

Quranic Ethics and Contemporary Society: Reimagining Social Justice Beyond Textual Interpretation

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Abstract

Contemporary social injustice requires ethical frameworks capable of connecting normative values with changing social realities. This study examines how Qur'anic ethics can be contextualized to provide a framework for reimagining social justice in contemporary society. The study employs a library research method, analyzing the Qur'an, selected works of classical and contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, academic books, and relevant scholarly articles on Qur'anic ethics, contextual interpretation, and social justice. The analysis draws primarily on Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* and Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach to examine the relationship between textual meaning, historical context, moral principles, and contemporary application. The findings indicate that Qur'anic ethics should not be understood merely as a collection of textual prescriptions but as a broader moral orientation encompassing justice, human dignity, equality, social responsibility, and protection of vulnerable groups. The study proposes an ethical-contextual framework that moves from Qur'anic text and historical context toward moral-ethical principles, contemporary contextualization, critical ethical evaluation, social justice orientation, and social transformation. The study argues that moving beyond textual interpretation does not mean abandoning the Qur'anic text; rather, it involves translating its moral significance into a critical framework for evaluating contemporary forms of inequality, exclusion, and marginalization. This framework contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by connecting interpretation, social ethics, and social justice.

Keyword: *Qur'anic ethics; social justice; Qur'anic interpretation; contextual interpretation; Fazlur Rahman; Abdullah Saeed.*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is confronted with increasingly complex forms of social injustice, including economic inequality, unequal access to social resources, discrimination, marginalization, and the weakening of social solidarity. These challenges cannot be addressed solely through institutional or economic mechanisms because they also involve questions of morality, human dignity, responsibility, and the ethical foundations of social relations. Within this context, religious traditions continue to offer important moral resources for reflecting on the meaning of justice. The Qur'an, in particular, contains a broad ethical orientation concerning justice, human dignity, compassion, responsibility, equality, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Recent scholarship confirms that Qur'anic teachings provide a significant ethical framework for addressing contemporary problems such as



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social inequality, injustice, environmental degradation, and other moral challenges facing modern societies.¹

Nevertheless, the contemporary relevance of Qur'anic ethics cannot be established simply by identifying verses that mention justice. The central problem concerns how textual meanings can be transformed into ethical principles that remain meaningful within changing social contexts. The relationship between the Qur'anic text and contemporary society is therefore not simply a matter of transferring a textual prescription from the past into the present. It requires an interpretive process capable of distinguishing historically situated formulations from the broader moral objectives embedded within the revelation. This issue becomes particularly important when Qur'anic teachings are applied to social problems that differ significantly from the socio-historical circumstances of the seventh century.²

The tension between textual interpretation and contemporary application has been an important concern in modern Qur'anic studies. Fazlur Rahman argues that Qur'anic interpretation should move beyond isolated textual meanings toward an understanding of the moral principles underlying particular revelations. His well-known double movement approach begins by examining the socio-historical context in which a Qur'anic passage emerged and then moves toward identifying its general moral principle before bringing that principle into contemporary circumstances. Such an approach provides an important methodological basis for understanding Qur'anic ethics as more than a collection of individual moral instructions. It allows the Qur'an to be approached as a source of broader ethical orientations capable of engaging changing social realities.

Abdullah Saeed subsequently developed a contextualist approach that further emphasizes the relationship between the historical context of revelation and contemporary circumstances. His approach is particularly concerned with ethico-legal verses, for which a strictly literalist interpretation may fail to address the social and ethical concerns of contemporary Muslims. Saeed's contextualist framework emphasizes the need to consider the socio-historical context of the Qur'an alongside the contemporary context in which its meanings are interpreted and applied. Recent scholarship on Saeed likewise identifies his approach as an extension and refinement of Rahman's double movement, particularly through the development of a contextual framework and a hierarchy of values for interpreting ethico-legal verses.³

This contextual orientation is particularly relevant to the question of social justice. Justice in the Qur'anic worldview is not confined to individual moral conduct but is connected to broader social relations and responsibilities. Contemporary studies of the Qur'anic paradigm of social justice have identified themes such as freedom, equality,

¹ Haruna Babatunde Jaiyeoba, Thameem Ushama, dan Yusuff Jelili Amuda, "The Quran as a Source of Ethical and Moral Guidance in Contemporary Society: Al-Quran Sebagai Sumber Panduan Etika Dan Moral Dalam Masyarakat Kontemporer," *Al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues* 9, no. 2 (2024): 1331–45, <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v9i2.485>.

² Jini Resma Ashari dkk., "The Dialectics of Qur'anic Verses on Social Justice through Contemporary Thematic Exegesis," *Jurnal El-Thawalib* 6, no. 4 (2025): 515–29, <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-thawalib.v6i4.16227>.

³ Sadia Saeed, "Religion, Classification Struggles, and the State's Exercise of Symbolic Power," *Theory and Society* 50, no. 2 (Februari 2021): 255–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-020-09415-z>.

fraternity, human rights, and socio-political responsibility as important dimensions of Qur'anic approaches to justice.⁴ More recent scholarship has also examined Qur'anic justice in relation to contemporary legal and social contexts, emphasizing justice as a central element of the Qur'anic worldview rather than merely a legal principle.⁵

However, the existing literature reveals an important analytical limitation. A substantial body of research identifies ethical values contained in the Qur'an, while other studies focus on contextual interpretation or examine specific dimensions of Qur'anic social justice. For example, recent research using thematic interpretation has examined Qur'anic verses concerning social justice and sought to contextualize their universal values within contemporary social realities.⁶ Similarly, studies of Qur'anic ethics have identified justice, compassion, honesty, stewardship, humility, and generosity as important moral principles relevant to contemporary society. These contributions demonstrate the continuing relevance of Qur'anic ethics, but they often remain separated into two analytical tendencies: identifying ethical values in the text and demonstrating their contemporary relevance.

