculine plural, passive.	Negative statement with <i>lā al-nāfiyah</i> .	The outcomes of deeds oriented towards worldly life.
Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85 (<i>tabkhasū</i>)	<i>Fi'l muḍāri'</i> , second-person masculine plural, active.	Prohibition with <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> .	Measures, weights, and people's rights.
Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 (<i>Bakhsin</i>)	<i>Maṣḍar</i> functioning adjectivally.	<i>Na'at</i> modifying <i>thamanin</i> and marked as <i>ma-jrūr</i> .	The price for which the Prophet Yūsuf was sold.
Q.S. Ash-Shu'arā' [26]: 183 (<i>Tabkhasū</i>)	<i>Fi'l muḍāri'</i> , second-person masculine plural, active.	Prohibition with <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> .	Transactional measures and all human rights.
Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 (<i>Bakhsan</i>)	<i>Maṣḍar</i> marked as <i>maṣṣūb</i> .	Object of the verb <i>yakhbāf</i> .	A guarantee for those who believe.

The table presents the morphological and syntactic inventory, based on the Quranic Arabic Corpus, together with the verse contexts discussed below. Al-Zuḥaylī's explanations give these contrasts their exegetical significance: in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, the debtor is prohibited from understating the obligation being acknowledged, whereas in Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 the recipients are described as not suffering diminution in their worldly recompense (Zuḥaylī 1991, 108).

In al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation, the use of the root *bakhs* in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, Q.S. Al-A'rāf [7]: 85, Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85, and Q.S. Ash-Shu'arā' [26]: 183 concerns human actions that diminish something belonging by right to another party. In Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, the prohibition is directed at the person dictating the debt, who is instructed not to diminish in the slightest the obligation that must be acknowledged. In the three verses associated with the preaching of the Prophet Syu'ayb, meanwhile, al-Zuḥaylī does not restrict *bakhs* to fraud involving measures and weights, but extends it to the diminution of property, rights, and values that others are entitled to receive. This pattern indicates that measures and weights constitute concrete manifestations of the violation, while the semantic

centre lies in the act of reducing actual fulfilment below the established measure of a right. Al-Zuhaylī's interpretation thus moves *bakhs* beyond the technical domain of transactions towards a broader principle concerning the protection of rights in social and economic relations.

Another dimension appears in the interpretation of Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 through the phrase *bi-thamanin bakhsin*. Al-Zuhaylī understands this phrase as referring to a low or deficient price, or one that falls below the *thaman al-mithl*, namely, the equivalent value that ought to be assigned to the object being exchanged. In this context, *bakhs* no longer directly denote the act of diminishing a right, as it does in the prohibitive constructions, but instead describes the condition of a price that has been reduced. This interpretation demonstrates that the criterion for *bakhs* is not merely the small nominal amount of the payment, but the incongruity between the price given and the value of the object being traded. The sale of the Prophet Yūsuf at a low price may therefore be understood as a form of value deficit: the payment actually made was not commensurate with the value that ought to have been attributed to the object. Although the narrative context also contains elements of exploitation and human degradation, these constitute ethical implications of the event rather than the direct lexical meaning of the word *bakhs*.

Unlike the preceding verses, Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 employ the root *bakhs* in negative constructions to affirm that no diminution occurs. Al-Zuhaylī interprets Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 as referring to the full granting of worldly recompense to those whose deeds are directed solely towards worldly life, whereas Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 affirms that believers need not fear that the reward for their good deeds will be diminished or that they will be subjected to injustice. The worldly fulfilment described in Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 remains related to human effort and divine determination; it should not be read as an unconditional promise that every desired worldly outcome will be obtained. The difference lies in the source and object of fulfilment: the first group of verses regulates human conduct so that people do not diminish the rights of others, while the second group affirms the completeness of the recompense granted by God. Despite the differences in context and object, all of al-Zuhaylī's interpretations preserve one consistent semantic element: the existence of something that ought to be received based on a right, value, outcome, or recompense, but that may potentially be realized below the appropriate standard. On this basis, the occurrences of *bakhs* examined here evoke a shortfall relative to a contextually grounded standard, while their constructions distinguish whether that shortfall is prohibited, described, or negated.

To determine whether this pattern of meaning is distinctive to al-Zuhaylī's interpretation or displays continuity with the earlier exegetical tradition, the reading of *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* must be compared, in a limited manner, with the interpretations of several other exegetes. In his interpretation of Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85, al-Ṭabarī understands the prohibition *wa-lā tabkhasū al-nāsa ašhyā'ahum* as a

prohibition against diminishing rights that must be fulfilled for others, whether in measures, weights, or other forms (Ṭabarī 2001, 540). This interpretation indicates that the semantic center of *bakhs* is not a particular measuring instrument, but a right grounded in an obligation. Al-Zamakhsharī offers a corresponding emphasis by explaining *al-qist* as fulfilment according to justice and equality, without either diminution or addition to the amount required, while interpreting *bakhs* as *al-haḍm wa-al-naqṣ*, namely, deprivation or diminution (Zamakhsharī 1987, 417). Al-Zuhaylī's explanation of *bakhs* as the diminution of rights thus displays continuity with the earlier exegetical tradition. Al-Zuhaylī also explicitly discusses the diminution of value and nonmaterial rights. The selected comparisons establish continuity on the points examined, but do not establish that these broader emphases are unique to his commentary.

