



RECONTEXTUALIZING FASĀD IN THE QUR'AN: A SEMANTIC APPROACH TO ECO-THEOLOGY AND HUMANITARIAN ETHICS

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Abstract

This study addresses the problem of whether fasād in the Qur'an functions as a monolithic concept or as a relationally dynamic term across distinct domains. It investigates two primary questions: how fasād is syntactically and semantically configured across selected passages, and how these configurations inform contemporary eco-theological and humanitarian ethics without collapsing contextual differences. Employing a literary-philological method that integrates Toshihiko Izutsu's relational semantics with clause-level syntactic-agency analysis (i' rāb and balāghah), the study examines four purposively selected contrasting passages: QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12, Ar-Rūm [30]:41, Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4, and Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33. Findings indicate that fasād maintains a relationally coherent basic meaning, defined as the disruption of a divinely valued order, yet is contextually differentiated by its agency configurations: highly specified and directly addressed in the hypocritical context of Al-Baqarah, maximally specified through an individually named actor in the political context of Al-Qaṣaṣ, diffuse and collectively attributed (aydī al-nās) in the ecological context of Ar-Rūm, and class-specified through defined legal categories in the juridical context of Al-Mā'idah. By linking these agency typologies to maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (ḥifẓ al-nafs, ḥifẓ al-niẓām, and ḥifẓ al-bī'ah), the study suggests that fasād denotes any act that threatens foundational human and ecological interests identified by maqāṣid scholarship. Integrating clause-level syntax into semantic models offers a more rigorous, checkable empirical baseline for Qur'anic ethical discourse, within the scope of the four contrasting passages examined.

Keywords *Qur'anic Studies, Semantics, Fasād, Islamic Ethics, Eco-theology*

INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis, marked by climate change, ecosystem degradation, and the excessive exploitation of natural resources, has intensified eco-theological discourse concerning the relationship between human beings, nature, and divine responsibility. Within Islamic thought, the Qur'an is increasingly regarded as a primary source of ethical principles for addressing ecological problems, particularly through concepts that link human conduct to the preservation or disruption of the created order (Foltz, 2003; Yusuf & Marjuni, 2022). Among these concepts, *fasād* has received widespread attention because of its association with corruption, disorder, and harm, serving as a core thematic anchor in environmental ethics and ecological responsibility (Helmi et al., 2026; Sayem, 2021).

QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:41 has consequently become a central textual reference in contemporary Qur'anic eco-theological discourse:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

The verse explicitly connects the manifestation of *fasād* in *al-barr* (land) and *al-baḥr* (sea) to human action and its consequences, encouraging contemporary interpretations

that align *fasād* primarily with environmental degradation. This predominant focus, however, raises a critical semantic question: does the ecological usage of *fasād* represent the whole semantic range of the Qur'anic root *f-s-d*, or does it constitute one contextual specification within a much broader relational network of meanings?

Addressing this question is vital because *fasād* appears across markedly distinct Qur'anic contexts. In QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12, those who commit *fasād* do so in moral and hypocritical opposition to their own claim of being *muṣliḥūn* (reformers). In QS. Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4, *al-mufsidin* characterizes Pharaoh's tyrannical political domination, social fragmentation, and systemic oppression. In QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33, *fasād fī al-arḍ* operates within a public-security and juridical framework involving the unlawful destruction of life and *muḥārabah*. These diverse occurrences indicate that reducing the Qur'anic discourse on *fasād* to an exclusively ecological definition oversimplifies its complex conceptual structure.

Previous scholarship has explored *fasād* from various ethical and semantic angles, and can be grouped into three broad tendencies. First, studies that apply Izutsu's semantic framework directly to *fasād* have demonstrated the utility of relational analysis in tracing its Qur'anic conceptual links (Adila et al., 2025). Second, domain-isolated studies have mapped the term onto a single register, whether environmental (Aziz, Muhammad & Supriadin, 2024; Hamimi et al., 2022) or social ethics, without situating it against the term's other Qur'anic manifestations. Third, thematic-integrative studies such as Oktafiani et al. (2025) have begun connecting *fasād* to adjacent concepts (*iṣlāḥ*, *'imārah*) within a unified ecological framework, marking real progress beyond single-domain readings. However, this integrative move has so far been conducted at the level of thematic association rather than clause-level grammatical evidence: it has not yet examined why the same root activates markedly different degrees and structures of agency, whether foregrounded, diffuse, or class-specified, across moral, political, ecological, and juridical contexts. Consequently, existing literature still tends to fall into either broad semantic mappings that treat *fasād* as a uniform concept, or thematic integrations that do not yet explain its structural, grammatically anchored differentiation across domains.

