



DOI: [10.24014/jush.v33i1.36504](https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v33i1.36504)

p-ISSN: 1412-0909

e-ISSN: 2407-8247

Available online at website: <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/ushuluddin>

Thematic Qur'anic Interpretation of Human Trafficking: An Analysis of QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20 within the Framework of Islamic Ethics and the Palermo Protocol

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Article Information

Received: January 02, 2025

Revised: March 24, 2025

Available online: June 01, 2025

Published regularly: June 2025

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Keywords

Qur'an, human trafficking, thematic tafsir, Palermo Protocol, Islamic ethics

Abstract

*This study explores the Qur'anic perspective on human trafficking through a thematic analysis of QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20. The objective is to interpret the linguistic meanings of *al-bighā'*, *syarā*, and *milk al-yamīn*, and to map their alignment with the tripartite definition of the Palermo Protocol in order to formulate an Islamic ethical framework for combating trafficking. The research employs a qualitative library research method, integrating classical and contemporary tafsir (Ibn Kathir, al-Maraghi, Quraish Shihab) with human rights literature. Linguistic analysis reveals that the three Qur'anic terms represent the act, means, and purpose of modern exploitation. The interpretation of QS An-Nur 33 emphasizes the prohibition of forced prostitution and the protection of women's dignity, while the interpretation of QS Yusuf 19–20 critiques child commodification and highlights the trauma experienced by victims. Mapping these interpretations onto the Palermo Protocol uncovers a complete correspondence with the elements of act, means, and purpose, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of Sharia in criminalizing trafficking. The synthesis of the values of *'adl* (justice), *raḥmah* (compassion), and *karāmat al-insān* (human dignity) generates an ethical paradigm that underpins legislation, faith-based advocacy, and rehabilitation programs. The findings affirm that the Qur'an not only aligns with but also enriches the international legal framework with spiritual motivation. Practical implications include issuing fatwas equivalent to *ḥirābah*, allocating zakat for victims, and developing anti-trafficking education curricula*

Kata Kunci

Al Qur'an, human trafficking, tafsir tematik, Palermo Protocol, etika Islam

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi perspektif Al-Qur'an tentang perdagangan manusia melalui analisis tematik QS An-Nur 33 dan QS Yusuf 19–20. Tujuannya adalah untuk menafsirkan makna linguistik dari *al-bighā'*, *syarā*, dan *milik al-yamīn*, dan untuk memetakan keselarasannya dengan definisi tripartit Protokol Palermo untuk merumuskan kerangka etika Islam untuk memerangi perdagangan manusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, yang mengintegrasikan tafsir klasik dan kontemporer (Ibn Kathir, al-Maraghi, Quraish Shihab) dengan literatur hak asasi manusia. Analisis linguistik mengungkapkan bahwa ketiga istilah Al-Qur'an mewakili tindakan, cara, dan tujuan eksploitasi modern. Penafsiran QS An-Nur 33 menekankan larangan prostitusi paksa dan perlindungan martabat perempuan, sementara penafsiran QS Yusuf 19–20 mengkritik komodifikasi anak dan menyoroti trauma yang dialami oleh para korban. Pemetaan interpretasi ini ke dalam Protokol Palermo mengungkap korespondensi lengkap dengan unsur-unsur tindakan, cara, dan tujuan, sehingga memperkuat legitimasi Syariah dalam mengkriminalisasi perdagangan manusia. Sintesis nilai-nilai *'adl* (keadilan), *rahmah* (kasih sayang), dan *karāmat al-insān* (martabat manusia) menghasilkan paradigma etika yang mendukung legislasi, advokasi berbasis agama, dan program rehabilitasi. Temuan tersebut menegaskan bahwa Al-Qur'an tidak hanya selaras tetapi juga memperkaya kerangka hukum internasional dengan motivasi spiritual. Implikasi praktisnya meliputi penerbitan fatwa yang setara dengan *hirābah*, mengalokasikan zakat untuk korban, dan mengembangkan kurikulum pendidikan antiperdagangan manusia

Introduction

Human trafficking is now recognized as one of the most profitable and destructive transnational crimes, with tens of millions of victims ensnared in forced labor, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking worldwide.¹ The International Labour Organization describes this phenomenon as "modern slavery" because it objectifies human beings for economic gain and

¹ Frances P Bernat and Tatyana Zhilina, "Trafficking in Humans: The TIP Report," *Sociology Compass*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2011.00380.x>.

inflicts long-term trauma.² Victims' vulnerability is heightened by structural poverty, gender inequality, and unplanned migration in developing countries.³ In international law, the Palermo Protocol provides a tripartite definition—act, means, and purpose—that informs global efforts in prevention, prosecution, and protection.

For Muslim communities, this issue holds significant ethical urgency, as Islamic teachings emphasize *karāmat al-insān* (human dignity) and *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of life) as foundational principles. Although the Qur'an was revealed in a context where slavery was prevalent, it introduced progressive reforms that encouraged emancipation and prohibited exploitation.⁴ With the emergence of contemporary Islamic studies, the *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* (thematic exegesis) approach has become essential in addressing modern issues such as gender justice and human rights.⁵ However, human trafficking remains underexplored in tafsir scholarship, despite the presence of Qur'anic terms such as *al-bighā'*, *syarā'*, and *milk al-yamīn*, which resonate with contemporary issues of exploitation.

This research examines how the Qur'an, specifically through QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20, addresses the prohibition of human exploitation and the extent to which this aligns with international legal standards. Ambiguities in interpreting terms such as *al-bighā'* (forced prostitution), *syarā'* (human trafficking), and *milk al-yamīn* (slave ownership) highlight a disconnect between classical texts and contemporary realities. A methodological challenge emerges from the classical *bi al-riwāyah* tafsir tradition, which often lacks critical engagement with modern human rights concepts.

Literature suggests employing *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* to connect Qur'anic values with the Palermo Protocol. This approach facilitates the mapping of the act-means-purpose elements within Qur'anic narratives, while grounding interpretation in *'adl* (justice), *raḥmah* (compassion), and *karāmah* (dignity). Comparative studies affirm that integrating tafsir with social sciences can lead to the development of religion-based policies for trafficking prevention.⁶

² Lisbeth Iglesias-Ríos et al., "Mental Health, Violence and Psychological Coercion Among Female and Male Trafficking Survivors in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region: A Cross-Sectional Study," *BMC Psychology*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-018-0269-5>.