This comparison becomes even clearer in relation to the nominal form *bakhsin* in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20. Al-Zamakhsharī interprets *thamanin bakhsin* as a price that has been manifestly reduced from the value of the commodity, or as defective payment, such that the word *bakhs* describes the disproportionality between the price paid and the value of the object exchanged (Zamakhsharī 1987, 452). Ibn 'Āsyūr provides a more precise semantic qualification by stating that *bakhs* is originally the verbal noun of the act of reducing something from its value, but that in this verse it is used in the sense of *mabkhūs*, namely, a price that has been reduced. He also understands the phrase *darābima ma'dūdah* as a figurative expression for a small amount, since a small sum can still be easily counted one coin at a time (Ibn 'Āshūr 1984, 244). This interpretation strengthens al-Zuhaylī's view that the price paid for the Prophet Yūsuf was below the *thaman al-mithl*. The standard of diminution in this verse is therefore not merely the small nominal amount, but the disproportionality between the price and the value that ought to have been recognized. Exploitation and degradation of the Prophet Yūsuf, meanwhile, must still be treated as ethical implications of the narrative context rather than as the direct lexical meaning of the word *bakhs*.

In the negative constructions, comparison among exegetical interpretations reveals a shift from human acts that diminish rights to a guarantee that no diminution will occur. In Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15, al-Ṭabarī explains *wa-hum fihā lā yubkhasūn* as the full granting of recompense for deeds directed towards worldly life, without any diminution within the worldly domain itself. In Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13, he interprets *bakhsan* as the diminution of the reward for good deeds, while *rahaqan* refers to the imposition of another person's sins or of evil deeds that were never committed (Ṭabarī 2001, 331). These interpretations support al-Zuhaylī's distinction between *bakhs* in interpersonal relations and *bakhs* that is negated in the granting of recompense. The consistent element across all uses of *bakhs* is therefore not the type of object involved, but the presence of a normative measure that relates a right, value, outcome, or recompense to the realization actually

received. The grammatical form then indicates whether the verse foregrounds an act of diminution, the condition of something that has already been diminished, or a guarantee that no diminution will occur.

The Construction of the Semantic Frame of *al-Bakhs*

The mapping presented in the preceding subsection demonstrates that the seven occurrences of the root *bakhs* do not produce seven entirely separate meanings. Although changes in context alter the participants, objects, grammatical forms, and direction of evaluation, all seven occurrences activate a relationship between a contextually grounded standard and a shortfall that is prohibited, described, or negated. In Frame Semantics, the meaning of a lexical element is not limited to a list of definitional features but is understood through an experiential structure comprising particular events, participants, objects, circumstances, relationships, and consequences (Fillmore 1976, 32). Fillmore and Baker emphasize that frame analysis must explain the linguistic forms that evoke a frame, the elements involved in it, and the ways in which those elements are grammatically realized (Fillmore and Baker 2012, 340). Recent developments in FrameNet likewise maintain the distinction among a *frame*, a *frame element*, and a *lexical unit* as a specific pairing of form and meaning (Boas et al. 2024, 284)

Consequently, the root *bakhs* function in this study as the basis for compiling the corpus, but it is not automatically assumed to constitute a single uniform lexical unit. Each form and instance of use is examined according to its contextual meaning. The application of Frame Semantics to the Qur'an was pioneered by Sharaf and Atwell through the alignment of Qur'anic verbs with frames and frame elements in FrameNet, although their research remained a work in progress (Sharaf and Atwell 2009, 2). Gargett and Leung have also demonstrated that FrameNet annotation can be applied to an Arabic-language corpus; however, their object of study was Emirati Arabic rather than Qur'anic Arabic (Gargett and Leung 2020, 72). These two studies provide procedural support, rather than direct evidence that *bakhs* constitute a particular frame.

The frame reconstructed in this study is therefore not pre-existing but is derived through a comparison of the seven verses, the grammatical forms employed, the parties involved, the objects under discussion, and Wahbah al-Zuhayli's explanations. On the basis of this comparison, the *bakhs* frame is designated the normative-deficit frame. This term is an analytical construct developed by the researcher, rather than the name of a frame formulated by al-Zuhayli or a standard category within FrameNet. The term deficit refers to a realization that falls below its point of comparison, while normative indicates that the point of comparison is not merely a neutral numerical value, but a right, value, measure, or outcome that has a legitimate basis for fulfilment. This label is adopted because the term diminution does not adequately explain the relationship among the participants, object, and standard, whereas the term injustice is too broad to be applied uniformly both to a

low price and to constructions that explicitly negate the occurrence of diminution.

The normative element is grounded in the standards identified within the exegetical contexts rather than imposed as an identical rule on every occurrence. In Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, the reference point is the debt that must be truthfully acknowledged. In the verses concerning Shu‘ayb, it is the measure or right that must not be diminished. In Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20, al-Zuḥaylī’s reference to *thaman al-mithl* provides a comparative standard for assessing the deficient price, without converting the description into a general ruling that legitimizes the transaction. In Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13, the relevant standard concerns the recompense described in the respective theological contexts. Normative therefore denotes a contextually warranted basis of evaluation; it does not mean that every occurrence expresses the same kind of legally enforceable entitlement.