The gap addressed by this study lies between these two tendencies. What requires further elaboration is the interpretive mechanism connecting textual meaning, moral principles, and contemporary social justice. In other words, the question is not simply what the Qur'an says about justice, nor whether Qur'anic values remain relevant to contemporary society. The more fundamental question is: how can historically situated Qur'anic meanings be transformed into general ethical principles that provide a normative basis for critically evaluating contemporary structures of social injustice? This question requires moving beyond textual interpretation without abandoning the authority of the text itself.

The phrase "beyond textual interpretation" in this study therefore does not imply that textual interpretation is unnecessary or that contemporary ethical reasoning can be detached from the Qur'an. Rather, it refers to a movement from textual meaning toward moral significance and social application. The text remains the starting point, while ethical principles constitute the analytical bridge between the historical revelation and contemporary social reality. In this sense, interpretation becomes not an endpoint but a stage in the broader process of ethical reasoning.

This distinction is particularly important because contemporary social injustice frequently takes forms that did not exist in precisely the same configuration during the period of revelation. Economic inequality, structural discrimination, unequal access to education and healthcare, digital exclusion, and complex forms of institutional marginalization require analytical categories that go beyond the literal reproduction of historical social arrangements. A contextual approach therefore enables Qur'anic ethics to

⁴ Juliyana Junaidi, Latifah Abdul Majid, dan Mohd Arif Nazri, "Revisiting Social Justice: Exploring the Qur'anic Paradigm in Addressing Contemporary Challenges," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah Dan Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 2 (2023): 153–92, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol25no2.5>.

⁵ Taufik Setyaudin, Ethan Tan, dan Ryan Teo, "THE QURANIC CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE AND ITS APPLICATION IN ISLAMIC LEGAL THOUGHT," *Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 2026): 136–49, <https://doi.org/10.70177/jnis.v3i2.3568>.

⁶ Jini Resma Ashari dkk., "The Dialectics of Qur'anic Verses on Social Justice through Contemporary Thematic Exegesis," *Jurnal El-Thawalib* 6, no. 4 (2025): 515–29, <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-thawalib.v6i4.16227>.

engage these problems by identifying the moral objectives underlying the Qur'anic response to injustice and considering their relevance to contemporary structures.

Rahman's double movement provides the methodological foundation for this process. The first movement moves from contemporary concerns toward the historical context of revelation in order to understand the specific social problem addressed by the Qur'anic text. The second movement returns from that historical understanding to the present by formulating a general moral principle and considering how it can be applied within contemporary circumstances.⁷ Saeed's contextualist approach complements this framework by emphasizing the importance of contemporary context and the ethical dimensions of Qur'anic interpretation. Together, these approaches provide a framework through which Qur'anic ethics can be understood as a dynamic moral resource rather than a static collection of textual prescriptions.

Accordingly, this study conceptualizes Qur'anic ethics as a normative framework through which contemporary forms of social injustice can be critically evaluated. The framework does not claim that the Qur'an provides direct technical solutions to every contemporary social problem. Instead, it argues that the Qur'anic worldview contains moral orientations particularly justice, human dignity, equality, responsibility, and protection from harm that can inform ethical reflection on changing social conditions. The task of interpretation is therefore to identify these principles through careful engagement with the historical and textual context and subsequently examine their implications for contemporary society.

The study consequently advances the argument that Qur'anic interpretation should not be understood as the final stage of engagement with the Qur'an. Through a contextual and ethical approach, textual meanings can be transformed into broader moral principles that provide a normative basis for evaluating contemporary social structures. The movement can be conceptualized as

On this basis, the study asks three questions: (1) How can Qur'anic texts be interpreted as sources of broader moral principles concerning social justice? (2) How does a contextual approach transform Qur'anic moral principles from historically situated meanings into contemporary ethical frameworks? and (3) How can Qur'anic ethics provide a normative framework for reimagining social justice in contemporary society?

By addressing these questions through a qualitative critical integrative literature review, this study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by connecting three areas that are frequently discussed separately: Qur'anic interpretation, social ethics, and social justice. Its principal contribution is not to claim that justice is a new theme in Qur'anic studies, but to develop an analytical pathway explaining how interpretation can move from textual meaning toward ethical reasoning and, ultimately, toward a critical engagement with contemporary forms of social injustice.

METHOD

⁷ F. Rahman, *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1982).

This study employs a library research method to examine Qur'anic ethics and its relevance to contemporary social justice. Library research is appropriate because the study focuses on analyzing and interpreting existing scholarly sources rather than collecting primary data through interviews, observations, or surveys. The research examines Qur'anic texts, classical and contemporary exegetical works, academic books, journal articles, and other scholarly publications relevant to Qur'anic interpretation, ethics, and social justice.⁸

The data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the Qur'an and selected works of Qur'anic interpretation that discuss ethical and social dimensions of Qur'anic teachings. Particular attention is given to interpretations concerning justice (*'adl* and *qist*), human dignity, equality, social responsibility, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Secondary sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and academic publications discussing Qur'anic ethics, contextual interpretation, social justice, and contemporary approaches to Qur'anic studies. The works of Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed are particularly important for understanding the relationship between Qur'anic interpretation, historical context, moral principles, and contemporary social realities.⁹

The literature was collected through academic databases and scholarly search platforms, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Crossref, and relevant Indonesian academic databases. The selection of sources was based on their relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and substantive contribution to the discussion. Recent publications were prioritized for contemporary debates, while classical and foundational works were retained when they provided important theoretical or interpretive foundations. Sources that were unrelated to the research questions or did not provide sufficient scholarly discussion were excluded from the analysis.