³ David Okech et al., "Seventeen Years of Human Trafficking Research in Social Work: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761407.2017.1415177>.

⁴ Mohsen Kadivar, "Human Rights and Reformist Islam," 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474449304.003.0006>; Andri Nirwana et al., "Methods of Qur'an Research and Quran Tafseer Research Its Implications for Contemporary Islamic Thought," *Bir*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i1.34>.

⁵ Ahmad Nabil Amir and Tasnim Abdul Rahman, "Historicity of the Qur'an and Hadith: Historical Dynamics and Effects," *Fajar Historia Jurnal Ilm Sejarah Dan Pendidikan*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.29408/fhs.v7i2.9957>.

⁶ Ahmad Mustafa Halimah, "Translation of the Holy Quran: A Call for Standardization," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 122–33; Sayla Ar Rahmah Harahap and Indra Indra, "Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al Misbah Interpretation)," *Academy of Education Journal*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.47200/aoej.v15i2.2637>.

On a practical level, contemporary exegetes now interpret al-bighā' as encompassing all forms of organized sexual exploitation, not just slave prostitution (Quraish Shihab in Al-Misbah). Similarly, Yusuf's sale is reinterpreted as a prototype of child trafficking that involves commodification and dehumanization.⁷ A linguistic analysis of the root sh-r-w reveals that the sale of human beings violates the maqāsid al-syarī'ah, which safeguards life and property. The concept of taḥrīr al-raqabah (slave emancipation) advocates for the rehabilitation of trafficking victims as a form of social responsibility.⁸

Other studies integrate tafsir with gender analysis, emphasizing the vulnerability of women and children in global trafficking. The Islamic feminist approach reinterprets slavery-related verses to advocate for gender equality and denounce exploitation.⁹ These efforts align with contemporary maqāsid, which broaden the scope of protection to encompass dignity and freedom. However, many remain descriptive and lack explicit integration with international legal frameworks.

Despite these contributions, no study has comprehensively integrated thematic interpretation, linguistic analysis, and direct alignment with the Palermo Protocol concerning the two verses mentioned above. Most existing research emphasizes moral or historical aspects, leaving legal and advocacy dimensions fragmented. This represents a significant research gap: the necessity for an integrative framework that connects classical texts, contemporary tafsir, and global human rights standards.

This study aims to: (1) elaborate on the meanings of al-bighā', syarā', and milk al-yamīn in QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20; (2) compare interpretations from three exegetical approaches—bil-riwāyah (Ibn Kathir), al-adabī al-ijtimā'ī (al-Maraghi), and contextual ra'y (Quraish Shihab); (3) map Qur'anic values onto the act-means-purpose framework of the Palermo Protocol; and (4) propose ethical and legal implications for sharia-based policies and victim rehabilitation.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of a Qur'anic – Palermo correspondence matrix and the synthesis of tafsir as a bridge between theological heritage and modern rights

⁷ Osian Orjumi Moru, "Human Trafficking in the Story of Joseph: A Hermeneutic Study of Genesis 37:12–36," *Kenosis Jurnal Kajian Teologi*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.37196/kenosis.v7i2.274>.

⁸ Yahya Fathur Rozy, Anass Benichou, and Nagoor Gafoordeen, "The Hermeneutics Influence on Feminist Exegesis: A Case Study on Amina Wadud," *Qist Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v2i3.2908>.

⁹ Asniati Asniati and Ardiansyah Ardiansyah, "Ethics of Permission in Al-Qur'an Guidance: Dr. Perspective Abdul Hayy Al-Farmawi in the Maudu'i Tafsir Method," *Academy of Education Journal*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.47200/aoej.v15i1.2316>; Dwi Fidhayanti et al., "Rethinking Islamic Feminist Thought on Reinterpreting the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Thoughts of Aminah Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan," *Tribakti Journal of Islamic Thought*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v35i1.4956>.

advocacy. This research is limited to textual and exegetical analysis; empirical data will be addressed in future studies. It is hoped that this study enriches tafsīr mawḍūʿī and provides an academic foundation for anti-trafficking efforts in Muslim contexts.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research method to analyze Qur'anic exegesis and literature on human trafficking, highlighting both normative and socio-historical dimensions.¹⁰ It draws on three major tafsir works— Ibn Kathīr, al-Maraghī, and al-Misbah— which reflect classical, modernist, and contemporary exegetical trends, directly addressing QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20. Secondary sources include academic journals, UN reports, and literature on human rights, particularly the Palermo Protocol.¹¹

The study employs tafsīr mawḍūʿī (thematic exegesis), supported by asbāb al-nuzūl to trace the historical context, and munāsabah to examine the interrelation of verses.¹² Semantic unpacking of key terms—al-bighā', syarā', and milk al-yamīn—reveals shifts in moral discourse over time. This analysis involves mapping these concepts to the elements of act, means, and purpose as outlined in the Palermo Protocol, followed by a comparison of exegetical interpretations across different periods. The result is a Qur'anic–Palermo correspondence matrix that connects classical Islamic discourse with contemporary anti-trafficking norms, highlighting the evolving ethical significance of the Qur'an in addressing exploitation.

Linguistic Analysis

A rigorous linguistic examination of the Qur'anic lexicon—al-bighā', syarā', and milk al-yamīn—provides an empirical foundation for understanding how the Qur'an encodes forms of exploitation that parallel contemporary human trafficking. Root analysis reveals that al-bighā' (b-gh-y) connotes illicit sexual relations conducted for profit, a nuance that classical lexicographers have long associated with coercive prostitution¹³. Syarawhu derives from the triliteral root s-y-r-w, which means trade or sell. Surah Yusuf, it specifically refers to the sale of a human being, thereby emphasizing the aspect of commodification¹⁴. Milk al-yamīn is derived from two words:

¹⁰ Fitri Andriyani and Muhammad Hasani Mubarak, "The Urgency of the Historical Context of Asbab Al-Nuzul Al-Wurud in Tafsir and Sharia Hadith," *Arjis*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.58824/arjis.v2i1.68>; Ahmad Marzuki, "Munāsabah in Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim by Mahmud Yunus," *Aphorisme Journal of Arabic Language Literature and Education*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.37680/aphorisme.v5i1.6168>.