For this study, an occurrence evokes the normative-deficit frame when the verse and al-Zuḥaylī’s explanation allow the identification of an object and an affected party, a contextually grounded standard, and an actual or potential shortfall relative to that standard. The analysis must also establish whether the construction prohibits, describes, or negates the shortfall. A decrease or difference alone is insufficient: the relevant standard and the relationship between that standard and its realization must be identifiable. These criteria distinguish the evocation of a deficit from its actual occurrence. The prohibitive verses identify a diminution that must be prevented, without necessarily reporting that it has occurred. Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 describes a deficient price, whereas Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 negate diminution. The three configurations therefore share a relationship between standard and realization while differing in the status of the shortfall. Intentional wrongdoing is not assumed in every occurrence.

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, the debtor occupies the position of the party who controls the acknowledgment of the obligation, the creditor is the affected party, the amount of the debt constitutes the object, and the actual amount of the obligation serves as the standard of comparison. A deficit may arise when the acknowledged obligation is lower than the actual amount owed. In Q.S. Al-A‘rāf [7]: 85, the transacting party or member of society stands in relation to the owner of goods, rights, or merits. The objects include both material and nonmaterial rights, while the point of comparison is the right or value that ought to be given and acknowledged. Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85 exhibits a similar relationship in relation to measures, weights, and the fulfilment of rights, whereas Q.S. Ash-Shu‘arā’ [26]: 183 extends the object to both quantitative and nonquantitative rights.

A different arrangement appears in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20. The parties conducting the transaction are not directly profiled, while the element foregrounded is the actual price, which falls below the *thaman al-mithl*. In Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15, God occupies the position of the giver of worldly results; those whose actions are oriented towards worldly life are the recipients, and the results assigned in

worldly life constitute the standard of comparison. The diminution mentioned in the verse does not occur but is instead negated. In Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13, *bakhs* concerns the diminution of good deeds or their reward, whereas *rahaq* concerns an unjust increase in evil deeds attributed to the believer. The present frame analysis concerns the former; the latter supplies the accompanying context of protection from injustice.

This mapping demonstrates that the most stable element is neither the agent, the type of object, nor the domain in which the term is used. The stable elements are the presence of something being evaluated, a standard of comparison, and the relationship between that standard and an actual or potential realization. The object may consist of a debt, goods, a measure, social recognition, a price, a worldly outcome, or recompense for deeds, but it is always situated in relation to the amount or degree that ought to be realized. Accordingly, the minimum structure of the *bakhs* frame consists of an object, an appropriate standard, an actual or potential realization, the possibility of a deficit discrepancy, an affected party, and a normative evaluation of the relationship among these elements. Petruck explains that FrameNet recognizes certain semantic roles that are not explicitly realized through the concept of *null instantiation* (Petruck 2019, 123). Nevertheless, elements derived from exegetical explanations in this study are referred to only as contextually reconstructed elements and are not automatically classified as instances of null instantiation without syntactic and pragmatic examination. This distinction is important because the information evoked by a lexical element is not always identical to the information supplied by context, general knowledge, or interpretation (Torrent et al. 2022, 4)

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, for example, the creditor's right is understood through the context of debt, while the standard of comparison is derived from the actual amount of the obligation. In Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20, the party responsible for creating the disproportionate price is not the grammatical centre of the construction, but the standard of value may be reconstructed from al-Zuḥaylī's explanation of *thaman al-mithl*. In the two verses containing negation, the deficit discrepancy does not actually occur, but it is nevertheless presented as a possibility that is subsequently rejected. The presence of an element within a frame therefore does not necessarily mean that the element is explicitly expressed in the sentence structure.

On the basis of the relationships among its elements, the normative-deficit frame produces three configurations. The first is the violation configuration, found in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 85, Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85, and Q.S. Ash-Shu'arā' [26]: 183. In this configuration, one party controls the process of acknowledging, measuring, delivering, or evaluating something that constitutes another party's right. The relationship among the participants is asymmetrical because one party has the opportunity to realize that it will be received by the other.

The active form within a prohibitive construction profiles the party who has the potential to create the deficit. Its normative evaluation therefore arises not merely from a quantitative discrepancy, but also from the violation of the obligation to fulfil another party's right.

The violation configuration does not require a single specific mechanism. A deficit may be created through nominal reduction, incomplete measurement, incomplete acknowledgment of an obligation, concealment of information, or an evaluation that diminishes another party's rights. These variations demonstrate that the core of the frame is not the instrument employed, but the relational outcome it produces. Al-Zuhayli's interpretation of the verses concerning the Prophet Shu'ayb shows that a deficit may arise through either physical action or the control of information. In both circumstances, the affected party receives less than the amount or degree that it has a legitimate basis to receive.

The second is the assessment configuration, as illustrated in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20. The nominal form *bakhsin* qualifies the price, so that the profiled element is the condition of the transactional outcome rather than the action of its agent. The actual price is evaluated by comparing it with the *thaman al-mithl*. Unlike the violation configuration, the structure of this verse does not directly contain either a command or a prohibition. The evaluation emerges through an attribute that indicates disproportionality. The agent, affected party, and transactional process remain available within the narrative context, but the linguistic focus rests on the condition of the value produced.