The data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical and interpretive methods. First, relevant literature was identified and classified according to major themes, including Qur'anic ethics, justice, contextual interpretation, human dignity, equality, and contemporary social problems. Second, the selected sources were examined comparatively to identify similarities, differences, and developments in scholarly interpretations. Third, the findings were interpreted using Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* approach and Abdullah Saeed's contextualist perspective. The analysis examines how the historical and textual meanings of Qur'anic teachings can be understood in relation to broader moral principles and subsequently connected with contemporary social realities.

The analytical process follows the sequence of Qur'anic text → historical context → moral principle → contemporary context → social justice. This framework enables the study to move beyond merely identifying verses concerning justice toward examining the ethical principles underlying those verses and their relevance to contemporary social conditions.

⁸ Amir Hamzah, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Dasar Natural Research* (Malang: Literasi Nusantara, 2020).

⁹ Miza Nina Adlini dkk., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (Maret 2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

The analysis therefore seeks to demonstrate how Qur'anic ethics can function as a normative framework for critically reflecting on contemporary forms of social injustice.

The validity of the study is maintained through source comparison and interpretive consistency. Different exegetical works and academic studies are compared to avoid relying on a single interpretation or scholarly perspective. The conclusions are developed based on recurring arguments and patterns identified across the literature. As a library-based study, the research does not claim statistical generalization; its contribution lies in providing a systematic interpretation and conceptual synthesis of existing scholarship concerning Qur'anic ethics and contemporary social justice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From Qur'anic Text to Moral-Ethical Principles

The Qur'an contains a broad moral orientation concerning human conduct and social relations, including justice, equality, human dignity, responsibility, and protection of vulnerable groups. However, identifying these values from individual verses is only the initial stage of Qur'anic ethical inquiry. The central interpretive problem is how particular textual statements, which emerged within specific historical and social circumstances, can be understood as expressions of broader moral principles relevant to contemporary society. This requires an approach that considers not only what the Qur'anic text says, but also the social problem addressed by the revelation and the moral orientation underlying it.¹⁰

Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* provides an important methodological basis for making this transition. Rahman argues that Qur'anic interpretation should move from the specific circumstances surrounding revelation toward the general moral principles underlying particular Qur'anic statements, and subsequently return to contemporary circumstances to determine their appropriate application (Rahman, 1982). The significance of this approach lies in its distinction between the historically particular formulation of a Qur'anic response and the broader ethical principle that can be derived from it. Consequently, interpretation is not reduced to reproducing a historical formulation but seeks to understand the moral direction embedded within the revelation.¹¹

The first movement requires attention to the historical and socio-moral context of the Qur'anic text. A verse addressing economic relations, social inequality, treatment of vulnerable groups, or interpersonal justice must therefore be examined in relation to the circumstances in which it was revealed. This contextual examination helps identify the social problem to which the Qur'an responded and prevents contemporary readers from treating textual formulations as detached from their original circumstances. In this respect, the historical context is not merely supplementary information but an important component of understanding the ethical significance of the text.

¹⁰ Jini Resma Ashari dkk., "The Dialectics of Qur'anic Verses on Social Justice through Contemporary Thematic Exegesis," *Jurnal El-Thawalib* 6, no. 4 (2025): 515–29, <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-thawalib.v6i4.16227>.

¹¹ Muhammad Umair dan Hasani Ahmad Said, "Fazlur Rahman Dan Teori Double Movement: Definisi Dan Aplikasi," *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (Maret 2023): 71–81, <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v2i1.26>.

The second movement involves moving from the historically situated meaning toward a general moral principle and then considering its relevance to contemporary circumstances. The objective is not to abandon the original meaning of the Qur'anic text, but to identify the broader ethical orientation that can inform new situations. Studies applying Rahman's approach demonstrate that this movement can generate moral principles that extend beyond the immediate historical circumstances of a particular verse. For example, research applying the double movement method to Surah al-'Alaq identifies principles such as human equality, intellectual humility, social harmony, patience, and moral responsibility as ethical implications that can be related to contemporary society.¹²

This movement from text to moral principle is also central to Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach. Saeed argues that the interpretation of Qur'anic ethico-legal texts should take seriously both the socio-historical context of revelation and the contemporary circumstances in which Muslims seek to apply Qur'anic teachings. His approach explicitly challenges interpretations that rely excessively on literalism and textualism without adequately considering changing social realities. In this framework, ethical values function as an important bridge between the historical meaning of the Qur'an and its contemporary application.

Accordingly, Qur'anic ethics should not be understood merely as a collection of moral instructions. Rather, it can be conceptualized as a normative orientation derived through the interaction between Qur'anic text, historical context, and ethical reasoning. This distinction is important because a textual statement may respond to a particular social circumstance while embodying a moral concern that extends beyond that circumstance. Justice, for example, can be understood not merely as a command applicable to a particular case but as a broader orientation toward fair treatment, protection from oppression, and responsible social relations.

The relationship between textual interpretation and ethical principles can therefore be represented as:

Qur'anic Text → Historical Context → Social-Moral Problem → General Ethical Principle → Contemporary Application

This sequence demonstrates why moving "beyond textual interpretation" does not mean moving away from the Qur'an. Instead, it means extending interpretation toward the ethical implications of the text. The text remains the normative starting point, historical context provides the interpretive framework, and moral reasoning connects the resulting principle with contemporary circumstances.

The contextualist approach developed by Saeed further strengthens this process by introducing a mediating relationship between the historical context of revelation and contemporary context. Saeed and Akbar (2021) argue that contextualist interpretation seeks to relate Qur'anic ethical teachings to contemporary needs without abandoning fundamental Qur'anic values. This approach is particularly relevant to social justice because contemporary forms of inequality may differ substantially from those encountered during

¹² Sulkipli dan Nurul Hikmah Amir, "Kontribusi Metode Double Movement Fazrul Rahman Terhadap Penafsiran al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Tafseer* 11, no. 1 (2023): 55–77, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jt.v11i1.37050>.

the period of revelation, while the underlying ethical concern with justice and human welfare may remain relevant.