¹¹ Mailani Ulfah and Ahmad Zakiy, "An Examination of the Historical Context of the Verse Prohibiting Prayer for Polytheistic Relatives: A Study of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Concept of Asbab Al-Nuzul," *Alsysis*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.58578/alsysis.v4i1.2277>.

¹² Sabrina Farah Fuadia et al., "The Concept of the State in Islam: A Study of Maudhu'i's Interpretation," *Bir*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i2.6>; Lalu Bustanil ulum, Novi Amelia Putri, and Nur Farhati, "Islam's View of Pluralisme: A Study of Maudhu'i Tafsir," *Bir*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i3.31>.

¹³ Rozy, Benichou, and Gafoordeen, "The Hermeneutics Influence on Feminist Exegesis: A Case Study on Amina Wadud."

¹⁴ Afrizal Nur, Sri Kurniati Yuzar, and Fadhli Ananda, "Understanding Human Trafficking in the Perspective of Al-Azhar Interpretation (Review Surah Yusuf [12]: 19-20)," *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v3i12.21977>.

malaka and al-yamīn. According to Mu'jam Maqāyīs, the term malaka, which consists of the letters mīm, lām, and kāf, signifies “power” or “control over something.” Two cognates of malaka—al-malak and al-mamlūk—translate to “possessed property” and “slave,” respectively.¹⁵ In Quraish Shihab's Encyclopedia of the Qur'an, the term appears 24 times across 15 surahs. It can signify from Allah's punishment, and¹⁶ When mapped semantically, these three terms create a composite picture of sexual exploitation, commercial transaction, and legal subjugation, precisely illustrating the triadic structure of human trafficking.

The exegetical tradition supports this linguistic insight. Ibn Kathir, within the bil-riwāyah framework, interprets al-bighā' in QS An-Nur 33 as a categorical prohibition against masters coercing their female slaves into prostitution for financial gain. This interpretation is based on the asbāb al-nuzūl involving 'Abd Allāh bin Ubayy in Medina.¹⁷ Al-Maraghi expands on this by emphasizing the need for social reform and advocating for economic alternatives for vulnerable women. Quraish Shihab broadens the scope of the prohibition to encompass all forms of organized sexual exploitation, thereby safeguarding human dignity.¹⁸

A parallel hermeneutic dynamic emerges in interpretations of syarawhu in QS Yusuf 19–20. Ibn Kathir emphasizes the betrayal of familial trust and the severe moral violation involved in trafficking a child; for him, the caravan's eagerness to sell Yusuf “for a few dirhams” exemplifies the dehumanizing logic of slavery. Al-Maraghi situates this episode within the Qur'an's critique of socioeconomic systems that facilitate human commodification, while Quraish Shihab highlights the aspect of child victimhood, noting that modern human trafficking often targets children who are deceived or coerced by relatives or intermediaries.¹⁹ The intertextual resonance between Yusuf's sale and contemporary child trafficking highlights a persistent moral pathology characterized by greed, the abuse of power, and the dehumanization of individuals into tradable assets.

Having established this exegetical foundation, the analysis proceeds to align the Qur'anic data with the tripartite definition of human trafficking outlined in the Palermo Protocol—act, means, and purpose. The element of is explicitly represented by the term the physical transaction that transfers ownership. The element of in which classical commentaries describe

¹⁵ Abī al-H{usayn Ah{mad b. Fāris b. Zakaryā, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs Al-Lughah*, Ed. 'Abd Al Salām Muh}ammad Hārūn, Vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al Fikr, 1979).

¹⁶ Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an: A Study of Vocabulary*, Vol. 3 (Jakarta: Lintera Hati, 2007).

¹⁷ A M Ismatulloh, “Legal Verses in the Thought of Indonesian Mufasirs (Comparative Study of the Interpretation of M.Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqi and M.Quraish Shihab),” *Fenomena*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.21093/fj.v6i2.555>.

¹⁸ Khoirul Umami and Muhammad Naufal Hakim, “Qur'anic Interpretation of Human Trafficking: Application of Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Theory to QS. An-Nūr [24]: 33,” *Mutawatir*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2021.11.2.355-379>.

¹⁹ Moru, “Human Trafficking in the Story of Joseph: A Hermeneutic Study of Genesis 37:12–36.”

as involving coercion, threats, or manipulation by slave owners—corresponding to the Protocol's categories of violence, deception, or exploitation of vulnerability.²⁰ The element of purpose—exploitation—appears in both verses: sexual exploitation in QS An-Nur 33 and forced labor in QS Yusuf 19–20, where Yusuf is purchased to be employed by the Egyptian elite. By aligning each semantic component with the legal criteria of the Palermo Protocol, this study demonstrates that the Qur'anic discourse—articulated fourteen centuries ago—has already anticipated the analytical categories used in contemporary international law.

This lexical-legal correspondence is further reinforced by the broader ethical framework of the Qur'an. The principle of *'adl* (justice) compels believers to uphold equality, even at the expense of their own interests (Q 4:135), thereby delegitimizing any profit gained from human exploitation. *Rahmah* (compassion) requires empathetic protection of the vulnerable, operationalized through repeated calls to free slaves and care for orphans—two groups that are disproportionately victimized by human trafficking.²¹ The doctrine of *karāmat al-insān* (human dignity) in QS Al-Isra' 70 universalizes respect across ethnic, gender, and class lines, thereby rejecting all forms of commodification. Collectively, these principles establish a normative framework that not only condemns human trafficking but also mandates affirmative responsibilities, including emancipation, rehabilitation, and socio-economic inclusion.

A comparative analysis of the three exegetical corpora reveals a diachronic expansion of the Qur'an's anti-exploitation impulse. The *bil-riwāyah* method preserves early Islamic reforms that reduced, but did not abolish, slavery, reflecting the socioeconomic limitations of 7th-century Arabia. Al-Maraghi's *adabī ijtīmā'ī* approach, developed during the era of modern colonialism, interprets the same verses as mandates for systemic social justice, thereby broadening their applicability. Quraish Shihab's contextual hermeneutics, informed by global human rights discourse, refines this trajectory by asserting that any practice functionally equivalent to historical slavery—such as trafficking, forced labor, or debt bondage—falls within the Qur'an's moral condemnation. This evolution illustrates the elasticity of Islamic law (*fiqh*) when grounded in Qur'anic values that are immutable yet responsive to changing social configurations.