The third is the guaranteed configuration, found in Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 and Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13. In this configuration, the possibility of a deficit remains activated, but its realization is negated. Q.S. Hūd [11]: 15 profiles the recipient through a passive form, whereas Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13 presents *bakhsan* as something that need not be feared. Neither verse portrays God as an agent of diminution; rather, He is presented as the giver and guarantor of an outcome that does not fall below what has been justly due. The difference between violation and guarantee configurations therefore lies in the polarity of realization: in human conduct, the deficit constitutes a prohibited possibility, whereas in divine reckoning, that possibility is introduced only to be negated.

Variations among active, passive, and nominal forms also reveal differences in perspectivization. The active form foregrounds the source of an action, the passive form foregrounds the recipient of an outcome, the attributive nominal form foregrounds the condition of a value, and the *maṣḍar* in a construction expressing fear foregrounds the possibility of a consequence. These differences in perspective do not invalidate the unity of the frame because the object, standard, and deficit relationship remain identifiable. The semantic frames of the term *rabb* demonstrate that the use of a Qur'anic lexeme may produce different conceptual configurations according to its verse context (Riyadi and Thalib 2025, 380). The

present study differs in that it does not construct several parallel frames but instead examines one core relationship through variations in the realization of its elements and polarity.

Hassan demonstrates that terms in Arabic may carry networks of knowledge and conceptual relations that remain invisible when analysis stops at lexical similarity (Bahaa-eddin 2017, 389). This supports the conclusion that *bakhs* cannot adequately be translated simply as to diminish without explaining the affected party and the standard being violated. Ismail likewise emphasizes the importance of relating Qur'anic vocabulary to its textual and situational contexts rather than treating it as an isolated unit (Ismail 2024, 1345). Durie, meanwhile, demonstrates that Qur'anic vocabulary that is difficult to render through a direct equivalent may be decomposed into more explicit semantic components (Durie and Mapk 2022, 969). Although Durie employs Natural Semantic Metalanguage rather than Frame Semantics, his study reinforces the need to distinguish the semantic core from contextual elements. Similar caution is required when Frame Semantics is applied to early Arabic, because the cultural context and textual patterns of use may contain relationships that are not fully represented in modern FrameNet (Pietrzak 2025, 120).

The traceability of this construction is maintained by treating each occurrence in the verses as a unit of analysis and examining it through the same coding fields, namely, the agent or source of realization, the affected party, the object, the standard of comparison, the realization relationship, and the configuration. O'Connor and Joffe explain that a codebook, trial coding, agreement checks, and discussion of discrepancies can increase analytical transparency, although such procedures do not in themselves prove the validity of a substantive interpretation (O'Connor and Joffe 2020, 10). Elo and colleagues likewise emphasize the importance of clearly defining the unit of analysis, category definitions, the abstraction process, and the reporting of the decision trail so that the relationship between the data and the findings can be examined (Elo et al. 2014, 7). In this study, the function of these procedures is not to replace the authority of the Qur'anic text or al-Zuhaylī's exegesis, but to ensure that the analytical process leading from the verse data to the frame construction remains traceable.

The coding results demonstrate that intentionality is not a necessary element in the minimum structure of the frame. Intentionality is strongly evident in the prohibitions against manipulating rights, but it is not profiled in the description of the price and is not relevant as an actual action in the verses containing negation. Injustice should likewise not be incorporated as an identical meaning in all occurrences. Injustice constitutes the dominant evaluation when human beings unlawfully create a deficit in the rights of others, whereas the relationship between the standard and its realization is the more general element because it can account for the violation, assessment, and guarantee configurations alike.

The unity of this frame, however, cannot be established solely based on the shared *bakhs* root. Etymological relatedness provides a starting point for investigation, but it does not in itself prove that every derived form has the same reference, nuance, and discourse function. The study by Altohami and Khafaga demonstrates that Qur'anic lexical pairs that are etymologically related may possess overlapping referential ranges, while their connotations and discursive functions remain distinct due to the grammatical constructions and the historical and theological contexts of each occurrence (Altohami and Khafaga 2023, 23). Accordingly, the unit of analysis in this study is not the *bakhs* root detached from its context, but each occurrence within a verse, together with its morphological form, syntactic structure, semantic participants, object, and event domain. This procedure is consistent with the findings of Prasetiawati, Amalia, and Irsad, who show that al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation in *al-Taḥsīn al-Munīr* is shaped through an integrated analysis of *mufradāt*, etymology, morphology, *i'rāb*, and syntactic structure (Prasetiawati et al. 2025, 522). The data are therefore unified only after the contextual differences among the verses have been explained, rather than before the analysis begins.

Once differentiation at the level of lexical use has been carried out, unification at the frame level can be justified only when a recurring conceptual relationship is identified. Developments in FrameNet indicate that a single frame is not formed merely by similarities in dictionary meaning, but by the relationship of lexical units to a situational schema and to semantic roles that can be explicitly mapped (Boas et al. 2025, 189). In the *bakhs* data, the recurring elements consist of the presence of a standard of right or value, the realization of that standard, and the possibility of a detrimental discrepancy between the two. This relational similarity does not eliminate the differences among the violation, assessment, and guarantee configurations. A useful comparison is provided by the study of Sholeha, Isnaeni, and Alghifari, which demonstrates that *al-mīzān* and *al-qistās*, although both situated within the semantic field of measurement and justice, are not fully interchangeable: *al-mīzān* more strongly represents the universal and normative principle of balance, whereas *al-qistās* profiles its concrete application in social, legal, and economic life (Sholeha et al. 2026, 20). In the same way, variations in the use of *bakhs* must be preserved at the level of semantic profiling, even though all of them may be situated within a single underlying relationship between standard and realization.