This gap has normative stakes as well as descriptive ones. As studies on Islamic ethical pedagogy caution, ethical concepts risk becoming overgeneralized or fragmented in application when they are not first anchored in precise textual and grammatical frameworks (cf. Oktafiani et al., 2025). Moreover, while Izutsu's framework effectively traces conceptual networks, it often overlooks how clause-level syntax and grammatical agency (*i'rāb* and *balāghah*) directly shape semantic realization; this is the specific gap the present study addresses.

To address this gap, the present study adopts the synchronic dimension of Izutsu's Qur'anic semantic methodology (Izutsu, 2002, 2008) and integrates it with a clause-level syntactic-agency analysis. Izutsu posits that a Qur'anic key term retains a primary basic meaning while deriving its dynamic relational meaning from its position within a semantic field, structured by associated terms (such as *miṣṣān*, *isrāf*, and *tughyān*) and antonymic terms (such as *ṣalāḥ*/*iṣlāḥ* and *'adl*). Rather than treating meaning as a static dictionary definition,

this study investigates relational structures including semantic opposition, collocation, predication, agency, and syntactic construction. Morphological variation and syntactic roles serve as direct linguistic evidence of agency, revealing how the text backgrounds, foregrounds, or diffuses human responsibility.

To ensure lexical rigor without forcing conceptual uniformity, the linguistic baseline is anchored in classical Arabic lexicography: Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī for sense-differentiated definitions; Ibn Manẓūr for comprehensive usage; Ibn Fāris for verifying root-level core meanings (*al-aṣl al-wāḥid*); and al-Zamakhsharī's *Asās al-Balāghah* specifically for distinguishing literal material spoilage (*ḥaqīqah*) from figurative social or moral disruption (*majāz*). Crucially, this study maintains a clear methodological boundary between textual-semantic analysis and contemporary ethical application. Ecological disruption, political tyranny, moral hypocrisy, and juridical harm are analyzed as distinct contextual manifestations of a shared underlying phenomenon, namely the disruption of a normatively valued, divinely established order.

To bridge these textual-semantic findings with contemporary normative concerns without committing semantic flattening or anachronism, the study utilizes *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) as a secondary interpretive framework (Auda, 2008). Modern extensions of this framework propose *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (preservation of the environment) alongside classical objectives such as *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life) and *ḥifẓ al-niẓam* (preservation of social order) (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025). In this study, *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* is not projected backward as an inherent lexical meaning of *fasād*, but serves as an interpretive bridge to explain how different agency configurations of *fasād* activate different dimensions of human ethical responsibility.

Against this background, this study addresses two primary research questions: (1) How is *fasād* syntactically and semantically configured through its lexical, syntactic, and relational networks (agency, predication, and conceptual associations) across purposively selected passages representing ecological, moral, political, and juridical contexts? (2) What patterns of semantic continuity and contextual differentiation emerge across these configurations, and how can these findings, when mediated through the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework, inform contemporary eco-theological and humanitarian-ethical discourse?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to Qur'anic semantics by providing a checkable empirical baseline grounded in Arabic grammar. It demonstrates how an agency-sensitive relational analysis accounts for both the linguistic stability and the contextual adaptability of key Qur'anic terms, offering a disciplined methodological model to inform current debates on environmental stewardship and human responsibility without sacrificing philological rigor.

METHODS

This study adopts a philological and Qur'anic semantic approach, specifically employing the synchronic-relational dimension of Toshihiko Izutsu's framework (Izutsu, 2002, 2008). The analysis focuses on how the conceptual meaning of *fasād* is structured by its syntactic role, the realization of agency, and its relational associations with adjacent

terms in specific Qur'anic passages. The diachronic dimension, which traces the pre-Islamic historical evolution of vocabulary (Izutsu, 2002), remains outside the scope of this study, as the objective is to map the internal coherence and contextual differentiation of *fasād* within the compiled Qur'anic text.