These findings also challenge residual apologetics that invoke historical allowances for concubinage or slave markets to downplay modern human trafficking. Linguistic evidence indicates that the Qur'an's lexicon carries a negative moral connotation; exegetical evidence demonstrates a teleological inclination toward emancipation; and the legal-ethical framework confirms alignment with contemporary anti-trafficking norms. Therefore, any invocation of sacred texts to justify human commodification constitutes a hermeneutical distortion.

²⁰ Rahmah Harahap and Indra, "Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al-Misbah Interpretation)."

²¹ Rahmah Harahap and Indra.

Conversely, this study legitimizes faith-based advocacy by providing textual support: activists can reference QS An Nur 33 to oppose sexual exploitation, QS Yusuf 19–20 to condemn child trafficking, and various *taḥrīr al-raqabah* verses to advocate for victim rehabilitation as a religious obligation.

Beyond normative affirmation, this analysis presents practical implications. First, Islamic legal councils (*majālis iftā'*) can issue fatwas equating trafficking with *ḥirābah* (waging war against society), thereby justifying severe penalties and asset forfeiture. Second, mosque-based educational programs can leverage the linguistic nuances of *al-bighā'* and *syarawhu* to raise awareness about coercive recruitment tactics. Third, *zakat* and *waqf* institutions can prioritize funding for shelters and vocational training centers, thereby operationalizing the Qur'anic mandate of *taḥrīr al-raqabah* in contemporary contexts.²² Such policy proposals demonstrate how textual hermeneutics can be transformed into effective anti-trafficking interventions.

The study's inductive logic culminates in a theoretical synthesis: the Qur'an articulates an anti-exploitation paradigm that is both historically grounded and normatively transcendent. By tracing the macro-semantics of three key lexicons, examining their exegetical elaborations, and juxtaposing them with the Palermo Protocol, this research demonstrates that the Islamic sacred text not only condemns human trafficking but also anticipates the legal framework surrounding the crime. The convergence of linguistic, exegetical, and legal evidence reinforces the hypothesis that the Qur'an provides a robust ethical and legal foundation for contemporary anti-trafficking efforts.

This analysis remains focused on the text and does not incorporate ethnographic data regarding how Muslim communities currently apply these verses in legal or advocacy contexts. Future research should assess the applicability of the proposed Qur'an–Palermo matrix through case studies on the implementation of Islamic law in countries that have ratified anti-trafficking legislation. Such empirical extensions would not only validate the hermeneutical findings but also highlight the operational gaps between scriptural idealism and socio-legal reality.

Tafsir of QS An-Nur 33

QS An-Nur 33 states: "And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution if they desire chastity, in order to seek the fleeting gains of worldly life. But if they are forced, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful after such compulsion." This verse is notable for its explicit prohibition of sexual exploitation, which was legitimized by the slave-ownership structure prevalent in early Arab society. This study examines how classical and contemporary exegetes

²² Rozy, Benichou, and Gafoordeen, "The Hermeneutics Influence on Feminist Exegesis: A Case Study on Amina Wadud."

interpret this prohibition and how the evolution of interpretation reflects a shift in Islamic social ethics.

Historically, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* places this verse in the context of specific hypocrites—particularly ‘Abd Allāh b. Ubayy—who compelled their female slaves to generate income through prostitution and subsequently appropriated the earnings.²³ This context reveals that sexual exploitation was not marginal but rather a structured economic practice institutionalized through the master-slave power dynamic. By addressing this practice, the Qur'an intervenes at one of the most vulnerable points in the social structure—enslaved women—endowing the verse with a significant dimension of social reform.

In classical exegesis, Ibn Kathīr defines the key term *al-bighā'* as “illicit sexual relations arranged for compensation,” asserting the prohibition against compelling slave women into such acts. He further argues that the pursuit of “worldly gain” (*‘araḍa al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*) by masters reflects a greed that corrupts societal morals and degrades human dignity.²⁴ Al-Ṭabarī affirms this but emphasizes the gradual nature of Islamic legal reform. Islam did not abolish slavery immediately due to economic constraints; however, it disrupted the profit chain that sustained sexual enslavement.

Al-Qurṭubī expands the discussion into *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Coercing a female slave violates *‘ismah* (the protection of honor) and necessitates both repentance and financial compensation. He interprets the concluding phrase of the verse—“Allah is Forgiving, Merciful”—as a call for the social rehabilitation of the enslaved, rather than merely a spiritual pardon for the perpetrators. This represents an early integration of humanitarian ethics into legal frameworks, positioning the victim as a subject deserving of restoration.

In the modern era, *Tafsir al-Marāghī* transitions from a legalistic approach to a structural analysis. He interprets the verse as a critique of an economy that normalizes the commodification of women's bodies. The prohibition against coercing slaves is regarded as seed of social liberation, as the verse instructs masters to offer alternatives for their slaves' livelihoods. Al-Marāghī contends that the core message is to dismantle the economic dependency that perpetuates exploitation.²⁵ This demonstrates that Islam condemns exploitative actions and calls for the restructuring of material conditions that perpetuate injustice.

Quraish Shihab places the *tafsir* in a global context. In *Al-Misbah*, he emphasizes that the term now encompasses anyone who has lost bodily autonomy due to economic coercion,

²³ Ismatulloh, “Legal Verses in the Thought of Indonesian Mufasirs (Comparative Study of the Interpretation of M.Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqi and M.Quraish Shihab).”

²⁴ Ismatulloh.