At the interpretive level, the term normative-deficit frame must be treated as the product of analytical reconstruction rather than as a direct lexical translation of the word *bakhs*. The encyclopedic semantic model developed by Darmawan, Riyani, and Husaini emphasizes the importance of identifying the limitations of a model, developing an analytical design, verifying it, and demonstrating its application to Qur'anic data (Darmawan et al. 2020, 184). On the basis of

this principle, the construction of the *bakhs* frame derives its foundation not merely from translational equivalents, but from the distribution of the verses, grammatical forms, relationships among participants, al-Zuḥaylī's interpretations, and comparisons across contexts. Such caution is also relevant to Almjlad's finding that compressing Qur'anic vocabulary into a single target-language equivalent may obscure the relational and contextual layers of its meaning (Almjlad 2025, 14). Meanwhile, Abou-Bakr's analysis of *qisṭ* situates justice within a conceptual network that includes *mīzān*, *tatfīf*, *istikbār*, and *istiḍ'āf*, thereby demonstrating that the curtailment of rights must be understood through the relationship among measurement, power, and the disadvantaged party (Abou-Bakr 2023, 12). That article does not prove that *bakhs* is identical to all of these concepts, but it serves as conceptual triangulation supporting the view that the diminution of rights constitutes a normative relationship that extends beyond acts of purely quantitative reduction.

Accordingly, the *bakhs* semantic frame may be formulated as a conceptual structure relating a right, value, outcome, or recompense to a contextually grounded standard and a shortfall that is prohibited, described, or explicitly negated. This frame is unified at the level of its underlying relational structure, but remains flexible with respect to its participants, objects, domains, grammatical forms, and polarity. The violation configuration profiles the prohibited creation of a deficit, the assessment configuration profiles a state of disproportionality, and the guaranteed configuration profiles the negation of a deficit. This reconstruction provides the foundation for the following discussion of the anti-*bakhs* principle, without implying that the terms normative-deficit frame or anti-*bakhs* were directly formulated by Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī.

Reconstructing the Anti-*Bakhs* Principle from al-Zuḥaylī's Interpretation

This section reconstructs a specific anti-*bakhs* principle through three inferential steps. First, the semantic analysis identifies a recurring relationship between a contextually warranted standard and a shortfall that is prohibited, described, or negated. Second, the prohibitive verses establish the normative direction of this relationship: another party's due must not be diminished, which entails preserving its full realization. The assessment of the price in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 clarifies the relevance of proportional valuation, while the guaranteed constructions affirm non-diminution within their respective theological contexts. Neither the descriptive price construction nor the divine guarantees are treated independently as universal commands governing human institutions. Third, the study formulates the shared anti-diminution orientation as an analytical principle: legitimately grounded rights and values should be fully and proportionately realized without unjustifiable diminution. The principle is thus supported by the normative content of the exegetical contexts, rather than deduced from a descriptive semantic structure alone. It is the researcher's reconstruction, not a

term directly formulated by al-Zuḥaylī (Shohib 2024, 2880)

Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282 provides a concrete illustration of this reasoning. As explained in the preceding analysis, al-Zuḥaylī understands the prohibition as requiring the debtor not to diminish the obligation being acknowledged. The debtor is the party responsible for dictation, the creditor holds the corresponding right, the debt is the object, and the actual obligation supplies the standard. Understanding that obligation would create a discrepancy between the creditor's due and its documented acknowledgment. The semantic analysis identifies this discrepancy as the prohibited deficit; the normative inference is that the acknowledgment must preserve the obligation in full. In this example, the anti-*bakhs* principle links the protection of a substantive right with the accuracy of the procedure through which it is recorded (Zuḥaylī 1991, 108).

The procedural and institutional implications require support from *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* itself. In his interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisā' [4]: 135, al-Zuḥaylī emphasizes truthful testimony and the rejection of partiality arising from wealth, poverty, or family relationships. His interpretation of Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]: 8 similarly requires justice despite hostility towards another party (Zuḥaylī 1991, 118). These explanations, discussed further below, provide an exegetical basis for examining how rights are acknowledged and adjudicated. Relating them to anti-*bakhs* is an analytical step taken in this study: partial procedures may contribute to the under-fulfilment of rights. *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu* supplies supplementary context for al-Zuḥaylī's wider account of governance and justice (Zuḥaylī 1991, 4998) but does not independently establish the meaning of *bakhs* in the seven-verse corpus.

This formulation is consistent with al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation of Q.S. An-Nahl [16]: 90. He understands *al-'adl* as objectivity and the proper fulfilment of obligations, whereas *iḥsān* refers to the perfect completion of an act or to giving beyond what is obligatory. The distinction between the two is important because anti-*bakhs* belongs to the domain of obligatory justice, rather than to the domain of additional generosity. A person cannot be considered to have acted with *iḥsān* when the basic rights of another party have not yet been fulfilled. Nor can a voluntary addition compensate for the diminution of an obligatory right.

