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Contemporary Scholars' Views on the Science of Munāsabah (Qur'anic Correlation) and the Coherence of Verses within Qur'anic Chapters

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Abstract: This study examines contemporary approaches to Qur'anic coherence (ʿIlm al-Munāsabah), focusing on the scholarly contribution of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour to the study of coherence among the segments of Qur'an 5:3 (Sūrat al-Māʾidah). It addresses the extent to which textual coherence can guide interpretation and support preference among competing exegetical explanations, distinguishing evidence-based textual relationships from plausible connections with limited interpretive significance. Using a descriptive, analytical, and comparative methodology, the study investigates the conceptual foundations of munāsabah, examines interpretations of the declaration of the completion of religion (ikmāl al-dīn), and evaluates linguistic, contextual, and transmitted exegetical evidence. The findings indicate that explaining the semantic meaning of this declaration does not necessarily explain its placement between dietary prohibitions and the concession of necessity (iḍṭirār). Neither describing the declaration as a rhetorical parenthesis (iʿtirāḍ balāghī) nor asserting a general thematic connection is sufficient on its own to establish a preferred interpretation. Furthermore, differences in the circumstances of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl) do not, by themselves, exclude semantic coherence within the received textual arrangement. The study identifies four evaluative criteria: linguistic and rhetorical validity, contextual consistency, evidentiary sufficiency, and interpretive contribution. Its primary methodological contribution is a proposed hypothetical removal test (ikhtibār al-ḥadhf al-iftirāḍī) designed to distinguish coherence that adds explanatory value from coherence that merely accompanies an independently established interpretation, without treating the test as an independent proof of validity.

Keywords: Qur'anic coherence (ʿIlm al-Munāsabah), verse correlation, Qur'anic context, Sūrat al-Māʾidah.

Introduction

The science of Qur'anic correlation (*ʿIlm al-Munāsabah*) constitutes a vital branch of Qur'anic sciences concerned with uncovering the structural harmony of Qur'anic discourse and identifying the semantic, rhetorical, and contextual relationships linking verses, passages, and chapters (*sūrahs*). Its significance extends beyond demonstrating formal symmetry among textual components to elucidating how these interrelations shape meaning, guide semantic interpretation, and weigh competing exegetical possibilities. Consequently, investigating *munāsabah* requires moving beyond the mere assertion of a connection to analyzing its precise nature, scrutinizing its supporting textual indicators (*qarāʾin*), and determining the exact measure of its contribution to the interpretive process.

Contemporary scholarship has devoted considerable attention to this discipline, particularly within

studies addressing the thematic unity of the *sūrah* (*al-waḥdah al-mawḍūʿiyyah*), textual cohesion (*al-ittisāq al-naṣṣī*), and intra-Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*). However, divergent methodological frameworks employed to uncover textual correlations have yielded varying conclusions: while certain interpretations rely on direct linguistic linkage, others rest upon an assumed overarching thematic unity or an inferred rhetorical relationship. This divergence raises a fundamental methodological problem regarding the probative authority (*ḥujjiyyah*) of *munāsabah* and the epistemological boundaries within which it may legitimately be invoked in Qur'anic exegesis.

Within this scholarly landscape, examining the research contribution of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour assumes particular importance. He co-authored a specialized study investigating the textual coherence of Qur'an 5:3 (*Sūrat al-Māʾidah*), addressing the problematic relationship between the declaration of the completion of religion (*ikmāl al-dīn*) and the surrounding dietary regulations. That collaborative study examined the interpretation of this clause as a rhetorical parenthesis (*iʿtirāḍ balāghī*) and evaluated the sufficiency of such an explanation in light of the Qur'anic context, the canonical arrangement of verses, and the differing circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*).

This case reveals an exegetical problem that transcends a single textual instance: the placement of a clause bearing a foundational doctrinal or legislative declaration within a passage detailing specific legal rulings raises critical questions regarding the interplay between distinct units of discourse and the possibility of thematic shifts coexisting with semantic continuity in a single locus. Furthermore, it necessitates distinguishing between textual coherence arising from the canonical sequence of verses in the *Muṣḥaf* and historical correlation tied to occasions of revelation, rather than assuming that distinct historical contexts automatically negate textual *munāsabah*.

Accordingly, this study analyzes contemporary positions on *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah*, taking Sanaei Pour's scholarly contribution as a primary point of departure for critical examination and comparison with relevant exegetical approaches. Rather than merely surveying existing views, the study evaluates their evidentiary foundations, elucidates their impact on semantic guidance, and delineates the methodological constraints that must govern arguments based on *munāsabah*.

The intended scholarly contribution lies in constructing a critical framework that distinguishes among three analytical levels: (1) the conceptual plausibility of a relationship between verses, (2) the empirical substantiation of that relationship through valid textual indicators, and (3) its operative efficacy in generating or preponderating an exegetical meaning. On this basis, the study seeks to integrate theoretical grounding with applied textual analysis, thereby evaluating *munāsabah* as an interpretive tool of variable evidentiary strength rather than an a priori assumption imposed upon the Qur'anic text.