²⁵ Abdul Hameed and Mian Saadat Ali Nadeem, “A Brief Review of Historical Promotions of Interpretive Methods of the Holy Quran in Early Times,” *Al-Qamar*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.53762/alqamar.06.03.e01>.

violence, or deception. Consequently, *al-bighā'* includes forced pornography, child sex work, and exploitative contractual marriages.²⁶ He interprets “if they desire chastity” as an affirmation of female agency, emphasizing that consent must be genuine and not the result of structural coercion. This interpretation broadens the verse's relevance to contemporary trafficking networks that exploit women's vulnerabilities in Southeast Asia.²⁷

Islamic feminist literature reinterprets this verse as a text of liberation. Fidhayanti et al. (2024) view the prohibition of *al-bighā'* as a mandate for gender equality, challenging the commodification that is rooted in patriarchy.²⁸ Asniati and Ardiansyah (2024) emphasize that the phrase *not compel* assigns moral responsibility to power structures rather than to the victim, thereby supporting a survivor-centered public policy. This feminist perspective underscores the verse's normative rejection of victim-blaming and advocates for legal protection.²⁹

Methodologically, the interpretive shift reflects significant epistemological transitions. *Tafsir bil-riwāyah* preserves historical context, while *al-adabī al-ijtimā'ī* emphasizes social function. *Tafsir ra'y* employs rational *ijtihād* to align verses with contemporary human rights. A comparative analysis reveals moral continuity: all exegetes concur that coercing women into exploitation is prohibited and contradicts *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. However, analytical divergence broadens applicability, extending from 7th-century households to 21st-century global networks.

The contemporary reading presents significant practical implications. First, Islamic legal councils can issue fatwas that equate modern pimping—including online recruitment—with *ḥudūd*-level offenses that threaten public order (*ḥirābah*). Second, *zakat* and *waqf* institutions can provide funding for victim rehabilitation, thereby fulfilling the spirit of *taḥrīr al-raqabah* as a form of social worship. Third, Islamic education curricula can analyze QS An-Nur 33 to promote gender awareness and legal literacy among youth, which can help prevent trafficking at grassroots levels.

This verse provides an ethical foundation for regulatory frameworks in Muslim-majority states. By emphasizing the absolute prohibition of sexual exploitation, QS An-Nur 33 legitimizes anti-trafficking laws and protective mechanisms. Framing the victim as a subject of recovery aligns with *raḥmah* and *karāmah*, obligating states to offer comprehensive services, including mental health care, legal aid, and reintegration support. Consequently, religious reasoning enhances human rights legislation, where sacred texts serve as central moral references.

²⁶ Umami and Hakim, “Qur'anic Disclaimer on Human Trafficking: An Application of Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Theory to QS. An-Nūr [24]: 33.”

²⁷ Rahmah Harahap and Indra, “Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al Misbah Interpretation).”

²⁸ Fidhayanti et al., “Rethinking Islamic Feminist Thought on Reinterpreting the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Thoughts of Aminah Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan.”

²⁹ Asniati and Ardiansyah, “Ethics of Permission in Al-Qur'an Guidance: Dr. Perspective Abdul Hayy Al-Farmawi in the Maudu'i Tafsir Method.”

Tafsir of QS Yusuf 19–20

The story of Prophet Yusuf's sale, as depicted in Qur'an Surah Yusuf, verses 19–20, presents one of the earliest and most dramatic portrayals of human exploitation in the Qur'an. Verse 19 describes travelers who discovered Yusuf at the bottom of a well, while verse 20 recounts that they sold him for a low price, a few dirhams, for they considered him of little worth. This narrative is not merely biographical; it offers a profound critique of human commodification—particularly of children—within the prevailing system of slavery at that time. The interpretation of these verses reveals an evolving Islamic perspective on children's rights, power dynamics, and economic morality.

Classical tafsir situates this within a moral framework of family dynamics and divine decree. Ibn Kathīr underscores the jealousy of Yusuf's brothers as the root of their betrayal, emphasizing that the “cheap price” they placed on Yusuf reflects their moral degradation rather than his worth.³⁰ Al-Ṭabarī provides historical context, noting that children were often sold quickly to avoid raising suspicion. Al-Qurṭubī examines the validity of such sales in pre-Islamic times, concluding that they were morally invalid. This analysis underscores the notion that child exploitation is inherently unjust.³¹

In the 20th century, al-Marāghī shifts focus to socio-economic dimensions, interpreting “a few dirhams” as a symbol of economies that commodify human beings. The merchants are portrayed as market agents who exploit profit opportunities in the absence of protective measures.³² The Qur'an condemns this reasoning, highlighting the structural issues surrounding trafficking that leave vulnerable groups unprotected.

Quraish Shihab's linguistic-contextual approach connects the story of Yusuf to contemporary human rights. He observes that the root word implies a hasty sale and opportunism.³³ He interprets the act as a violation of children's rights and familial trust, drawing parallels to contemporary trafficking, where impoverished families exploit their children for quick profit—morally akin to the actions of Yusuf's brothers.³⁴ This expands the ethical implications of the verse: reducing a child to a mere commodity is condemned by revelation.

³⁰ Sophie Namy et al., “‘All I Was Thinking About Was Shattered’: Women's Experiences Transitioning Out of Anti-Trafficking Shelters During the COVID-19 Lockdown in Uganda,” *Affilia*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099221137058>.

³¹ Ingrida Mustafa Behri and Lira Spiro, “Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Trafficking of Children as a Form of It,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.56345/ijrdv10n1s102>.

³² Hameed and Ali Nadeem, “A Brief Review of Historical Promotions of Interpretive Methods of the Holy Quran in Early Times.”

³³ Hendrik Bosman, “The Naked Truth or Prophecy as Folly? A Performative Interpretation of Isaiah 20,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7612>.

³⁴ Nur, Yuzar, and Ananda, “Understanding Human Trafficking in the Perspective of Al-Azhar Interpretation (Review Surah Yusuf [12]: 19-20).”

Psychosocial literature offers valuable insights. Ardiansyah et al. (2023) interpret Yusuf's trauma as a representation of the psychological wounds experienced by victims, which include betrayal, displacement, and uncertainty.³⁵ Areqih (2023) compares Yusuf's later resilience in Egypt to survivor recovery strategies, emphasizing the necessity of long-term support.³⁶

The methodological evolution of tafsir resembles a dialectical staircase: tafsir bil-riwāyah emphasizes morality, adabī ijtīmā'ī examines social structures, and tafsir ra'y relates to global human rights. Although their perspectives differ, all approaches converge in affirming that the sale of Yusuf was a crime rooted in greed, familial abuse, and regulatory failure. Qur'anic values prioritize the protection of children and reject exploitation.

Verse 20 also contains moral irony. The phrase *kānū fīhi mina al-zāhidīn* ("and they undervalued him") illustrates how traffickers fail to recognize the human potential of their victims. In neoclassical economics, these individuals are viewed as "cheap labor"; however, the Qur'an subverts this notion: Yusuf, sold for a pittance, symbolizes immense human worth. This message remains pertinent today, as many victims originate from marginalized communities that are often labeled as "unproductive," despite possessing significant potential.