On the basis of this relationship, the anti-*bakhs* principle may be formulated as the requirement that every right or value possessing a legitimate basis be realized fully and proportionately, without any unjustifiable diminution. This formulation does not equate justice with the distribution of identical amounts. The appropriate standard may differ according to the type of right, contract, contribution, need, responsibility, or legal status involved. Consequently, differences in outcomes do not necessarily constitute *bakhs*. A difference becomes unjust when it causes a person to receive less than a right that has a legitimate basis. Suryadinata likewise demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept of *al-'adl* encompasses placing things in

their proper position, fulfilling rights, maintaining balance, and treating parties impartially, rather than merely ensuring nominal equality (Suryadinata 2020, 40)

The following discussion distinguishes three levels of support. The first consists of the direct exegetical findings concerning debt, measurement, rights, valuation, and recompense in the *bakhs* corpus. The second draws on al-Zuḥaylī's interpretations of other verses and his related writings to contextualize those findings. The third develops possible contemporary applications. The dimensions below are therefore not presented as separate lexical meanings of *bakhs* or as an exhaustive classification explicitly formulated in *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*.

The first dimension of the anti-*bakhs* principle is the complete fulfilment of rights. Justice in this dimension begins before a right is actually delivered, because the right must first be correctly acknowledged, recorded, measured, and evaluated. Diminution may occur when the amount of obligation is understated, the quality of goods is concealed, measurements are manipulated, or information determining a right is presented incompletely. Anti-*bakhs* therefore encompasses both substantive and procedural justice. Substantive justice concerns the right or outcome actually received, whereas procedural justice concerns the honesty, accuracy, and transparency of the mechanism through which that outcome is produced. This distinction is consistent with Nurlaila Harun's study, which presents substantive and procedural dimensions as two interdependent aspects in the realization of justice under Islamic law (Harun 2022)

This procedural dimension is related to al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisā' [4]: 135. He explains *qawwāmīna bi al-qisṭ* as a command to uphold justice earnestly and perfectly. Justice applies in courts, workplaces, families, public services, and relations among leaders, officials, workers, and members of society. A person's wealth must not give rise to partiality, while poverty must not be used as a reason to disregard the facts. Testimony must conform to the truth even when it is detrimental to oneself or to close family members (Zuḥaylī 1991, 312). Altohami likewise finds that al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisā' [4]: 135 affirms equal treatment of the rich and the poor and rejects the determination of testimony based on economic status (Bastari 2024, 124). Analytically, these explanations demonstrate that procedures that appear formally valid may nevertheless produce *bakhs* when they are controlled by personal desire, conflicts of interest, discrimination, or the manipulation of information.

The second dimension is impartiality in determining rights. In his interpretation of Q.S. Al-Mā'idah [5]: 8, al-Zuḥaylī describes justice as the measure of rights. Hatred towards a particular group must not cause a person to abandon justice. Rights must continue to be fulfilled for both allies and adversaries (Zuḥaylī 1991, 116). This principle indicates that the identity of a party must not be used to lower the standard of that party's rights. Personal closeness, hostility, economic status, family ties, or social differences cannot be used as grounds for giving someone less

than the amount or degree to which that person is legitimately entitled.

Impartiality does not mean ignoring differences in facts, capacities, and responsibilities. Justice still permits different treatment when relevant and defensible reasons exist. What it rejects is differentiation arising from hatred, prejudice, personal interest, or the domination of one group. Sabri Ciftci's study of Islam and social justice demonstrates that an egalitarian orientation and concern for the interests of others are important elements of Islamic social justice (Ciftci 2019, 576). Within the context of al-Zuḥaylī's thought, Basyiruddin and Yunus show that support for relatives or close associates is not automatically considered unjust. Such support becomes blameworthy when it disregards competence and deprives a more deserving party of its rights, whereas assigning responsibility on the basis of ability, honesty, and the public good may remain justifiable. This finding reinforces the boundary that anti-*bakhs* rejects partiality that diminishes rights, rather than every form of differentiation that rests on an objective basis (Basyiruddin and Yunus 2025, 116).

The third dimension concerns proportionality between value and valuation. Its direct exegetical basis is the assessment of the price in Q.S. Yūsuf [12]: 20 against *thaman al-mithl*. Extending this relationship to wages, professional decisions, or forms of recognition constitutes a contemporary normative application. Such an application requires evidence that the relevant right or value has a defensible basis and that its realization falls below that basis without adequate justification. Neither a low nominal amount nor dissatisfaction with an outcome is sufficient by itself to establish *bakhs*.

Proportionality cannot always be determined through a single mathematical calculation. Value may depend on quality, market conditions, agreement, professional standards, or recognized custom. However, variation in value does not mean that every valuation can be justified. A claim of *bakhs* must be supported by a verifiable standard of comparison. Without such a standard, the assertion that a price, wage, or form of recognition is too low remains merely subjective. The application of the anti-*bakhs* principle therefore requires two forms of proof simultaneously: the existence of a legitimate basis for the right or value concerned, and an actual realization that falls below that basis.