1. Statement of the Research Problem

The research problem stems from the divergence among contemporary exegetical trends in defining the nature of Qur'anic *munāsabah* and establishing rigorous standards for invoking it—especially when a Qur'anic verse or clause appears thematically distinct from what precedes and follows it. Whereas such shifts are sometimes explained through rhetorical parenthesis or disparate occasions of revelation, alternative approaches view them as manifestations of deeper semantic integration requiring closer analysis of textual structure and context.

This tension is vividly exemplified in the co-authored study by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour on the coherence of Qur'an 5:3, where the juxtaposition of the declaration of religion's completion with dietary prohibitions prompts critical inquiry into whether a rhetorical explanation suffices to account for the clause's placement, and how contextual and historical indicators operate to substantiate coherence across the verse's segments.

Thus, the central problem of this study is defined by examining the nature of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour's scholarly contribution to the study of Qur'anic *munāsabah*, and assessing the efficacy of the methodological criteria and evidentiary proofs embedded in his work for explaining inter-verse relationships and guiding their semantic interpretation, in comparison with prevailing contemporary exegetical approaches.

2. Research Questions

1. What conceptual and methodological foundations can be derived from Sanaei Pour's scholarly contribution to the study of Qur'anic *munāsabah*, and how do they relate to textual context (*siyāq*) and thematic unity (*al-waḥdah al-mawḍūʿiyyah*)?

2. How did the collaborative study co-authored by Sanaei Pour address the problem of coherence in Qur'an 5:3, and what are the points of convergence and divergence between this treatment and other exegetical approaches?

3. What critical criteria can be established to evaluate the evidence used to substantiate *munāsabah*, and to distinguish between genuine textual cohesion, rhetorical parenthesis, and coherence that yields substantive exegetical meaning?

3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in highlighting the role of *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah* in uncovering semantic cohesion among Qur'anic verses and chapters and demonstrating its influence on interpretive meaning. Furthermore, the study derives value from critically analyzing Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour's contribution in this field and situating it alongside contemporary exegetical trends, thereby clarifying the methodological rules that separate *munāsabah* grounded in valid textual indicators from merely plausible connections that yield no clear interpretive consequence.

4. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to establish the conceptual foundations and methodological principles of Qur'anic *munāsabah*, highlight Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour's scholarly contribution to verse and chapter correlation through applied textual models that reveal its semantic impact, and compare contemporary perspectives to identify methodological convergences and divergences. Ultimately, it seeks to formulate rigorous academic criteria for evaluating Qur'anic correlations and preponderating among competing interpretations according to the strength of their textual indicators and proofs.

5. Methodology and Scope

The study employs a descriptive, analytical, and comparative methodology by surveying documented contributions by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour in the field of *munāsabah*, analyzing their underlying proofs, and comparing them with the views of contemporary exegetes. Qur'an 5:3 (*Sūrat al-Māʾidah*) serves as the primary applied case study, supplemented by additional examples where necessary. Exegetical explanations are evaluated according to four benchmarks: linguistic soundness, contextual consistency, evidentiary strength, and impact on elucidating Qur'anic meaning. The conclusions remain strictly bound to the examined corpus, carefully distinguishing between views articulated in co-authored publications and those attributable exclusively to Sanaei Pour.

6. Literature Review and Scholarly Contribution

Qur'anic correlation (*munāsabah*) has attracted numerous contemporary studies focused on analyzing textual and semantic relationships among verses, passages, and *sūrahs* and determining their interpretive impact. These works range from conceptual and methodological treatises to applied exegetical analyses targeting specific Qur'anic loci.

Among the studies directly relevant to this inquiry is Sayyid Mohammad Reza Hosseini Nia's article, *"An Investigation of the Relationships Among the Segments of Verse 3 of Sūrat al-Māʾidah"* (2019), which examined the problem of cohesion across the verse's clauses—specifically the link between dietary prohibitions and the declaration of the completion of religion. Hosseini Nia concluded that facets of structural interconnection among the verse's segments can be substantiated, grounded in the theological premise of the integrity of the Qur'anic text and the divinely ordained (*tawqīfī*) arrangement of its verses.

Hosseini Nia's work intersects with the collaborative study co-authored by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour, titled *"The Coherence of Verse 3 of Sūrat al-Māʾidah from the Sunni Perspective"* (2022), in its shared focus on connecting the *ikmāl al-dīn* clause to its surrounding context. However, the latter study specifically investigates classical and modern exegetical treatments of rhetorical parenthesis (*iʿtirāḍ*), examines the impact of differing circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) on

understanding intra-verse relationships, and argues for the possibility of demonstrating coherence in recitation, canonical arrangement, and exegesis.