The practical implications of QS Yusuf 19–20 for anti-trafficking policy include: (1) legal protection—intensifying penalties for guardians who traffic children; (2) early detection—monitoring migrant routes and informal labor markets; and (3) spiritual-psychological rehabilitation—Yusuf's faith-driven recovery model incorporates trauma counseling that integrates religious principles.³⁷

Beyond policy, the verse provides a theological foundation for inclusive dakwah. Preachers can utilize Yusuf's story to raise awareness about commodification, including the economically motivated practice of child marriage. Consequently, QS Yusuf 19–20 critiques patriarchy and materialism—forces that sustain trafficking.

Yet, contemporary tafsir often lacks the integration of victim data to enhance hermeneutics. Involving survivors strengthens social relevance and prevents abstraction. Interfaith comparisons—such as the story of Joseph in Jewish and Christian traditions—could foster cross-ethnic coalitions against trafficking, an area that remains underexplored in Islamic tafsir.³⁸

³⁵ Ade Arip Ardiansyah, Izzuddin Musthafa, and A Heris Hermawan, "Analysis of the Dialogical Narration in the Story of Prophet Yusuf in the Quran," *Ta Lim Al- Arabiyyah Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab & Kebahasaaraban*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpba.v7i2.25684>.

³⁶ Rashad Al Areqih, "Psychoanalytic Approach and Dreams Interpretation in Surah Yusuf," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v8i1.5567>.

³⁷ Moru, "Human Trafficking in the Story of Joseph: A Hermeneutic Study of Genesis 37:12–36."

³⁸ Bosman, "The Naked Truth or Prophecy as Folly? A Performative Interpretation of Isaiah 20."

QS Yusuf 19–20 critiques child exploitation throughout history. Viewed through both classical and modern lenses, Yusuf's sale underscores that the commodification of human beings contradicts the principles of 'adl (justice), raḥmah (compassion), and karāmah (dignity). This evolution demonstrates the adaptability of Qur'anic ethics in addressing issues of trafficking and labor abuses. Consequently, these verses provide a scriptural foundation for legal, educational, and advocacy efforts aimed at child protection across the Muslim world.

Correlation with the Palermo Protocol

The 2000 Palermo Protocol—formally known as the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children—defines human trafficking using a tripartite structure: act, means, and purpose.³⁹ This framework has established itself as the global legal standard for law enforcement and victim protection. Emerging scholarship suggests that the Qur'an includes narratives and terminology that align with modern forms of exploitation. This section examines how QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20 can be systematically aligned with the Palermo framework while maintaining theological integrity.

The act element encompasses the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals. Quranic verses Yusuf 19–20 illustrate the transfer of the Prophet Yusuf from a well to an Egyptian marketplace by a caravan, highlighting the receipt and sale—key components of trafficking.⁴⁰ Though situated within a prophetic-historical context, the passage reflects human transfer consistent with Palermo's definition. QS An-Nur 33, while lacking spatial movement, addresses the coercion of female slaves into prostitution, illustrating the economic exploitation of individuals within a system of oppression. Both verses affirm the presence of the act element—whether through physical relocation or the commodification of the body.

The term refers to threats, coercion, abduction, abuse of power, or exploitation of vulnerability. In QS An-Nur 33, the word is traditionally understood as coerced prostitution, but its interpretation has now been broadened to encompass economic coercion.⁴¹ Here, ownership and dependency create coercive dynamics. In QS Yusuf, Yusuf's vulnerability and betrayal by his brothers illustrate the abuse of trust and the susceptibility of children—conditions recognized under the Palermo Protocol as indicative of trafficking.⁴² These verses demonstrate that the

³⁹ Yassar Mustafa, "Islam and the Four Principles of Medical Ethics," *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2012-101309>.

⁴⁰ Nur, Yuzar, and Ananda, "Understanding Human Trafficking in the Perspective of Al-Azhar Interpretation (Review Surah Yusuf [12]: 19-20)."

⁴¹ Umami and Hakim, "Qur'anic Interpretation of Human Trafficking: Application Teori Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Pada QS. An-Nūr [24]: 33."

⁴² Ardiansyah, Musthafa, and Hermawan, "Analysis of the Dialogical Narration in the Story of Prophet Yusuf in the Quran."

Qur'an recognizes structural inequalities, such as slave status and age, as factors contributing to exploitation.⁴³

The purpose element focuses on exploitation, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, and similar practices. QS An-Nur 33 directly addresses sexual exploitation for economic gain, while QS Yusuf 20 implies forced labor, as Yusuf is sold to be used by the Egyptian elite.⁴⁴ Both reflect the fundamental exploitative objectives outlined in the Protocol. Despite their seventh-century language, these Qur'anic examples mirror the tripartite legal framework of trafficking.⁴⁵

This alignment carries normative implications. First, it affirms the Shariah legitimacy of criminalizing trafficking. If the act, means, and purpose are condemned in the Qur'an, Muslim-majority states have a theological basis to ratify the Protocol without fear of ideological conflict. Second, it enables fiqh to classify trafficking as *ḥirābah* or *fasād fī al-arḍ*, paving the way for robust legal sanctions and restitution.⁴⁶

Third, the correlation enhances faith-based advocacy. Civil society actors can utilize Qur'anic verses as ethical narratives, reframing anti-trafficking efforts as a divine mandate rather than a Western import. Concepts such as *taḥrīr al-raqabah* (liberating a slave) can be reinterpreted to support victim rehabilitation and economic reintegration.⁴⁷ This promotes broader community acceptance of anti-trafficking initiatives.

The correlation between the Qur'an and the Palermo Protocol invites critical reflection. The Palermo Protocol requires for a case to qualify as trafficking. However, in QS Yusuf 20, Yusuf is sold in a legally sanctioned market. Does legality negate exploitation? Contemporary tafsir argues that it does not—the Qur'an prioritizes morality over legality. A state-sanctioned practice can still be unjust if it commodifies human beings.⁴⁸ This ethical insight enhances the Palermo framework by addressing the limitations of positivism.