Thus, the movement from Qur'anic text toward moral-ethical principles provides the first analytical foundation for rethinking social justice. It enables Qur'anic interpretation to move beyond the identification of textual prescriptions toward the formulation of broader ethical orientations. The next question is how these principles can be contextualized within contemporary social conditions without losing their connection to the Qur'anic worldview. This issue becomes the focus of the following section.

Contextualizing Qur'anic Ethics Beyond Textual Meaning

The transition from Qur'anic text to moral-ethical principles does not automatically establish their relevance to contemporary society. Ethical principles derived from the Qur'an must also be interpreted in relation to changing social, political, and economic circumstances. This is where contextual interpretation becomes important. A contextual approach does not abandon the textual meaning of the Qur'an; rather, it seeks to understand the relationship between the text, its socio-historical circumstances, and the context in which its ethical significance is applied. Saeed argues that understanding the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an requires attention to the socio-historical context of revelation as well as the changing needs and circumstances of Muslims today.¹³

Within this perspective, the relevance of Qur'anic ethics cannot be determined solely by asking whether a particular textual formulation can be reproduced literally in the present. The more fundamental question is what moral orientation the text seeks to establish. This distinction is important because contemporary social problems frequently differ in form and complexity from those encountered during the period of revelation. Economic inequality, institutional discrimination, unequal access to resources, and structural marginalization may operate through institutions and social systems that did not exist in the same form in seventh-century Arabia. Consequently, the contemporary application of Qur'anic ethics requires an interpretive process capable of maintaining the normative orientation of the Qur'an while recognizing changes in social circumstances.

Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* provides a methodological basis for this process. The first movement seeks to understand the Qur'anic response within its historical and social context, while the second movement seeks to derive general moral principles and consider their relevance to contemporary situations.¹⁴ The contextualization of Qur'anic ethics therefore involves a movement from historical particularity toward moral universality, followed by a movement from moral universality toward contemporary application. The objective is not to reproduce historical social arrangements but to preserve the ethical direction of the Qur'anic message.

Saeed's contextualist approach further develops this relationship by emphasizing the importance of considering multiple dimensions of context. His approach recognizes that

¹³ Abdullah Saeed, "Some Reflections on the Contextualist Approach to Ethico-Legal Texts of the Quran," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no. 2 (2008): 221–37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X08000517>.

¹⁴ Rahman, *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition*.

Qur'anic interpretation involves interaction between the text, the historical circumstances of revelation, the linguistic and literary dimensions of the text, and the social conditions of contemporary interpreters. This framework is particularly relevant for ethical questions because it allows interpreters to distinguish between values that possess broader normative significance and specific responses that were closely connected to the social conditions of the first Muslim community.

This contextualization can be illustrated through the concept of justice. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes justice and equitable treatment, but contemporary social justice encompasses dimensions such as economic inequality, human rights, political participation, discrimination, and access to social opportunities. Junaidi et al. (2023), for example, identify freedom, equality, fraternity, equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, and respect for human rights as important dimensions of the Qur'anic paradigm of social justice. These dimensions demonstrate that Qur'anic justice can be approached as a broader moral orientation rather than being restricted to a particular historical legal formulation.¹⁵

The contextualization of justice therefore requires a distinction between ethical principle and social form. The ethical principle may remain stable while the social forms through which it is realized change. For example, the principle of equitable distribution may remain relevant even though the economic structures through which wealth is accumulated and distributed have changed considerably. Similarly, the principle of protecting human dignity may remain constant even though contemporary forms of discrimination and marginalization differ from those of the early Islamic period. Contextual interpretation thus enables Qur'anic ethics to remain normatively grounded while responding to historically changing circumstances.

Recent scholarship supports this movement toward historically informed and socially responsive interpretation. Lokman (2025) argues that historical approaches to Qur'anic interpretation are important for understanding revelation within its social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. The study specifically highlights Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* as one of the methodological approaches that distinguishes universal ethical principles from historically contextualized prescriptions. This distinction strengthens the argument that contextual interpretation is not simply an attempt to modernize the Qur'an but a methodological effort to understand how its ethical orientation can engage new social realities.¹⁶

At the same time, contextualization must avoid two opposite tendencies. The first is textual reductionism, in which contemporary ethical questions are answered exclusively through the literal reproduction of historical formulations without sufficient attention to changed circumstances. The second is contextual relativism, in which contemporary social values become the sole basis for determining Qur'anic meaning. Both tendencies create

¹⁵ Junaidi, Majid, dan Nazri, "Revisiting Social Justice."

¹⁶ Ainul Asyraf Lokman, "Pendekatan Sejarah Terhadap Pentafsiran Al-Quran: Memahami Wahyu Dalam Konteks Peradaban Kontemporer: Historical Approach to the Interpretation of the Quran: Understanding Revelation in the Context of Contemporary Civilization," *Journal Al-Muqaddimah* 13, no. 2 (2025): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.22452/muqaddimah.vol13no2.1>.

methodological problems. The former risks making Qur'anic ethics incapable of responding adequately to new forms of injustice, while the latter risks disconnecting contemporary ethical reasoning from the normative authority of the Qur'anic text.

A contextual approach therefore requires a balance between textual fidelity and contemporary relevance. The Qur'an remains the normative source, while historical and contemporary contexts function as interpretive dimensions through which its ethical significance is understood. Saeed emphasizes precisely this challenge in contextualist interpretation: the task is to relate Qur'anic ethico-legal teachings to changing circumstances while maintaining their connection to the text.¹⁷

This balance also changes the role of the interpreter. The interpreter is not merely a transmitter of an already fixed meaning but becomes a mediator between the Qur'anic text and contemporary moral problems. Such mediation requires historical awareness, textual competence, ethical reasoning, and sensitivity to contemporary social realities. The interpreter must therefore ask not only "What does this verse mean?" but also "What ethical concern does this verse express, and how can that concern be meaningfully addressed under contemporary conditions?"