Both studies converge in selecting Qur'an 5:3 as their analytical locus and addressing the link between the completion-of-religion clause and its surrounding legislative context. Based on the available bibliographic data, their divergence lies in their stated analytical angles: whereas the first study concentrates broadly on structural relationships among the verse's segments, the second devotes specialized attention to exegetical positions concerning rhetorical parenthesis and occasions of revelation. Nevertheless, differences in title and thematic framing alone do not suffice to establish divergence in final conclusions or granular methodology; doing so requires full-text collation and detailed evidentiary analysis. Accordingly, the critical comparison pursued herein moves beyond asking whether *munāsabah* exists to interrogating *how* it is substantiated, whether the supporting indicators suffice to prove the proposed connection, and how effectively each approach accounts for the clause's placement within the verse.

Scholarly Contribution of the Present Study

The primary contribution of the present study is to advance the inquiry from merely cataloguing facets of *munāsabah* to evaluating their interpretive efficacy by distinguishing among three interrelated analytical tiers: (1) the conceptual plausibility of a relationship, (2) its substantiation through valid textual indicators, and (3) its capacity to generate an exegetical meaning or preponderate one interpretation over another.

To operationalize this framework, the study applies criteria assessing linguistic soundness, contextual consistency, evidentiary sufficiency, and explanatory power regarding passage arrangement. Moreover, it introduces the *hypothetical removal test* (*ikhtibār al-ḥadhf al-iftirāḍī*), which involves mentally suspending a proposed *munāsabah* hypothesis and examining whether its exclusion diminishes the capacity to explain the text or leaves the meaning fully intact via independent proofs. Thus, the originality of this research lies not in claiming the discovery of a previously unnoticed correlation, but in constructing a critical apparatus that tests the rigor of competing exegetical explanations and delineates the boundaries of their conclusions.

Section I: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of ʿIlm al-Munāsabah in Contemporary Scholarship

The science of *munāsabah* holds a prominent place in Qur'anic studies due to its role in uncovering semantic and rhetorical links between verses and chapters and illuminating their bearing on textual comprehension. Yet, methodological disparities among exegetes and researchers in identifying these links raise pressing questions about their ontological nature and the limits of their evidentiary deployment—particularly when distinguishing correlation anchored in sound textual indicators from connections open to multiple competing interpretations. This section therefore examines the concept of *munāsabah*, its relationship to textual context (*siyāq*), thematic unity (*al-waḥdah al-mawḍūʿiyyah*), and intra-Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*), before establishing the methodological rules governing its exegetical application.

1. The Concept of Munāsabah and Its Boundaries with Context and Thematic Unity

ʿIlm al-Munāsabah is defined within the Qur'anic sciences as the discipline devoted to uncovering modes of interconnection among units of Qur'anic discourse—whether clauses within a single verse, adjacent verses, sequential passages, or entire *sūrahs*. Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī approached *munāsabah* in terms of the rational and linguistic links binding parts of speech together, explaining that grasping these connections reveals the orderly arrangement of meanings and the structural cohesion of the text (al-Zarkashī, 1990). Similarly, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī highlighted the diverse forms of *munāsabah*—including relationships based on causation (*taʿlīl*), contrast (*muqābalah*), parallelism (*tanāẓur*), and semantic transition—demonstrating that correlation is not confined to thematic similarity, but encompasses varied patterns of semantic and rhetorical linkage (al-Suyūṭī, 1974).

However, the multiplicity of potential correlations creates a methodological dilemma regarding the distinction between conceptual plausibility and valid inference. An exegete may propose multiple ways

in which two clauses or passages connect, yet these proposals are rarely equal in evidentiary weight or explanatory power. Consequently, mental plausibility alone does not suffice; a proposed correlation must rest upon a specific textual indicator (*qarīnah*) and perform a clear function in elucidating the text. This distinction forms an indispensable foundation for separating *munāsabah* as a speculative exegetical possibility (*iḥtimāl ijtihādī*) from *munāsabah* as a probative interpretive proof (*dalīl tafsīrī*).

While *munāsabah* intersects with Qur'anic context (*siyāq*) in examining textual order, the two differ in focus and function: *siyāq* comprises the surrounding textual elements that delimit the meaning of a given expression, whereas *munāsabah* explicates the specific mode of relationship linking the constituent units of discourse. Mohammad Hadi Maʿrifat emphasized the necessity of accounting for both verse connectivity and occasions of revelation when analyzing Qur'anic relationships, cautioning against assuming a unified historical context merely on the basis of physical adjacency in the *Muṣḥaf* (Maʿrifat, 1419 AH).

The practical import of this distinction becomes evident when Qur'anic discourse shifts from a specific legal ruling to a doctrinal proclamation or general directive before returning to the initial ruling. Simply labeling such a shift a digression or a thematic connection is insufficient; one must identify the precise function performed by the intervening passage and the indicators explaining its placement. Context (*siyāq*) maps the locus of transition and its surrounding elements, whereas *munāsabah* interprets the nature of the inter-passage relationship—an interpretation whose validity depends entirely on the strength of its supporting evidence.