Data were retrieved using the *Quranic Arabic Corpus* (Dukes, n.d.), which records 50 occurrences of the root *f-s-d* across four derived forms: the Form I verb *fasada* (3), Form IV verb *afsada* (15), abstract noun *fasād* (11), and Form IV active participle *muḥsid*/*muḥsidūn* (21). Four passages were purposively selected for close analysis: QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12, QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:41, QS. Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4, and QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33. Rather than representing a statistical sample of the entire corpus, these passages provide contrasting syntactic and thematic configurations across moral/hypocritical, ecological, political-tyrannical, and juridical/public-security contexts.

Agency analysis at the clause level is operationalized through three criteria: classical grammatical function (*i'rab*), agent specification (ranging from explicit individual naming to defined legal categories and diffuse causal adjuncts), and syntactic foregrounding or backgrounding through active, passive, or nominalized constructions. The lexical baseline is established by comparing four foundational lexicographical sources: Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108) for sense-differentiated definitions; Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) for comprehensive usage and antonymic relations with *ṣalāḥ*; Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) for verifying root-level core meanings (*al-aṣl al-wāḥid*); and al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), through *Asās al-Balāghah*, for distinguishing literal material spoilage (*ḥaqiqah*) from figurative social or moral disruption (*majāz*).

The analysis follows four sequential stages: establishing the lexical baseline, performing clause-level syntactic and agency analysis, mapping the relational semantic field (including antonyms such as *ṣalāḥ* and *'adl*, and associated terms such as *mizān*, *tughyān*, and *ḥirābah*), and synthesizing cross-contextual patterns of continuity and differentiation. Classical exegesis, including al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī (through *al-Kashshāf*), Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn 'Āshūr, is consulted to clarify interpretive consensus and rhetorical nuances. Finally, the semantic findings are bridged to contemporary ethical discourse via *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Auda, 2008). By mapping the agency configurations of *fasād* to the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), social order (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*), and the environment (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*), this framework connects textual semantics to modern environmental and humanitarian ethics without projecting modern categories directly onto the ancient lexeme.

RESULTS

Lexical Baseline: Basic Meaning and Antonymic Structure of *Fasād*

Classical Arabic lexicography establishes *fasād* as a term denoting departure from a sound, balanced, or proper state. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī defines *al-fasād* as *ḵhurūj al-shay' 'an al-i'tidāl*, referring specifically to the departure of something from a state of equilibrium or correct proportion, while Ibn Manẓūr identifies *fasād* as the primary antonym (*naqīḍ*) of *ṣalāḥ* (Al-Iṣfahānī, 2011; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993).

Ibn Fāris's *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* confirms this core coherence by identifying a single underlying root meaning (*al-aṣl al-waḥid*) centered on the loss of soundness or rectitude, from which physical, moral, social, and legal applications derive (Ibn Fāris, 1998). Al-Zamakhsharī's *Asās al-Balāghah* demonstrates the semantic extension from literal (*ḥaqīqah*) material spoilage (e.g., *fasada al-laḥm*, meat spoiling) to figurative (*majāz*) systemic disorder (e.g., *fasada al-amr*, affairs going awry) (al-Zamakhsharī, 2010). This primary opposition between *fasād* and *ṣalāḥ*, complemented by associations with *mīzān* (balance) and *ʿadl* (justice), establishes a stable normative baseline: *fasād* consistently signifies the disruption of a divinely valued order, regardless of the specific context.

Clause-Level Syntactic-Agency Configurations across Selected Contexts

1. Foregrounded Moral Agency in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12

QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12 articulates the most explicit antonymic relation between *f-s-d* and *ṣ-l-ḥ*:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

The passage links three derived forms: the Form IV prohibitive verb *tufsidū*, the predicate noun *muṣliḥūn*, and the active participle *al-mufsidūn*. In *lā tufsidū*, the verb directly prohibits corrupting action, while *muṣliḥūn* functions as the predicate (*ḵabar*) of the hypocrites' self-justification (*innamā naḥnu muṣliḥūn*). In verse 12, *al-mufsidūn* serves as the predicate of *innabum humu al-mufsidūn*, with the intervening pronoun *hum* acting as *ḍamīr al-faṣl* (pronoun of separation). Syntactically, this construction restricts true agency and definitively classifies the addressees as corruptors rather than merely describing their actions. Classical exegesis identifies these actors as hypocrites (*al-munāfiqūn*) whose self-perceived reform constitutes systemic corruption due to its destabilizing effect on communal integrity (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Agency here is foregrounded and highly specified through second-person address and explicit personal pronouns, demonstrating that the semantic classification of *fasād* is determined by divine evaluation rather than the actors' subjective intentions.