This shift is crucial to the argument of this study. Moving beyond textual meaning does not mean moving beyond the Qur'an. Rather, it means moving from textual meaning to ethical significance and from ethical significance to social application. The analytical movement can therefore be formulated as:

Textual Meaning → Historical Context → Moral Principle → Contemporary Context → Ethical Application

Through this process, Qur'anic ethics becomes capable of engaging contemporary social realities without being reduced either to literal textualism or unrestricted reinterpretation. The Qur'anic ethical tradition can thus function as a critical normative resource for evaluating contemporary social arrangements, particularly those characterized by inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and unequal distribution of social resources.

The importance of this approach becomes clearer when Qur'anic ethics is considered in relation to social justice. If justice is understood only as a textual command, its application may remain limited to the specific circumstances discussed in classical interpretation. If, however, justice is understood as a broader moral orientation, it can provide a framework for examining whether contemporary institutions and social relations protect human dignity, distribute opportunities fairly, and prevent forms of oppression. In this sense, contextual interpretation creates the conceptual bridge between Qur'anic ethics and contemporary social justice.

Thus, contextualizing Qur'anic ethics does not diminish the importance of the text. Instead, it allows the ethical potential of the text to become visible across changing historical circumstances. The task of interpretation is consequently not merely to preserve past meanings but to identify the moral principles through which the Qur'anic worldview can critically engage contemporary society. This provides the foundation for the next section,

¹⁷ Abu Bakar dkk., "From Precarity to Divine Sufficiency: A Qur'anic Response to the Neoliberal Structuring of Marriage Delay," *Kalam* 20, no. 1 (2026): 119–42, <https://doi.org/10.24042/202620131019>.

which examines the specific relationship between Qur'anic ethics and the foundations of social justice.

Qur'anic Ethics and the Foundations of Social Justice

The contextualization of Qur'anic ethics provides a basis for understanding social justice not merely as a legal or institutional concept, but as a moral orientation embedded in relationships between individuals and society. The Qur'an repeatedly associates justice with fair treatment, responsibility, and the rejection of oppression. Consequently, social justice can be approached as an ethical framework through which social arrangements are evaluated according to their capacity to protect human dignity, prevent injustice, and promote equitable relations. This perspective is consistent with contemporary studies that identify justice, equality, freedom, fraternity, and protection of human rights as interconnected dimensions of the Qur'anic paradigm of social justice.¹⁸

One of the central ethical foundations is justice itself (*'adl* and *qist*). The Qur'anic conception of justice cannot be reduced to the impartial application of rules. It also involves the moral responsibility to establish fair relationships and prevent arbitrary forms of domination. Qur'anic commands concerning justice therefore acquire significance beyond individual behavior because they establish a normative expectation concerning how social relationships should be organized. When interpreted contextually, justice becomes a critical principle for evaluating whether contemporary institutions and social practices reproduce inequality or protect the rights and dignity of members of society.

A second foundation is human dignity (*karāmah*). The Qur'an presents human beings as possessing an inherent dignity that should inform social relations. This principle has implications for how vulnerable and marginalized groups are treated within society. Social justice, from this perspective, cannot be measured exclusively through the distribution of material resources. It also requires recognition of persons as subjects possessing dignity, rights, and moral agency. Consequently, discrimination, exclusion, humiliation, and systematic marginalization represent ethical problems because they undermine the dignity that constitutes an important dimension of the Qur'anic moral worldview.¹⁹

A third foundation is equality and human solidarity. Qur'anic ethics challenges social distinctions when they become mechanisms for unjustified superiority or exclusion. The emphasis on human equality does not necessarily imply that all individuals occupy identical social positions, but it establishes a moral basis for rejecting discrimination based on arbitrary social distinctions. Contemporary scholarship on Qur'anic social justice similarly identifies equality, fraternity, and human rights as important components of a broader Qur'anic paradigm of justice. This provides a basis for interpreting Qur'anic ethics in relation

¹⁸ Junaidi, Majid, dan Nazri, "Revisiting Social Justice."

¹⁹ Muhammad Maga Sule dan Attahir Shehu Mainiyo, "Impact of Qur'anic Moral Excellence on The Lives of Muslim Society: An Exposition," *Spektra: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 6, no. 1 (2024): 65–92, <https://doi.org/10.34005/spektra.v6i1.3637>.

to contemporary concerns about discrimination, social exclusion, and unequal access to opportunities.

A fourth foundation concerns responsibility toward vulnerable groups. Qur'anic ethical discourse repeatedly draws attention to orphans, the poor, travelers, and other socially vulnerable groups. The importance of these groups indicates that justice cannot be understood solely as formal equality. A society may formally treat individuals equally while maintaining structural conditions that prevent some groups from exercising their rights or accessing essential resources. Qur'anic ethics therefore introduces a substantive dimension of justice in which social responsibility requires attention to those who are particularly exposed to deprivation and exclusion.

This distinction between formal and substantive justice is important for contemporary application. If Qur'anic justice is interpreted solely as equal treatment, it may fail to address structural inequalities that originate from unequal starting positions. A contextual reading instead suggests that justice also requires examining the social conditions that produce vulnerability. The ethical question consequently shifts from “Are people treated equally?” to “Do existing social arrangements enable people to live with dignity and access their basic rights and opportunities?”

A fifth foundation is social responsibility. Qur'anic ethics does not construct morality exclusively around individual piety. Moral responsibility extends into social relationships and collective life. This dimension is important because contemporary injustice frequently results not only from individual misconduct but also from institutional arrangements, economic structures, and political decisions. A Qur'anic ethical approach to social justice therefore requires attention to both individual responsibility and the collective responsibility of institutions and communities.