⁴³ Emily Brace, Julia Sanders, and Hanna Oommen, "Access to Healthcare for Victims of Human Trafficking: A Focus Group With Third Sector Agencies," *Diversity & Equality in Health and Care*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.21767/2049-5471.1000159>.

⁴⁴ Moru, "Human Trafficking in the Story of Joseph: A Hermeneutic Study of Genesis 37:12–36."

⁴⁵ Rahmah Harahap and Indra, "Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al Misbah Interpretation)."

⁴⁶ Rahmah Harahap and Indra.

⁴⁷ Rozy, Benichou, and Gafoordeen, "The Hermeneutics Influence on Feminist Exegesis: A Case Study on Amina Wadud."

⁴⁸ Bosman, "The Naked Truth or Prophecy as Folly? A Performative Interpretation of Isaiah 20."

This Matrix of Qur'anic–Palermo Protocol Correspondence:

Palermo Protocol	QS An-Nur 33	QS Yusuf 19–20	Corresponding Meaning
Act (What is done)	Coercion into prostitution—economic use of a person in a system of exploitation (no mobility)	Sale and transfer of Yusuf from a well to market—receipt and sale of a child	Physical or economic transfer and commodification of a person
Means (How it is done)	Coercion, abuse of power, vulnerability—slaveowners forcing sexual acts due to ownership status	Abuse of trust and child vulnerability—Yusuf's helplessness and betrayal by brothers	Use of structural inequalities: slave status and child age
Purpose (Why it is done)	Sexual exploitation—forced prostitution for profit	Forced labor—Yusuf is sold “to be used” by Egyptian elite	Profit-driven exploitation through sexual servitude or labor

This Qur'anic–Palermo mapping promotes interdisciplinary approaches. Exegetes, criminologists, and legal practitioners can extract risk indicators from sacred texts for early detection. For example, the term “slave” in QS An-Nur 33 can be likened to undocumented migrant workers, while the phrase “a few dirhams” in QS Yusuf 20 may indicate undervalued child labor. These indicators are particularly pertinent in developing countries, where inequality and migration contribute to trafficking.⁴⁹ In legal education, integrating the Palermo framework into Shariah curricula can help bridge the perceived divide between Islamic and international law. Fiqh students can be trained to correlate Qur'anic verses and hadiths with elements of trafficking, guided by 'adl (justice) and rahmah (compassion), in alignment with maqāṣid principles such as ḥifẓ al-naḥs (preservation of life) and ḥifẓ al-'ird (preservation of honor).⁵⁰

However, limitations persist. Conceptual alignment does not guarantee procedural harmonization; while Palermo mandates transnational cooperation, sharia remains fragmented. Additionally, the ongoing debate regarding adult consent in the Protocol can be informed by QS An-Nur 33, which suggests that economic coercion undermines consent. Furthermore, this mapping necessitates validation through case studies in contemporary Islamic courts.

The Qur'an provides not only terminological parallels but also ethical principles that enhance and deepen the Palermo Protocol. While the Protocol outlines the reasons trafficking must be eradicated, the Qur'an offers guidance on how to achieve this—through justice,

⁴⁹ Nina Stănescu, A Dan, and Tănase Tasente, “Human Trafficking - The Boomerang of a Decadent Society (Social Perception of Human Trafficking in Dobrogea / Constanța),” *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v44i1.9036>.

⁵⁰ Rahmah Harahap and Indra, “Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al Misbah Interpretation).”

empowerment, and systemic reform. Analyzing QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20 reveals a theological alignment with contemporary anti-trafficking definitions, effectively bridging global standards with Islamic values and reinforcing efforts across law, education, and advocacy.

Synthesis of Islamic Ethical Values

The linguistic exploration of *al-bighā'*, *syarawhu*, and *milk al-yamīn*, along with the correlation of key verses to the Palermo Protocol, demonstrates that the Qur'an provides a normative framework consistent with contemporary anti-trafficking definitions. This synthesis establishes a paradigm grounded in Islamic ethical values—*‘adl* (justice), *raḥmah* (compassion), and *karāmat al-insān* (human dignity)—as well as *maqāṣid*-based protections of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), honor (*ḥifẓ al-‘ird*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Rahmah Harahap & Indra, 2024). Employing an inductive approach, this analysis transitions from textual semantics to actionable legal and policy recommendations.

Justice (*‘adl*) plays a foundational role in society. Surah An-Nisā' [4:135] commands the pursuit of justice, even at the expense of self-interest, thereby negating any justification for economic exploitation, including forced prostitution and child trafficking. Classical tafsir explicitly prohibits profiting from the exploitation of enslaved individuals,⁵¹ While contemporary interpretations extend this to modern abuses such as pornography and child labor.⁵² Hence, *‘adl* necessitates structural reforms that address the economic disparities exploited by traffickers.

Compassion (*raḥmah*), derived from Allah's names *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, integrates the legal with the ethical dimensions of life. The prohibition outlined in QS An-Nur 33 not only represents an economic perspective but also recognizes the psychological trauma experienced by victims. The enslavement and suffering of Yusuf underscore the long-term consequences of exploitation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Therefore, *raḥmah* advocates for comprehensive recovery frameworks that include mental health support, education, and social reintegration.

Human dignity (*karāmat al-insān*) is emphasized in QS Al-Isrā' 70, which affirms the inherent nobility of all individuals, regardless of race, gender, or social status. This principle challenges the legitimacy of master–slave hierarchies that have historically justified slavery and, by extension, rejects the hierarchical distinctions between and undocumented migrant workers, who are often subject to exploitation.⁵³

⁵¹ Ismatulloh, "Legal Verses in the Thought of Indonesian Mufasirs (Comparative Study of the Interpretation of M.Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqi and M.Quraish Shihab)."

⁵² Umami and Hakim, "Qur'anic Interpretation of Human Trafficking: Application of Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Theory to QS. An-Nūr [24]: 33."

⁵³ Stănescu, Dan, and Tasește, "Human Trafficking - The Boomerang of a Decadent Society (Social Perception of Human Trafficking in Dobrogea / Constanța)."