Thematic unity (*al-waḥdah al-mawḍūʿiyyah*), by contrast, pertains to the overarching objective (*maqṣad ʿāmm*) under which the themes or major sections of a *sūrah* cohere. It is broader in scope than micro-level *munāsabah*: a *sūrah* may encompass diverse topics unified under a single macro-objective without requiring a direct semantic link between every pair of adjacent verses. In his analysis of the opening of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, Mohammad Hossein Ṭabāṭabāʾī demonstrated how verses align with the *sūrah*'s overarching purpose, utilizing macro-level intent to illuminate thematic arrangement without treating that intent as automatic proof for every micro-level correlation (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1412 AH).

The interpretive (*ijtihādī*) character of *munāsabah* is further illustrated in al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī's *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* under the rubric of *naẓm* (structural composition), where he explores how verses connect to preceding passages and frequently presents multiple plausible explanations for a single connection (al-Ṭabrisī, 1995). This plurality confirms that *munāsabah* is not invariably apodictic (*qaṭʿī*), but often constitutes an arena for weighing competing explanations of varying evidentiary strength. Hence, one must distinguish between an explanation that merely describes textual order and one that actively determines a verse's meaning or preponderates one of its interpretive possibilities.

Accordingly, the relationship among *munāsabah*, context, and thematic unity can be regulated through three interrelated analytical questions: (1) What textual elements surround the expression and shape its meaning? (2) What is the specific mode of connection between the passages? (3) What overarching purpose unifies these passages? Answering the first identifies contextual indicators; answering the second defines the nature of *munāsabah*; and answering the third establishes the broader teleological framework. Moving directly from establishing macro-thematic unity to asserting the validity of a specific micro-correlation without independent proof is methodologically unwarranted.

This regulatory framework proves crucial in analyzing Qur'an 5:3, where the clause *"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you"* (*al-yawma akmaltu lakum dīnakum wa-atmamtu ʿalaykum niʿmatī*) is situated between prohibited foods and the concession of necessity. While textual adjacency establishes the clause's physical position in the verse's sequence, it does not independently define the semantic relationship linking it to the surrounding legal rulings. Likewise, positing a broad legislative purpose does not obviate the need to explain the abrupt transition to the declaration of religion's completion and the subsequent return to the ruling of necessity.

Evaluating the interpretations examined by Sanaei Pour and his colleagues therefore requires determining whether a proposed *munāsabah* explains this textual architecture via specific indicators or merely asserts a generalized thematic link. The interpretive value of *munāsabah* is realized not through mere conceptual plausibility, but through substantiation by credible evidence and demonstrable impact

on understanding the text or its arrangement. Thus, differentiating context, *munāsabah*, and thematic unity serves as an operational safeguard regulating exegetical inference rather than a mere terminological exercise.

2. Intra-Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān) and Its Relationship to Munāsabah

Intra-Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*) is an interpretive methodology grounded in utilizing Qur'anic verses to clarify one another—elucidating the ambiguous (*mujmal*) via the explicit (*mubayyan*), qualifying the absolute (*muṭlaq*), specifying the general (*ʿāmm*), and synthesizing texts addressing a shared subject. While this approach shares with *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah* a commitment to intra-textual semantic relationships, the two differ in the core questions they address: intra-Qur'anic exegesis seeks to clarify a verse's meaning by cross-referencing other verses (regardless of location), whereas *munāsabah* investigates the structural linkage between adjacent textual units and the effect of their sequence on semantic orientation.

In the preface to *al-Mīzān*, Ṭabāṭabāʾī grounded intra-Qur'anic exegesis in the inherent capacity of Qur'anic verses to explain one another, while warning against subjecting the text to preconceived exegetical assumptions (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1412 AH). This principle implies that inter-verse connections derive not from superficial lexical or thematic overlap, but from the explanatory function one verse performs in defining another. Consequently, a semantic link between two verses does not necessarily entail a structural *munāsabah* arising from their adjacency in the *Muṣḥaf*.

Abdullah Jawadi Amoli further systematized intra-Qur'anic exegesis in *Tasnīm*, examining its epistemic authority, typology, and interaction with other exegetical sources (Jawadi Amoli, 1431 AH). His framework clarifies the distinction between *semantic linkage* across dispersed verses and *contextual linkage* generated by a verse's position within a specific textual structure: the former relies on the mutual explanatory power of Qur'anic statements, whereas the latter demands identifying the bond between adjacent passages and the indicators governing their sequence. Similarly, Mohammad Hadi Maʿrifat's treatment of exegetical sources underscores the need to separate the *source* of an exegetical proof from its *mode of deployment*: a cited verse may clarify the meaning of another verse without establishing a structural *munāsabah* rooted in textual arrangement (Maʿrifat, 2007).