These principles can be organized into an analytical framework:

Qur'anic ethical principle	Social justice dimension	Contemporary concern
'Adl / Qist	Fairness and justice	Inequality and discrimination
Karāmah	Human dignity	Marginalization and exclusion
Equality	Equal moral worth	Discriminatory structures
Social responsibility	Protection of vulnerable groups	Poverty and deprivation
Solidarity	Collective welfare	Social fragmentation

This framework demonstrates that Qur'anic social justice is multidimensional. Justice is not limited to the redistribution of wealth, nor can it be reduced to individual morality. It encompasses the moral quality of social relations, the recognition of human dignity, the

protection of vulnerable groups, and the responsibility of society to prevent conditions that generate systematic disadvantage.

The significance of this framework becomes clearer when connected to Rahman's double movement. The historical analysis of Qur'anic references to justice, poverty, economic relations, and social responsibility allows the interpreter to identify the moral concerns underlying specific revelations. The second movement then asks how these concerns can be translated into principles capable of addressing contemporary forms of injustice. This approach prevents the study from simply transferring historical social arrangements into the present while also preventing contemporary ethical concerns from becoming detached from the Qur'anic text.

For example, Qur'anic concern with the equitable treatment of economically vulnerable groups can be interpreted as expressing a broader principle of social protection and distributive responsibility. The contemporary application does not require reproducing the exact institutional mechanisms of early Muslim society. Instead, the ethical principle can be used to evaluate whether contemporary economic arrangements adequately protect people from extreme deprivation and whether wealth and opportunities are distributed in ways consistent with human dignity and social responsibility.

This approach also demonstrates why Qur'anic ethics can contribute to contemporary discussions of structural justice. Traditional discussions of morality often focus on the behavior of individuals, whereas contemporary social injustice may be produced through systems and institutions. A contextual ethical reading allows the Qur'anic concern with oppression, exploitation, inequality, and vulnerability to be extended to the evaluation of institutional arrangements. The relevant question becomes whether social structures facilitate justice or reproduce forms of domination.²⁰

However, the Qur'anic ethical framework should not be presented as a ready-made policy program for every contemporary problem. Its contribution is primarily normative. It establishes moral criteria through which existing social arrangements can be evaluated. Specific policies concerning taxation, welfare, education, healthcare, or economic redistribution require additional social-scientific and institutional analysis. Qur'anic ethics can provide the moral direction for such debates without claiming to replace empirical knowledge or public policy expertise.

This distinction is crucial for maintaining the analytical rigor of the study. The objective is not to argue that Qur'anic ethics alone can resolve contemporary social injustice. Rather, the argument is that Qur'anic ethics can provide a normative framework for questioning unjust social arrangements and orienting collective action toward dignity, fairness, equality, and social responsibility. Such a position allows religious ethics to enter contemporary social debates without reducing complex social problems to religious prescriptions alone.

The foundations identified above consequently provide a bridge between Qur'anic interpretation and contemporary social ethics. Justice, dignity, equality, protection of

²⁰ Muhammad Fadhil Wathani dkk., "Qur'anic Ethics of Women's Dignity Against Defamation: A Double Movement Hermeneutic Study of Li'an Case in Q.S. An-Nur Verse 6 until 9," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 4, no. 3 (Desember 2025): 1139–60, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v4i3.13623>.

vulnerable groups, and social responsibility can function as interconnected ethical principles through which contemporary social realities are critically examined. The next challenge is therefore to determine how these principles can be applied to the changing forms of injustice characteristic of contemporary society.

Reimagining Social Justice in Contemporary Society

The ethical principles identified above become more significant when they are applied to the changing forms of social injustice in contemporary society. Contemporary injustice is not limited to direct acts of discrimination or individual violations of rights. It can also emerge through economic structures, unequal access to education and healthcare, political exclusion, social marginalization, and institutional arrangements that systematically disadvantage particular groups. For this reason, reimagining social justice from a Qur'anic perspective requires moving from individual morality toward a broader examination of social structures and relationships.²¹

From the perspective of Qur'anic ethics, justice is not merely an ideal but a normative criterion for evaluating social relations. The Qur'anic emphasis on *'adl* and *qist* provides a basis for questioning social arrangements that generate arbitrary inequality or enable domination. Junaidi demonstrate that the Qur'anic paradigm of social justice encompasses interconnected concerns such as equality, freedom, fraternity, human rights, and equitable access to social opportunities. This suggests that Qur'anic justice can be interpreted as a multidimensional moral framework rather than a narrowly legal concept.

One important contemporary application concerns economic inequality. Contemporary economies generate substantial differences in wealth, access to resources, and opportunities. Although inequality itself does not necessarily constitute injustice, it becomes ethically problematic when economic structures systematically prevent particular groups from meeting basic needs or participating meaningfully in social life. Qur'anic ethical principles concerning justice, responsible wealth, and concern for vulnerable groups provide a normative basis for evaluating such conditions. The relevant question is therefore not simply how much wealth individuals possess, but whether economic structures allow wealth and opportunities to circulate in ways consistent with human dignity and social responsibility.

This perspective shifts the discussion from charity to structural responsibility. Individual generosity is important within the Qur'anic moral framework, but social justice requires more than voluntary assistance. If poverty and deprivation are continuously reproduced by institutional arrangements, addressing their consequences without examining their structural causes remains insufficient. Qur'anic ethics can therefore encourage a broader understanding of social responsibility in which communities and institutions are expected to prevent conditions that produce persistent vulnerability.