2. Diffuse Environmental Agency in QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:41

QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:41 introduces a structural shift toward backgrounded, diffuse agency:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Here, *al-fasād* functions as the grammatical subject (*fāʿil*) of the intransitive verb *ẓahara* (appeared/became manifest), followed by the spatial prepositional phrase *fī al-barr wa-al-baḥr*. Human involvement is expressed through the causal adjunct *bimā kasabat aydī al-nās* (because of what the hands of people have earned). Rhetorically, the phrase *aydī al-nās* employs metonymy (*majāz mursal*, specifically *itlāq al-juṣʿ wa-irādat al-kull*), where hands represent collective human agency and cumulative conduct.

Unlike QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12, *fasād* is not predicated directly of a named actor; it is foregrounded as an existing, observable state, while human responsibility is introduced secondarily through a causal phrase. Classical commentators note that while *al-barr wa-al-baḥr* denotes physical landscapes, classical interpretations encompass both environmental manifestations (drought, crop failure, resource diminution) and spiritual-moral decay (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2026, modern critical edition of *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*). The ecological reading is therefore textually supported by the spatial setting, but represents a specific contextual specification within the broader relational meaning of the term.

3. Maximal Political Agency in QS. Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيْعًا يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُدَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

In this verse, Pharaoh (*Fir‘awn*) is explicitly named as the subject of a chain of active verbs: *‘alā* (exalted himself), *ja‘ala* (made its people factions), *yastaḍ‘ifu* (oppressed a group), *yudhabbiḥu* (slaughtered sons), and *yastahyī* (spared women). Rhetorically, this unbroken sequence of active-voice verbs constitutes a form of *taṭbīq* (cumulative escalation), each clause intensifying the portrait of tyranny before the passage resolves into the summary judgment *innahu kāna min al-mufsidīn*, where *al-mufsidīn* serves as the predicate complement following *kāna min*.

Syntactically, Pharaoh's agency is maximally specified and consistently foregrounded, distinguishing this passage from the collectively addressed agency of Al-Baqarah. As al-Zamakhsharī highlights in *al-Kashshaf*, the classification *min al-mufsidīn* characterizes his entire political apparatus, marked by tyranny, social fragmentation, and systemic violence, as an embodiment of *fasād* (al-Zamakhsharī, 2010). Here, *fasād* manifests as political oppression and the destabilization of social justice (*‘adl*).

4. Class-Specified Juridical Agency in QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33

QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33 embeds *fasād fī al-ard* within a legal and public-security framework:

Verse 32:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

Verse 33:

إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَن يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۚ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

In verse 32, *fasādīn* is a genitive noun (*majrūr*) coordinated (*ma‘tūf*) with *naḥṣīn* under *ghayrī*, forming alternative legal justifications for capital consequence (*bi-ghayrī naḥṣīn an fasādīn fī al-ard*). The subject *man* is an indefinite conditional noun establishing a generic legal category. In verse 33, *fasādan* is accusative (*manṣūb*), analyzed classically as a causative object (*maf‘ul li-ajlibi*) denoting purpose, or as a circumstantial qualifier (*ḥāl*) describing the manner of action; the two readings carry different interpretive weight, since the *maf‘ul li-*

ajlibi reading frames corruption as the perpetrators' deliberate motive, while the *ḥāl* reading frames it as the observable manner in which their hostility unfolds. The agents are specified as a defined behavioral class (*alladhīna yuḥāribūna... wa-yas'awna*).

Classical jurists and exegetes, such as Ibn ʿĀshūr (2026), associate *fasād fī al-arḍ* in verse 33 with *ḥirābah* (unlawful armed banditry and terrorism violating public security). However, *ḥirābah* represents a specific legal contextualization of *fasād*, not a complete lexical equivalence. Agency in both verses is class-specified: the text constructs statutory behavioral categories rather than naming specific historical individuals.