Quraish Shihab's tafsir emphasizes that both slaves and migrant workers possess bodily autonomy; any form of coercion violates *karāmah* and is therefore prohibited.⁵⁴ *Karāmah* also provides a moral foundation for campaigns against victim stigmatization, asserting that an individual's worth is not determined by their economic status or experiences of exploitation.⁵⁵

These ethical values converge within the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Trafficking undermines *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of life) through violence, *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (protection of honor) through sexual exploitation, and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of property) through commodification. Consequently, anti-trafficking efforts are considered a *farḍ kifāyah*, a collective obligation of the *ummah*.⁵⁶

From this synthesis, several legal and policy implications emerge. First, trafficking can be classified as *ḥirābah*—a public safety crime—warranting severe penalties, yet balanced by *ta'zīr* for non-violent, impoverished offenders. Second, *taḥrīr al-raḡabah* can be re-institutionalized through *zakaṭ*, *waḡf*, or Islamic corporate social responsibility (CSR) to fund victim emancipation and empowerment.⁵⁷

In policy, a victim-centered model embodies *raḡmah* by providing anonymity, free legal services, and restitution. *ʿAdl* legitimizes the seizure of assets to fund compensation, which is integrated into a contemporary *ḥisbah* framework. *Karāmah* necessitates inclusive protections for migrants, individuals with disabilities, and gender minorities.

Religious institutions can internalize these values by delivering mosque sermons that connect Qur'anic verses with local trafficking realities, thereby enhancing community vigilance. Islamic schools should offer curricula on human rights and the interpretation of exploitation (*tafsir*), fostering ethical and legal awareness.

This synthesis promotes interfaith engagement. The Yusuf narrative, which is shared among Abrahamic traditions, can serve as a foundation for collaborative anti-trafficking efforts.⁵⁸ This Qur'an-based ethical framework, which integrates justice, compassion, and dignity, unites theology and law, tradition and reform, as well as faith and human rights into a cohesive and mobilizing anti-trafficking response for both Muslim and global communities.

⁵⁴ Umami and Hakim, "Qur'anic Interpretation of Human Trafficking: Application of Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Theory to QS. An-Nūr [24]: 33."

⁵⁵ Umami and Hakim.

⁵⁶ Rahmah Harahap and Indra, "Human Trafficking in the Islamic View (Comparative Study of Al-Azhar and Al Misbah Interpretation)."

⁵⁷ Rozy, Benichou, and Gafoordeen, "The Hermeneutics Influence on Feminist Exegesis: A Case Study on Amina Wadud."

⁵⁸ Bosman, "The Naked Truth or Prophecy as Folly? A Performative Interpretation of Isaiah 20."

Conclusion

This study affirms that the Qur'an, specifically in QS An-Nur 33 and QS Yusuf 19–20, presents a conceptual and ethical framework that aligns with the modern legal definition of human trafficking. Through a detailed linguistic analysis of the terms *al-bighā'*, *syarā'*, and *milk al-yamīn*, the study demonstrates that the Qur'anic lexicon inherently incorporates the three essential elements defined by the Palermo Protocol: act, means, and purpose. Although these terms are historically situated, they reveal a semantic continuity with contemporary legal structures that criminalize the exploitation of human beings.

The cross-generational examination of tafsir—represented by Ibn Kathir, al-Maraghi, and Quraish Shihab—demonstrates a progressive deepening of Qur'anic moral reasoning. From the early condemnation of coercive prostitution and the commodification of Yusuf as a child to broader ethical arguments concerning social justice and the dignity of victims, the exegetical tradition reinforces the Qur'an's anti-exploitation impulse. This diachronic interpretation affirms that Islamic sacred texts are not only contextually grounded but also normatively transcendent, capable of addressing modern crises such as human trafficking with both theological depth and legal clarity.

The correlation with the Palermo Protocol presents two fundamental implications. First, it affirms the theological legitimacy for Muslim-majority states to ratify and implement anti-trafficking laws that are fully aligned with international standards, thereby dispelling the notion of an inherent conflict between Sharia and global norms. Second, it enhances these norms with a spiritual and ethical dimension: the Qur'anic values of *'adl* (justice), *rahmah* (compassion), and *karāmat al-insān* (human dignity) not only justify the prohibition of trafficking but also mandate the restoration of rights, dignity, and agency for victim.

The key contribution of this study is the development of a Qur'an–Palermo matrix, a methodological synthesis that integrates thematic tafsir with human rights literature. This framework provides not only academic novelty but also practical utility for scholars, jurists, and policymakers seeking religiously grounded strategies in the fight against human trafficking. It reframes trafficking—not as a secular issue detached from religious ethics—but as a central moral crisis that necessitates Qur'anic engagement and jurisprudential innovation.

To ensure that this integration is not merely theoretical, several concrete recommendations arise from the findings. First, Islamic legal councils (*majālis iftā'*) should issue fatwas that equate trafficking with *ḥirābah* (waging war against society), thereby legitimizing severe penalties and asset confiscation. Second, national zakat and waqf bodies should allocate dedicated funds for rehabilitation programs—such as shelters, vocational training, and trauma recovery—translating the Qur'anic ethic of *taḥrīr al-raqabah* into modern institutional forms.

Third, curricula in sharia faculties and pesantren should include modules on Qur'anic terminology related to trafficking, particularly al-bighā' and syarā', to foster early awareness and scholarly competence. Fourth, mosques and Islamic civil society groups must lead faith-based campaigns that frame anti-trafficking not as Western intrusion but as an Islamic imperative rooted in revelation. Lastly, comparative fiqh training should engage with the Qur'an–Palermo matrix to produce jurists capable of interpreting Islamic law in dialogue with contemporary human rights challenges.

Nevertheless, this study remains primarily textual. Its proposed matrix awaits empirical testing through fieldwork in sharia courts, survivor interviews, and program evaluations. Future research should explore how fatwas are implemented, how zakat-funded initiatives operate, and how interfaith alliances might expand advocacy efforts. Such research would not only validate the hermeneutical insights presented here but also ensure that Islamic legal reasoning remains responsive to the complex social realities of trafficking in the 21st century.

This study demonstrates that the Qur'an does not merely echo the language of the Palermo Protocol; it offers a theologically grounded, morally urgent, and legally coherent framework that can enhance and deepen global anti-trafficking efforts. It bridges universal legal norms with Qur'anic ethics, empowering Muslim societies to take a leading role in the fight against exploitation—not as passive adopters of international standards, but as active agents of ethical transformation rooted in divine revelation.

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