The methodological distinction between intra-Qur'anic exegesis and *munāsabah* must therefore manifest in textual analysis. When the inquiry concerns the semantic definition of a term, ruling, or concept, cross-referencing other verses is appropriate. Conversely, when the inquiry asks *why* a clause appears at a specific juncture between two passages, answering it requires analyzing structural composition and indicators of transition. Although both functions may converge when a contextual link clarifies meaning, proving one does not automatically prove the other.

Qur'an 5:3 illustrates this clearly. To explore the Qur'anic semantics of "completion" or "perfection" (*tamām*), one may cross-reference Qur'an 6:115 (*"And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice"*), while accounting for differences in context and referents. Yet, even if such cross-referencing illuminates the concept of *tamām*, it cannot by itself explain why the *ikmāl al-dīn* clause is positioned between dietary laws and the concession of necessity, because explaining a clause's semantic content is distinct from explaining its structural placement.

This comparison reveals two distinct levels of inference: a *semantic level*, concerning what external verses contribute to understanding the concept of completion/perfection, and a *structural level*, concerning the textual indicators that explain the discourse's shift from dietary laws to the declaration of religion's completion and back to necessity. Relying solely on evidence from the semantic level to adjudicate the structural level is invalid unless that evidence directly addresses the mode of structural connection. Consequently, evaluating Sanaei Pour's collaborative study requires separating proofs that define the content of *ikmāl al-dīn* from proofs that explain its relationship to surrounding passages.

3. Methodological Rules of Munāsabah and the Role of Exegetical Traditions (Riwāyāt)

The interpretive value of Qur'anic *munāsabah* hinges on the soundness of the evidence substantiating the relationship between textual components, rather than on mere imaginative plausibility. A proposed correlation may appear acceptable on grounds of broad thematic resemblance, yet fall short of

constituting a valid indicator (*qarīnah muʿtabarah*) unless anchored in clear linguistic structure, defined contextual order, or an exegetical proof explaining the link. Evaluating *munāsabah* thus demands differentiating between the *possibility* of a connection, its *substantiation*, and its *semantic impact*.

Foremost among these rules is *linguistic precision*: a proposed explanation must not force words away from their established meanings without textual warrant, nor rely on far-fetched syntactic ellipses (*taqdīrāt*) unsupported by Arabic usage. Second is *contextual scrutiny*, encompassing a clause's position within its passage, its relation to preceding and succeeding segments, and the nature of semantic transitions. Yet even satisfying both rules does not obviate testing *evidentiary sufficiency*, because the mere possibility that two passages connect does not validate a specific explanation proposed for that connection.

The importance of defining the exact explanatory function of inter-verse links is highlighted in Maytham al-Baḥrānī's commentary on the maxim *"Parts of the Qur'an speak through other parts, and parts testify to other parts"* (*yanṭiqu baʿḍuhu bi-baʿḍ wa-yashhadu baʿḍuhu ʿalā baʿḍ*) (al-Baḥrānī, 1993). He interprets the Qur'an "speaking through itself" as clarifying the ambiguous, qualifying the absolute, and specifying the general, while linking its "testifying to itself" to intra-Qur'anic inferential proof. Thus, citing one verse to interpret another derives its legitimacy not from mere textual juxtaposition, but from specifying the exact mode of clarification performed.

As for exegetical traditions (*riwāyāt*), while they may illuminate a verse's meaning, circumstances of revelation, or intra-verse links, deploying them to establish *munāsabah* requires independent verification of both their chain/authenticity (*thubūt*) and semantic scope (*dalālah*). A tradition that defines the meaning of a Qur'anic clause does not necessarily explain why that clause occupies a particular textual position, nor does a report regarding an occasion of revelation automatically furnish a complete rhetorical explanation of intra-verse structure.

In this context, *al-Kāfī* records a prohibition against *"striking parts of the Qur'an against one another"* (*ḍarb al-Qurʾān baʿḍihi bi-baʿḍ*) (al-Kulaynī, 1365 SH). This prohibition cannot be construed as a blanket ban on intra-Qur'anic exegesis; rather, one must define what constitutes the censured "striking." ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Sabzawārī distinguished between legitimate Qur'anic cross-referencing that respects textual indications and arbitrary deployment that subordinates verses to preconceived exegetical opinions (al-Sabzawārī, 1418 AH). Similarly, Kamal al-Haydari differentiated between verses mutually confirming one another and eclectic synthesis that conflates distinct semantic stations, such as failing to distinguish the decisive (*muḥkam*) from the allegorical (*mutashābih*) (al-Haydari, 2006). Ali Akbar Babaei likewise stressed separating transmitted textual reports from the exegete's interpretive inference (*ijtihād*), lest a tradition be credited with a conclusion it neither states nor entails (Babaei, 2002). Ṭabāṭabāʾī echoed this by distinguishing between using verses to clarify one another and manipulating them in ways that violate their contextual stations (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1412 AH)—a safeguard preventing *munāsabah* from becoming an a priori assumption imposed onto the text.