Syntactic-Agency Typology: Cross-Contextual Patterns of *Fasād*

Comparing these four configurations reveals that while *fasād* retains its core lexical orientation (departure from a sound, balanced order), its relational meaning adapts through distinct syntactic and agency structures. Table 1 summarizes these cross-contextual patterns.

Table 1. Syntactic and Agency Configurations of *Fasād* Across Selected Passages

Qurʾanic Passage	Derived Form & Context	Syntactic Role & Agent Specification
Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12 (<i>Moral / Hypocrisy</i>)	<i>tufsidū, al-mufsidūn</i>	Prohibitive verb & predicate nominal; active agent foregrounded
Ar-Rūm [30]:41 (<i>Ecological</i>)	<i>al-fasād</i>	Subject of intransitive manifested condition foregrounded
Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4 (<i>Political Tyranny</i>)	<i>al-mufsidīn</i>	Predicate complement after <i>kāna min</i> ; tyrannical actions foregrounded
Al-Māʾidah [5]:32–33 (<i>Juridical / Security</i>)	<i>fasādīn, fasādan</i>	Coordinated genitive (v. 32) & accusative complement (v. 33); statutory behavior foregrounded

The typology is consistent with the view that *fasād* is relationally coherent yet contextually differentiated across the four purposively selected passages. Its coherence resides in the persistent threat to a normatively valued state (*iʿtidāl/ṣalāḥ*). Its differentiation is achieved through varied grammatical constructions, degrees of specification of agency, ranging from the collectively addressed hypocrites of Al-Baqarah

to the individually named Pharaoh of Al-Qaṣaṣ, and the specific domains of well-being or order disrupted in each context.

DISCUSSION

In summary, the four passages examined are consistent with the view that *fasād* is relationally coherent in root meaning and normative orientation, yet contextually differentiated in grammatical construction and agent specification. The sections below relate this finding to the study's original questions, interpret why the pattern holds, and situate it against prior scholarship.

Relational Coherence and Contextual Agency in Qur'anic *Fasād*

Research Question 1 asked how *fasād* is semantically configured across the selected passages. The findings reveal a dual structure: a shared root-meaning and a shared normative orientation, namely the disruption of a divinely valued order, runs through all four passages, yet co-exists with markedly different grammatical realizations of who or what causes the disruption. Agency is highly specified through direct address in Al-Baqarah, maximally specified through individual naming in Al-Qaṣaṣ, diffuse in Ar-Rūm, and class-specified in Al-Mā'idah. This does not establish that *fasād* forms a single semantic category across its full Qur'anic distribution, but demonstrates that it maintains relational coherence within these four purposively contrasting passages.

This finding is a direct empirical instantiation of Izutsu's semantic theory. For Izutsu, a Qur'anic key term acquires a relational meaning through its position within a semantic field structured by opposition, association, and collocation with other terms, while retaining a basic meaning that persists across contexts. The *fasād-ṣalāḥ/iṣlāḥ* opposition identified in the lexical baseline, and made explicit in the confrontation between *muṣliḥūn* and *al-muṣīdūn* in Al-Baqarah, anchors *fasād*'s basic meaning (its departure from a valued order) in a stable orientation. Its relational meaning shifts across the ecological reading of Ar-Rūm, the political reading of Al-Qaṣaṣ, and the juridical reading of Al-Mā'idah. The central formulation of this study, that *fasād* is relationally coherent but contextually differentiated, thus serves as an empirical demonstration of Izutsu's theory worked out through explicit grammatical evidence rather than conceptual assertion alone.

The *Maqāṣid* Framework as an Ethical Bridge

Research Question 2 addressed how these configurations might inform eco-theological and humanitarian-ethical discourse without collapsing the four contexts into a single meaning. Moving directly from contextual recurrence to a unified ethical system would overclaim, as a shared root and orientation do not inherently constitute an ethical argument. A more defensible bridge runs through the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework by asking what higher-order interest each configuration puts at risk. While classical objectives cover the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*) and social order (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*) (Auda, 2008), contemporary scholarship has extended these objectives to include environmental protection, formulated as *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025). On this reading, the

Qur'an classifies as *fasād* whatever threatens an interest that *maqāṣid* scholarship independently identifies as foundational.