A second area concerns social exclusion and discrimination. The Qur'anic emphasis on human dignity and moral equality provides a basis for challenging practices that reduce

²¹ Amina Wadud, "Towards a Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Social Justice: Race, Class and Gender," *Journal of Law and Religion* 12, no. 1 (Juni 1995): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1051608>.

individuals or groups to inferior social status. Contemporary discrimination may occur through explicit exclusion, unequal opportunities, stigmatization, or institutional practices. A contextual reading of Qur'anic ethics allows the principle of human dignity to be applied beyond the specific social categories mentioned in historical contexts. The central ethical question becomes whether contemporary social arrangements recognize the equal moral worth of human beings.²²

A third concern is unequal access to essential social resources, including education, healthcare, and opportunities for participation. Social justice cannot be fully achieved when formal equality exists but access to basic resources remains highly unequal. Qur'anic ethics, when interpreted through the principles of dignity, justice, and social responsibility, provides a normative basis for questioning such disparities. The Qur'anic ethical framework thus encourages attention to the conditions that enable individuals to develop and exercise their human capacities.

This approach also has implications for political and social participation. Justice requires that individuals and communities are not arbitrarily excluded from decisions affecting their lives. While the Qur'an does not provide a single institutional model corresponding directly to contemporary democratic systems, its ethical principles concerning justice, consultation, responsibility, and opposition to oppression can contribute to normative reflection on political participation.²³ The application should therefore occur at the level of ethical principles rather than through the literal transplantation of historical political arrangements into contemporary institutions.

The same principle applies to emerging forms of injustice associated with technological and social transformation. Digital inequality, unequal access to information, and new forms of social exclusion demonstrate that contemporary injustice increasingly operates through technological infrastructures as well as conventional economic and political institutions. A Qur'anic ethical framework can contribute to evaluating these developments by asking whether technological systems promote human dignity, equitable access, social responsibility, and protection from harm.²⁴

The importance of this approach lies in its ability to connect religious ethics with structural analysis. Qur'anic ethics should not be confined to personal virtues such as honesty, generosity, and compassion, although these remain essential. The ethical orientation of the Qur'an can also provide criteria for examining the institutions and

²² Josefa Flores, Luis Santos, and Usman Tariq, 'Shariah Law and Economic Justice: Analyzing The Impact of Zakat on Income Distribution in Indonesia', *Sharia Oikonomia Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (2025): 104–15, <https://doi.org/10.70177/solj.v3i1.2085>.

²³ Dedi Masri dan Randy Putra Alamsyah, "Force Majeure in Abortion: A Review of Ulama Fatwas and Indonesian Health Law," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 14, no. 1 (April 2026): 61–76, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol14no1.1179>.

²⁴ Randy Putra Alamsyah dan Daud Lintang, "Cultural Integration and Political Consciousness in Qur'anic Exegesis: A Study of the Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai," *Fikri : Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 10, no. 1 (Juli 2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v10i1.6161>.

structures through which social relationships are organized. Justice consequently becomes both a personal virtue and a social principle.

This argument extends the contextual approach discussed in the previous sections. The first movement of interpretation identifies the moral concerns embedded in the Qur'anic response to historical social problems. The second movement translates those concerns into broader principles capable of engaging contemporary structures. Thus, the contemporary application of Qur'anic ethics does not require identifying a direct verse for every modern problem. Instead, it requires determining whether contemporary social conditions are consistent with the broader moral objectives derived from the Qur'anic worldview.

The resulting framework can be summarized as follows:

Historical Qur'anic Concern → General Ethical Principle → Contemporary Social Problem → Critical Ethical Evaluation → Social Justice Orientation

This model also prevents two forms of reductionism. First, it avoids reducing Qur'anic ethics to a collection of isolated commands that are mechanically applied to contemporary situations. Second, it avoids treating contemporary social justice entirely independently of the Qur'anic moral tradition. The contextual approach instead establishes a dialogue between the normative orientation of the Qur'an and the empirical realities of contemporary society.

However, reimagining social justice through Qur'anic ethics requires acknowledging the limits of a normative framework. Qur'anic ethical principles can establish values and moral criteria, but they do not automatically determine the most effective institutional policies for achieving them. Questions concerning taxation, social welfare, education, healthcare, labor policy, or economic redistribution require empirical evidence and specialized policy analysis. Qur'anic ethics can inform the moral objectives of these policies while remaining open to insights from economics, sociology, political science, and other disciplines.

The significance of Qur'anic ethics therefore lies not in providing predetermined technical solutions but in expanding the moral horizon through which contemporary social problems are evaluated. It asks whether economic development occurs without sacrificing human dignity, whether political institutions protect rather than marginalize vulnerable groups, whether social differences become sources of domination or mutual recognition, and whether the distribution of resources reflects principles of justice and responsibility.

In this sense, reimagining social justice does not mean creating an entirely new conception of justice detached from the Qur'anic tradition. Rather, it means recovering the ethical orientation of the Qur'an and allowing that orientation to engage new forms of social reality. The Qur'anic emphasis on justice, dignity, equality, solidarity, and responsibility can therefore function as a critical moral vocabulary for contemporary debates about inequality and social exclusion.

The central argument of this section is that Qur'anic ethics can contribute to contemporary social justice when its moral principles are interpreted contextually and applied critically to changing social structures. Its relevance lies not in reproducing historical social arrangements but in maintaining the moral objectives of revelation while responding

to new forms of injustice. This provides the basis for developing an ethical-contextual framework that integrates Qur'anic interpretation, moral reasoning, and contemporary social justice. Toward an Ethical-Contextual Framework of Qur'anic Social Justice The preceding discussion demonstrates that the contemporary relevance of Qur'anic ethics depends not only on identifying ethical values within the text but also on establishing a methodological relationship between textual interpretation, historical context, moral reasoning, and contemporary social realities. Based on the literature examined, this study proposes an ethical-contextual framework of Qur'anic social justice that connects these dimensions in a continuous interpretive process. The framework seeks to explain how Qur'anic ethical principles can provide a normative foundation for engaging contemporary forms of social injustice without reducing interpretation to either literal textualism or unrestricted contextualization.²⁵ The framework begins with the Qur'anic text as the normative foundation of ethical reflection. The Qur'an is approached not simply as a collection of isolated prescriptions but as a source of moral guidance concerning human conduct and social relations. Interpretation then moves toward the historical context in which particular verses were revealed. Examining the social, economic, cultural, and moral circumstances surrounding revelation helps identify the specific problems addressed by the Qur'anic message and clarifies the ethical orientation underlying its response. This stage corresponds to the first movement of Fazlur Rahman's *double movement*, which emphasizes the importance of understanding Qur'anic statements within their historical circumstances before deriving their broader moral significance.²⁶