The fourth dimension concerns material and nonmaterial rights. The inclusion of nonmaterial rights has explicit exegetical support: al-Zuḥaylī's discussion of Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 85 includes knowledge and virtues, while his treatment of Q.S. Ash-Shu'ara' [26]: 183 includes dignity and honor. Applying this scope to the erasure of professional contributions, unacknowledged appropriation of work, or unjustified disparagement of competence is a further analytical development. These examples should therefore be distinguished from al-Zuḥaylī's own formulations. Their classification as anti-*bakhs* concerns requires an identifiable entitlement or contribution and evidence of its unjustified diminution, rather than a subjective

feeling of insufficient appreciation.

The fifth dimension is proportionality between actions and recompense. In human contexts, proportionality means that a right or outcome must not be granted below the amount or degree that has been established. In Q.S. Al-Jinn [72]: 13, the negation of *bakhs* concerns the diminution of good deeds or their reward, while the accompanying negation of *rahaq* concerns an unjust increase in evil deeds. Together, the expressions affirm protection from injustice, but they retain distinct lexical contributions.

This theme also appears in *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīf*. Al-Zuḥaylī discusses divine justice as the differentiation among and judgment of various groups of people based on their faith and deeds. He also relates the *mīzān* of the hereafter to the meticulous establishment of justice, so that human beings understand that the reckoning of deeds does not occur arbitrarily (Zuḥaylī 2002, 639). This explanation supports the guaranteed configuration within the *bakhs* frame: the possibility of diminution is conceptually introduced but is then excluded from divine reckoning.

The sixth dimension develops a possible social and institutional application of the anti-*bakhs* principle, informed by the supplementary accounts of justice discussed in this section. In *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, al-Zuḥaylī associates social justice with solidarity, economic balance, the prevention of the abuse of rights, the reduction of excessive inequality, and the authority of government to prevent harm and arbitrary conduct (Zuḥaylī 1985, 4997). On this supplementary basis, the present study proposes that the prevention of under-fulfilment may require institutional safeguards, such as supervision, transparent procedures, and mechanisms for restoring rights. These safeguards are normative implications developed here, rather than direct lexical components of *bakhs*. At the level of contemporary application, the anti-*bakhs* principle may also be used to examine whether institutional procedures systematically result in the under-fulfilment of established rights (Jamal 2022, 259)

This reading is consistent with Roro Fatihin's study, which relates social justice in the Qur'an to the protection of rights, welfare, social responsibility, and criticism of inequality (Fatihin 2017, 300). Haeruddin and colleagues further demonstrate that Qur'anic social justice provides practical instruments for protecting vulnerable groups and addressing structural poverty, unequal access, and exploitation (Haeruddin et al. 2025, 536). Nevertheless, anti-*bakhs* have a more specific scope than the broader concept of social justice. Its function is to detect a deficit by assessing whether acknowledgment, valuation, distribution, payment, recognition, or recompense falls below the appropriate standard. This principle does not replace the concepts of *'adl*, *qist*, *mīzān*, or *iḥsān*, but explains one concrete mechanism through which injustice may arise.

Al-Zuḥaylī's concept of justice may also be read through *Wasāṭiyyat al-Islām wa Samāḥatuhu*. In that work, he explains that moderation is related to justice

because it remains distant from the two poles of *ifrāt* and *tafrīt*, namely excess and deficiency (Zuḥaylī 2004, 6). This relationship reinforces the dimensions of balance and proportionality. Nevertheless, *wasatiyyah* is not identical to *anti-bakhs*. *Wasatiyyah* describes a balanced position between two extremes, whereas *anti-bakhs* specifically prevents a realization from falling below a legitimate right or standard. Kustiadi's reconstruction of al-Zuḥaylī's interpretation of *wasat* clarifies its conceptual boundary. *Wasat* refers to a balanced disposition that avoids excess and deficiency in religious and worldly matters (Kustiadi 2024, 166). In contrast, *anti-bakhs* denotes a normative requirement that a due right or value must not be delivered below its proper measure. Both reject unjust deviation, but they differ in function: *wasatiyyah* governs balance between extremes, while *anti-bakhs* specifically prevents under-fulfilment of what is owed. Thus, *anti-bakhs* is not synonymous with *wasatiyyah*, but a more specific principle of preventing unjustified diminution.

Contemporary studies of Qur'anic justice provide a broader context for discussing possible applications of the *anti-bakhs* principle; they do not independently validate the semantic frame reconstructed from the seven occurrences. Junaidi, Abdul Majid, and Nazri demonstrate that Qur'anic social justice encompasses respect for human dignity, freedom, the equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, and the recognition of fundamental rights (Junaidi et al. 2023, 192). This scope indicates that justice does not end with normative recognition but requires correspondence between the rights acknowledged and the conditions actually experienced by their holders. Alikhani likewise presents justice as a principle that must be translated into practical action rather than left as an abstract moral value (Alikhani 2023). Al-Khatib, meanwhile, shows that discrimination arises when social relations confer privileges upon certain groups at the expense of others (Khatib 2023, 66). Within the *anti-bakhs* framework, these three studies reinforce the proposition that diminution may affect not only the quantity of goods or payments, but may also occur when the dignity, opportunities, treatment, or protection actually realized fall below the rights that ought to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, substantive justice cannot be reduced to nominal equality. Zubaidi, Arifah, and Sansayto explain that balance does not always require every party to receive the same form or amount; differences may be justified when they bear a defensible relationship to the respective functions, needs, and responsibilities of the parties concerned (Zubaidi et al. 2025, 66). This finding confirms that *anti-bakhs* do not reject every difference in outcomes, but rather differences that cause a particular party to receive less than its rightful due without objective justification. Daud's application of *maqāsidī* interpretation likewise demonstrates that an assessment of justice must take into account the protection of welfare, dignity, and the rights of affected parties, rather than merely the formal