These insights yield a three-tiered operational standard for evaluating transmitted evidence: (1) verifying the authenticity (*thubūt*) of the cited report; (2) accurately delimiting its semantic scope (*dalālah*); and (3) assessing its sufficiency to prove the specific structural *munāsabah* under investigation. Applied to Qur'an 5:3, reports addressing the meaning or occasion of *ikmāl al-dīn* must be separated from explanations of its placement between dietary laws and necessity. Based on this synthesis, four integrated criteria are proposed for weighing competing *munāsabah* explanations: (1) linguistic and rhetorical validity, (2) contextual consistency, (3) absence of contradiction with stronger evidence, and (4) sufficiency of textual indicators to substantiate the specific link and its interpretive impact.

Section II: Applied Exegetical Models of Munāsabah and Critical Methodological Comparison

Having established the theoretical foundations, this section tests the interpretive efficacy of *munāsabah* by analyzing loci where exegetes diverge in identifying the structural bond between units of discourse. Qur'an 5:3 serves as the primary case study due to its direct connection to Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour's collaborative research, evaluated alongside classical and modern exegetical works.

1. Segment Coherence in Qur'an 5:3 and Its Impact on Semantic Guidance

Qur'an 5:3 presents a classic exegetical problem regarding intra-verse cohesion: it opens by enumerating prohibited foods and related rulings, shifts abruptly to proclaiming the despair of the disbelievers, the perfection of religion, and the completion of divine favor, and then reverts to stipulating the concession for extreme necessity (*iḍṭirār*). This transition highlights a marked thematic contrast between the surrounding legislative rulings and the central doctrinal proclamation, prompting inquiry into the nature of their interconnection and its semantic consequences.

Analytically, the verse divides into three segments: (1) dietary prohibitions; (2) the central proclamation—*"This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion"*; and (3) the concession of necessity. While direct legislative continuity links the first and third segments, the placement of the middle segment requires an explanation defining its structural function.

The collaborative study co-authored by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour, *"The Coherence of Verse 3 of Sūrat al-Māʾidah from the Sunni Perspective"* (Hosseini et al., 2022), examined this intra-verse cohesion with particular attention to interpretations treating the *ikmāl al-dīn* clause as a rhetorical parenthesis (*jumlah iʿtirāḍiyyah*). As indicated in the study's abstract, the authors explored the interplay between rhetorical significance, circumstances of revelation, and canonical verse arrangement in the *Muṣḥaf*, arguing for the possibility of substantiating textual coherence without presupposing simultaneous revelation.

The significance of this approach lies in distinguishing *parenthesis* (a syntactic/rhetorical description of placement) from *disconnection* (a judgment of semantic severance). A parenthetical clause can perform a vital rhetorical function tied to the discourse's overarching objective; hence, labeling a clause parenthetical does not automatically negate *munāsabah*. Yet, demonstrating general connectivity does not by itself specify the exact relationship linking dietary laws to the completion of religion. Similarly, while Hosseini Nia's study (2019) appeals to textual integrity and canonical order to affirm intra-verse linkage, canonical arrangement justifies *searching* for *munāsabah* rather than proving a specific mode of correlation, which still requires independent linguistic and semantic indicators.

Classical and modern exegetes reflect this exact analytical tension. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī interpreted *ikmāl al-dīn* in light of the Muslims' political and religious empowerment—performing pilgrimage rites securely and excluding polytheists from the Sacred Mosque—without making the phrase contingent upon the revelation of every final legal obligation at that moment (al-Ṭabarī, 2001). While compelling in defining the *meaning* of completion, al-Ṭabarī's historical-theological reading does not independently account for the clause's *placement* between dietary laws and necessity.

Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr approached the clause's context while accommodating the possibility that segments of the verse were revealed at different times, arguing that they cohere within a broader textual design uniting themes associated with the religion's culmination (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1984). This allows exploring *munāsabah* at the level of overarching purpose without requiring historical simultaneity, though invoking a broad purpose still requires greater specificity to explain the immediate transition from dietary prohibitions to *ikmāl al-dīn* and back to necessity. Meanwhile, Ṭabāṭabāʾī analyzed the placement of *ikmāl al-dīn* alongside revelation traditions to explore the possibility of its historical independence from the surrounding dietary laws, thereby separating structural sequence in the *Muṣḥaf* from chronological unity of revelation (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1412 AH).

Comparing these approaches requires recognizing that they address distinct levels of the exegetical problem: al-Ṭabarī elucidates the semantic content of completion in light of historical triumph; Ibn ʿĀshūr situates the clause within a broader purposive structure; and Ṭabāṭabāʾī interrogates the nexus between textual context and occasions of revelation. To regulate such comparisons, three levels of connection must be distinguished: (1) *syntactic/structural connection*, establishing physical placement within the verse; (2) *semantic connection*, defining the conceptual link between the clause's content and surrounding rulings; and (3) *historical connection*, pertaining to occasions of revelation and chronological sequence. Valid inference forbids leaping from one level to another without dedicated

proof. Consequently, preference among competing interpretations depends on an approach's capacity to explain two inseparable elements simultaneously: the meaning of the middle clause and the rationale for its placement at this precise juncture.