This mapping directly tracks the agency configurations compared across the passages. The highly and maximally specified agency of Al-Baqarah and Al-Qaṣaṣ, respectively, corresponds to forms of harm for which a nameable actor bears responsibility, such as moral betrayal and political tyranny. Al-Mā'idah's class-specified agency corresponds to harm the law prosecutes as a category, those who wage war (*alladhina yuḥāribūna*), even without naming individuals in advance. Conversely, Ar-Rūm's diffuse agency corresponds to a collective harm where no single hand is identifiable, only the hands of people (*aydī al-nās*) in aggregate. This explains why the ecological reading of *fasād* resists reduction to individual blame, and why extending *maqāṣid* to *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* requires categories of collective and intergenerational responsibility not emphasized in classical formulations. Furthermore, this reframing clarifies the textual basis of eco-theological literature (Foltz, 2003; Helmi et al., 2026; Izzī Dien, 2000; Sayem, 2021) by demonstrating that *fasād fī al-arḍ* coexists with concepts such as *khilāfah* (stewardship) and *mīzān* (balance).

Implication, Alignment with Prior Scholarship, and Limitations

Comparing these findings with prior scholarship highlights key methodological and substantive contributions. Methodologically, reviews of Izutsu's synchronic approach have noted its lack of explicit criteria for axial terms and its limited attention to sentence-level semantics (MirAzimi & Salehi Shahroudi, 2023). The agency-analysis scheme introduced here addresses this gap by anchoring coherence claims in checkable Arabic grammatical structures (*i'rab* and *balāghah*) rather than conceptual impression alone. Substantively, regarding the juridical association between *fasād* and *ḥirābah* in Al-Mā'idah, exegetical consensus links the two, yet attaches *fasād* to a legal category whose scope remains nuanced across legal schools (Peters, 2007). The finding is thus stated modestly: *fasād* in this context is defined by its association with a family of grave, destabilizing offenses affecting public safety, rather than by a single settled legal code.

These contributions must be interpreted within the study's scope limitations. The four passages were selected for maximum contextual variation rather than statistical representativeness across the entire Qur'anic corpus. Consequently, the syntactic-agency patterns describe these four contrasting configurations rather than the exhaustive behavior of the root *f-s-d* across all its occurrences. In addition, the syntactic-agency coding (foregrounded, diffuse, class-specified, and the associated *i'rab/balāghah* judgments) was conducted by a single analyst without a second-coder or expert cross-check; while every classification is anchored in explicit, citable grammatical evidence, the labeling of degrees of foregrounding still involves interpretive judgment, and future work would benefit from an inter-rater reliability procedure to strengthen this dimension of the analysis. Future research could also expand this framework by applying computational corpus linguistics to test whether the agency-coding model detects similar structural shifts across all derived forms of the root in the Qur'an.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the semantic and ethical problem of whether *fasād* functions as a static, monolithic concept or as a dynamic term that maintains a core meaning while adapting across diverse context-specific domains in the Qur'an. Through a literary-philological analysis of four purposively selected contrasting passages (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11–12, Ar-Rūm [30]:41, Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:4, and Al-Mā'idah [5]:32–33), the findings indicate that *fasād* is relationally coherent in its basic root meaning and normative orientation, defined as the disruption of a divinely valued order, yet contextually differentiated through distinct syntactic constructions and agency specifications.

Specifically, the results show that grammatical realization directly shapes how *fasād* manifests across moral, ecological, political, and juridical domains. Agency ranges from highly specified, directly addressed actors in Al-Baqarah and maximally specified, individually named actors in Al-Qaṣaṣ, to class-specified agents in Al-Mā'idah, and diffuse, collective responsibility (*aydī al-nās*) in Ar-Rūm. By mapping these agency configurations onto the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework, the study suggests that *fasād* bridges textual analysis and modern ethical discourse, including environmental preservation (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*) and humanitarian protection, not by carrying a single literal meaning, but by designating any act that threatens independently identified foundational human and ecological interests. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that integrating clause-level syntactic analysis into Izutsu's semantic model offers a more rigorous, checkable empirical foundation for understanding key Qur'anic ethico-religious terms, one that future studies can extend to a wider corpus and validate through inter-rater procedures.

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