validity of an action (Daud 2025, 16). Accordingly, the standard of comparison in the application of anti-*bakhs* must be derived from legitimate rights, relevant responsibilities, protective objectives, and the empirical consequences produced. Without such a basis, it becomes difficult to distinguish objectively between justifiable proportionality and a diminution of rights that constitutes *bakhs*.

At the social and institutional levels, Afifi and colleagues demonstrate that the distribution of social assistance constitutes an instrument of distributive justice but may become distorted when its administration is influenced by personal interests, political interests, or inaccurate targeting (Afifi et al. 2025, 26). Karim and Muhtador broaden this issue by showing that social inequality is connected to power relations, resource distribution, and ideological legitimation that may preserve structures of injustice (Karim and Muhtador 2025, 300). The anti-*bakhs* principle may therefore be used to evaluate not only individual conduct, but also procedures and structures that repeatedly cause a particular group to receive access, resources, or recognition below the level to which it is entitled. This reading is consistent with the *wasatiyyah* framework developed by Azzuhri and Fadhil, which identifies balance, distributive justice, poverty reduction, and the circulation of wealth as elements of Islamic economic welfare (Azzuhri and Fadhil 2022, 239). Nevertheless, *wasatiyyah*, social justice, and anti-*bakhs* must not be treated as identical concepts. These studies function as forms of conceptual triangulation, whereas the evidence that *bakhs* constitutes a frame of diminution must still be derived from the verses containing that root and from al-Zuḥaylī's interpretations of them.

The application of the anti-*bakhs* principle requires several qualifications. First, not every factual deficiency carries the same degree of moral culpability; therefore, unintentional error must be distinguished from deliberate manipulation. Second, the standard of comparison must rest on a defensible basis. Third, differences in outcomes may be justified when they correspond to differences in rights, functions, responsibilities, needs, or contributions. Fourth, the extension of the principle to contemporary cases must be presented as a normative application rather than as the direct lexical meaning of the verses. Fifth, anti-*bakhs* establishes the minimum threshold of justice, but it does not preclude *iḥsān* or giving beyond what is obligatory.

Accordingly, this study reconstructs the anti-*bakhs* principle as a specific requirement to prevent the unjustified under-fulfilment of legitimately grounded rights and values. Its primary basis is the interpretation of the seven *bakhs* occurrences; other passages in *al-Tafṣīr al-Munīr* and al-Zuḥaylī's related works provide supplementary normative context. The discussion of employment, professional recognition, and institutional procedures develops possible applications whose validity depends on independently defensible standards and evidence. The resulting principle contributes one perspective to the study of

justice without claiming to reconstruct al-Zuḥaylī's entire conception of justice.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the seven Qur'anic occurrences of the root *bakhs* in Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī's *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* neither convey seven unrelated meanings nor permit reduction to the general equivalent diminution. Four occurrences appear in active prohibitive constructions concerning the diminution of rights in interpersonal relations, one nominal occurrence evaluates a price as falling below its commensurate value, and two occurrences negate diminution in the granting of worldly outcomes and divine recompense. Although their participants, objects, grammatical forms, domains, and polarity differ, the seven occurrences share a stable conceptual relationship involving an object of evaluation, a legitimate standard, an affected party, and a shortfall relative to that standard that is prohibited, described, or explicitly negated. These recurring elements form what this study designates as the normative-deficit frame, manifested through violation, assessment, and guarantee configurations.

The anti-*bakhs* principle is reconstructed by relating this semantic pattern to the normative direction of the prohibitive verses: the rejection of diminished rights entails preserving their full realization. The assessment configuration clarifies the relevance of proportional valuation, while the guaranteed configuration affirms non-diminution within its theological contexts. On this basis, the study formulates a specific principle requiring legitimately grounded rights and values to be fully and proportionately realized without unjustifiable diminution. This principle does not require identical outcomes or constitute a comprehensive account of Qur'anic justice. Applications for employment, professional recognition, and institutional procedures remain normative developments that require independently defensible standards and evidence. Both the normative-deficit frame and the anti-*bakhs* principle are analytical reconstructions developed in this study, not terms directly formulated by al-Zuḥaylī or established categories within FrameNet.

Because this research is limited to seven Qur'anic occurrences and one principal exegetical work, its findings should not be treated as establishing a universal semantic frame applicable to every exegetical tradition. Further research should compare the interpretation of *bakhs* across classical and modern commentaries, examine the consistency of the proposed coding categories, and assess the applicability of the anti-*bakhs* principle to contemporary issues such as valuation, employment, professional recognition, public services, and institutional access. Such applications must employ verifiable standards of rights and value while maintaining a clear distinction among lexical meaning, contextual implication, and contemporary normative development.

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