2. The Impact of Divergent Contexts and Occasions of Revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl) on Determining Munāsabah

Distinguishing between Qur'anic context (*siyāq*) and occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) provides a crucial methodological entry point for resolving exegetical disagreements over *munāsabah*. Context governs semantic and syntactic relations generated by textual arrangement, whereas occasions of revelation pertain to historical events accompanying the descent of verses or passages. Proving a historical occasion does not automatically fix a verse's structural relation to adjacent text, nor do disparate occasions of revelation preclude semantic coherence within the canonical arrangement.

In Qur'an 5:3, hadith and exegetical sources preserve traditions linking *"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you"* to the proclamation of the *Wilāyah* (spiritual and political authority) of Imam ʿAlī (peace be upon him). In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits a report from Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) describing *Wilāyah* as the final obligation (*farīḍah*) whose enactment completed the religion (al-Kulaynī, 1365 SH). Similar traditions appear in al-ʿAyyāshī's *Tafsīr* on the authority of Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq (al-ʿAyyāshī, 1991), and in Hāshim al-Baḥrānī's *al-Burhān*, which explicitly connects the verse to the Day of Ghadīr Khumm (al-Baḥrānī, 1415 AH).

Methodologically, engaging these traditions requires three sequential steps: (1) verifying textual transmission (*thubūt*), (2) identifying direct semantic purport (*dalālah*), and (3) testing their scope regarding the specific structural question at hand. While these reports directly address the *meaning* of religion's completion and its historical occasion, the cited texts do not explicitly address *why* the clause was placed between dietary laws and necessity. Thus, invoking them to establish the semantic referent of *ikmāl al-dīn* is valid within their evidentiary scope, whereas extending them to explain intra-verse structural arrangement requires independent textual analysis.

This clarifies Ṭabāṭabāʾī's discussion in *al-Mīzān*, which examines whether the surrounding legislative context suffices to define the middle proclamation in light of revelation reports (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1412 AH). Rather than reducing this debate to a binary conflict between context and tradition (*riwāyah*), it should be recognized that each operates on a distinct analytical plane: context analyzes textual integration within the *sūrah*, while traditions illuminate historical circumstances and specific semantic referents. Genuine exegetical conflict arises only when one proof is deployed to negate a conclusion established by another on the exact same locus of meaning. Likewise, evaluating Sanaei Pour's collaborative study (Hosseini et al., 2022) requires separating three distinct questions: (1) What historical event does a report describe? (2) What meaning does it establish for the clause? (3) What textual indicator explains the clause's placement between legal rulings?

3. Criteria for Preponderating (Tarjīḥ) Among Exegetical Explanations of Munāsabah

The scientific rigor of *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah* is realized not by multiplying speculative connections, but by demonstrating that a proposed correlation rests on valid textual indicators and meaningfully guides interpretation. To adjudicate among competing explanations, four integrated criteria are established:

1. *Linguistic and Rhetorical Validity:* The explanation must align with lexical semantics and Arabic syntax without requiring unwarranted ellipses. As al-Zarkashī noted, verse connections vary between explicit conjunction (*ʿatf*) and implicit semantic cohesion, requiring tailored proofs rather than uniform assumptions (al-Zarkashī, 1990).

2. *Contextual Consistency:* The explanation must account for the clause's placement relative to both preceding and succeeding segments, explaining the function of semantic transitions rather than merely asserting a broad shared theme. In *Naẓm al-Durar*, Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī linked *ikmāl al-dīn* to the immediately preceding command to fear God rather than disbelievers (al-Biqāʿī, 1984). While illuminating the immediate transition between two adjacent clauses, evaluating al-Biqāʿī's reading requires distinguishing between explaining a local pair of clauses and accounting for the triadic structure encompassing dietary laws, the completion proclamation, and necessity.

3. *Evidentiary Sufficiency:* Proofs must match the nature of the claim. Historical reports establish occasions of revelation, and *Muṣḥaf* order justifies seeking coherence, but neither independently proves a specific structural relationship without corroborating textual indicators. Similarly, while al-Suyūṭī emphasized aligning verse links with a *sūrah*'s overarching objective (al-Suyūṭī, 1974), a macro-objective provides an interpretive frame rather than a substitute for micro-level proof.

4. *Interpretive Contribution:* A proposed *munāsabah* carries probative weight only if it adds explanatory value—such as clarifying a semantic transition, defining a clause's structural function, or preponderating one reading over another—rather than noting a generic thematic overlap.

Applying these criteria to the debate examined in Sanaei Pour's collaborative study (Hosseini et al., 2022) highlights the tension between *direct thematic correlation* and *rhetorical parenthesis*. A direct thematic approach must explain why dietary prohibitions specifically warrant the proclamation of religion's perfection and why discourse subsequently reverts to necessity. Conversely, a rhetorical parenthesis approach accounts for inserting an independent proclamation between two connected rulings, yet must still specify the rhetorical purpose (*gharaḍ balāghī*) of that insertion rather than assuming parenthesis implies semantic severance.