The analysis subsequently moves from historical context toward the identification of general moral-ethical principles. The objective is not to reproduce historical formulations literally but to identify the broader ethical orientations embedded within them. Principles such as justice, human dignity, equality, social responsibility, solidarity, and protection of vulnerable groups can therefore be understood as expressions of the Qur'anic moral worldview. At this stage, the interpretation moves beyond the immediate historical formulation while remaining grounded in the normative orientation of the Qur'anic text.

The next stage involves placing these moral principles within the contemporary context. Contemporary societies experience forms of injustice that may differ considerably from those present during the period of revelation. Economic inequality, structural discrimination, social exclusion, unequal access to education and healthcare, and other forms of institutional disadvantage require ethical analysis within their specific contemporary circumstances. Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach is particularly relevant at this stage because it emphasizes the relationship between the historical context of revelation and the contemporary context in which Qur'anic teachings are interpreted and applied.²⁷

The interaction between Qur'anic moral principles and contemporary circumstances leads to critical ethical evaluation. At this stage, Qur'anic ethics functions as a normative

²⁵ Putra Pandu Dinata Nurdiansyah, "The Paradigm of Reconstructing Fazlur Rahman's Ethical-Legal Contextual Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Takwil Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 4, no. 1 (2025): 110–25.

²⁶ Umair dan Said, "Fazlur Rahman Dan Teori Double Movement."

²⁷ Saeed, "Religion, Classification Struggles, and the State's Exercise of Symbolic Power."

framework for assessing contemporary social arrangements. The central question is not whether every contemporary problem has a direct textual equivalent in the Qur'an, but whether existing social practices and structures are consistent with broader principles of justice, dignity, equality, and social responsibility. This approach enables Qur'anic ethics to become a critical resource for examining the moral consequences of contemporary social structures rather than merely a source of individual moral instruction.

Critical ethical evaluation subsequently leads to a social justice orientation. In this framework, social justice refers to the organization of social relations in ways that protect human dignity, promote fairness, prevent oppression, and provide meaningful opportunities for individuals and communities. Qur'anic ethics therefore contributes a normative dimension to contemporary discussions of inequality and exclusion. As Junaidi et al. (2023) demonstrate, the Qur'anic paradigm of social justice encompasses interconnected concerns including equality, freedom, fraternity, human rights, and equitable social relations.

The final stage is social transformation. This concept should not be understood as the direct implementation of a predetermined Qur'anic political or economic system. Rather, it refers to the possibility of translating Qur'anic ethical principles into critical orientations for improving contemporary social relations and challenging structures that reproduce injustice. Qur'anic ethics can therefore provide moral direction for social transformation while empirical research, institutional knowledge, and public policy determine the specific mechanisms through which such transformation may be pursued.²⁸

Taken together, the framework follows a continuous movement from Qur'anic text to historical context, from historical context to moral-ethical principles, from moral principles to contemporary context, from contemporary context to critical ethical evaluation, and ultimately from ethical evaluation toward social justice and social transformation. This sequence demonstrates that moving beyond textual interpretation does not mean abandoning the Qur'anic text. Instead, it means extending interpretation toward the ethical significance and contemporary implications of the text.

The proposed framework contributes to Qur'anic studies by clarifying the relationship between interpretation, ethics, and social justice. Existing discussions frequently examine Qur'anic ethical values or contemporary applications separately. This framework connects them through a systematic interpretive process. Its central proposition is that Qur'anic social ethics becomes socially meaningful when textual meanings are historically contextualized, transformed into broader moral principles, critically evaluated against contemporary realities, and translated into orientations for social justice.

Accordingly, the framework can be summarized as a movement from textual meaning toward ethical significance and from ethical significance toward social transformation. This provides a conceptual basis for understanding the Qur'an not only as a text to be interpreted but also as a moral resource through which contemporary forms of injustice can be critically examined and more just social relations imagined.

²⁸ Abdul Karim dan Moh Muhtador, "Re-Examining Social Verses through Justice and Inequality: A Critical Hermeneutical Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis," *QOF* 9, no. 2 (2025): 279–300, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v9i2.3251>.

CONLUSSION

This study demonstrates that Qur'anic ethics can provide a meaningful normative framework for reimagining social justice in contemporary society. The analysis shows that the relevance of Qur'anic teachings does not depend on the literal reproduction of historical formulations, but on the ability to identify their broader moral principles and contextualize them within changing social realities. Using Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* and Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach, the study develops an ethical-contextual framework that moves from Qur'anic text to historical context, moral-ethical principles, contemporary context, critical ethical evaluation, social justice orientation, and social transformation. This framework positions justice, human dignity, equality, social responsibility, and protection of vulnerable groups as important ethical foundations for evaluating contemporary forms of inequality, exclusion, and marginalization.

The study argues that moving beyond textual interpretation does not mean abandoning the Qur'anic text. Rather, interpretation becomes a process through which the moral significance of the text can engage contemporary social problems. The contribution of this study therefore lies in connecting Qur'anic interpretation with social ethics and contemporary social justice through a systematic ethical-contextual framework. As a library-based study, its conclusions remain conceptual and normative rather than empirically tested. Future research can examine how this framework operates in specific contexts, communities, or contemporary social justice movements.

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