To weigh these competing models, this study proposes the *hypothetical removal test* (*ikhtibār al-ḥadhf al-iftirāḍī*): mentally suspending the proposed *munāsabah* hypothesis (without altering the sacred text) and assessing what explanatory power is lost. If the verse's meaning and structural placement remain equally intelligible via independent evidence, the proposed correlation possesses minimal preponderating weight; conversely, if suspending it leaves a structural or semantic transition unexplained that alternative readings fail to resolve, its interpretive value is substantiated—provided its underlying indicators are sound.

Applying this test shows that defining *ikmāl al-dīn* as the culmination of Islamic legislation does not depend on positing a direct legal link to the specific foods listed in Qur'an 5:3; suspending the direct-dietary-link hypothesis leaves the semantic meaning of religion's perfection intact via independent evidence, though it leaves the structural placement between foods and necessity open to inquiry. Similarly, suspending the rhetorical parenthesis hypothesis reopens the question of how the discourse transitions into and out of the proclamation, proving that labeling a clause "parenthetical" gains preponderating force only when accompanied by valid indicators defining its rhetorical function. Crucially, the hypothetical removal test is not an independent proof of validity, but a diagnostic instrument measuring interpretive yield alongside the four core evaluative criteria.

Conclusion

This study has examined contemporary perspectives on *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah* and intra-sūrah verse coherence by analyzing the discipline's methodological foundations, its interplay with textual context (*siyāq*), intra-Qur'anic exegesis, and exegetical traditions (*riwāyāt*), using Qur'an 5:3 (*Sūrat al-Māʾidah*) and the collaborative research of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sanaei Pour as a focal case study.

Addressing the conditions under which *munāsabah* functions as a productive exegetical instrument rather than a mere mental association, the investigation demonstrated that scholarly divergence over the *ikmāl al-dīn* clause stems not merely from differing lexical or historical definitions, but from competing methodologies for explaining its placement between dietary prohibitions and the concession of necessity. Ultimately, the strength of a proposed correlation is determined not by the mere possibility of linking passages, but by its capacity to explain textual features through sufficient evidence while respecting the epistemic boundaries of each proof.

First: Key Findings

• **Methodological Regulation of ʿIlm al-Munāsabah:** While *munāsabah* is a vital tool for uncovering intra-textual relationships, it is functionally distinct from textual context (*siyāq*), thematic unity (*al-waḥdah al-mawḍūʿiyyah*), and intra-Qur'anic exegesis. Its probative value depends on the soundness of supporting indicators and its demonstrable contribution to semantic guidance.

• **Limits of Munāsabah in Interpreting Qur'an 5:3:** Explaining the semantic meaning of *"This day I have perfected for you your religion"* does not automatically explain its placement between dietary

prohibitions and the concession of necessity. Neither characterizing the clause as a rhetorical parenthesis nor asserting a general legislative link suffices to preponderate one interpretation over another without specific indicators defining the relationship's nature and function.

• **Interplay Between Context and Occasions of Revelation:** Textual coherence within the canonical *Muṣḥaf* does not require simultaneous historical revelation, nor do disparate occasions of revelation preclude semantic correlation. Exegetical traditions may define a clause's referent or historical occasion without independently explaining its syntactic placement, requiring rigorous verification of authenticity, semantic scope, and inferential limits.

• **Evaluative Criteria for Preponderation (Tarjīḥ):** The validity and weight of a proposed *munāsabah* are governed by four integrated criteria: linguistic and rhetorical validity, contextual consistency, evidentiary sufficiency, and interpretive contribution—distinguishing substantiated correlation from superficial thematic resemblance or mere adjacency.

• **Methodological Innovation:** The study introduces the *hypothetical removal test* (*ikhtibār al-ḥadhf al-iftirāḍī*) to measure the interpretive yield of a proposed correlation by mentally suspending it and evaluating the resulting impact on textual comprehension and structural explanation, thereby distinguishing meaning-producing coherence from merely accompanying coherence without substituting for primary textual evidence.

Second: Recommendations

1. Expand applied comparative studies in *ʿIlm al-Munāsabah* with a focus on how textual interrelations guide semantic meaning and adjudicate among competing interpretations, testing the four methodological criteria developed herein across diverse Qur'anic passages.

2. Deepen methodological inquiry into the nexus between textual context (*siyāq*), exegetical traditions (*riwāyāt*), and occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) by rigorously verifying evidentiary chains and semantic boundaries, while maintaining a clear distinction between explaining a verse's meaning and explaining its structural placement.

3. Test the efficacy of the *hypothetical removal test* in subsequent exegetical studies, comparing its diagnostic outcomes with linguistic and contextual analyses to further refine its utility as a critical instrument for evaluating Qur'anic coherence.

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