REINTERPRETING COERCIVE BEGGING IN ISLAM THROUGH THE TAFSIR OF WAHBAH AL-ZUḤAILI

*A'azliansyah Farizil Anam[1], Ahmad Nabilul Maram[2], Zahrah Faizatun Nafiah[3]
Hakmi Hidayat[4]

[1,4]Universitas Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia
[3]Universitas Islam Negeri Prof Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia
*Email: aazliansyahfarizilanammm@gmail.com

Abstract: The phenomenon of coercive begging raises complex social and ethical challenges. As a contemporary mufassir, Wahbah al-Zuḥaili addresses this issue through a distinctive approach that integrates modern social-ethical perspectives with Qur'anic teachings, specifically in QS. al-Baqarah (2): 273. This study aims to assess the ongoing relevance of his interpretation. It focuses on how al-Zuḥaili interprets coercive begging in this verse, as well as the epistemological and socio-political factors that shape his perspective. Employing Gadamer's hermeneutics as the analytical framework, this research bridges the horizon of classical texts with contemporary social realities. The findings demonstrate that al-Zuḥaili's interpretive method is both dynamic and integrative: he draws on lexical and grammatical analysis, classical and modern textual engagement, and historical experience to construct contextual and meaningful interpretations, all while remaining faithful to the core of the divine message. This model contributes to the evolution of Qur'anic interpretation, making it more responsive to the needs of contemporary society. The study reveals that al-Zuḥaili interprets the phrase *lā yasʾalūn al-nās ilḥāfā* as a prohibition of coercion rather than a blanket prohibition of asking. This interpretation reflects his engagement with the realities of coercive begging in Syria and Egypt during his lifetime. Al-Zuḥaili responds to the tension between scriptural text and contemporary socio-legal realities by proposing a practical alternative: rather than relying solely on criminal sanctions, governments should systematically identify vulnerable groups, foster interactive dialogue, and strengthen social welfare programs.

Keywords: *Wahbah al-Zuḥaili; Qur'anic exegesis; coerced begging; Islamic ethics; hermeneutics*

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Introduction

The issue of social welfare and poverty has long attracted scholarly attention. Even developed nations—such as the United States—often fall short of resolving this phenomenon, contradicting popular perceptions.[1] In Indonesia, as a developing country, the challenge of alleviating poverty remains significant. According to the Central

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[1] Tanya de Sousa, Meghan Henry, and Abt Global, "The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress" (Washington, 2024), https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf.

Statistics Agency (BPS), the total number of people living in poverty as of March 2024 was approximately 25.22 million.[2] Among the various survival strategies prompted by harsh urban environments, begging stands out. Regardless of its consequences, which range from contributing to urban slums, disrupting public order, and even distressing the community through coercive behavior,[3] begging is often perceived as a practical and efficient means of earning income.[4]

In Islamic discourse, the concept of sā'il (beggar) is intimately linked with the principles of mercy (raḥmah), charity (ṣadaqah), and collective responsibility. The Qur'ān does not frame poverty as an individual moral failure but as a societal condition demanding communal support and action. Verses such as QS. al-Baqarah (2): 273 are frequently cited to highlight this ethical imperative, drawing attention to those who, though impoverished, refrain from begging and are worthy of honor for preserving their dignity. Classical interpretations of this verse stress society's moral duty to assist the needy, without discrimination or stigma.[5] The ideal Islamic society, therefore, is one that not only seeks to alleviate poverty through mechanisms like zakat and waqf, but also safeguards the dignity of all individuals, especially the most vulnerable.[6]

However, the phenomenon of coercive begging represents a significant departure from these normative ideals. When begging becomes aggressive or is perceived as harassment, the ethical discourse surrounding poverty and charity becomes even more

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[2] Central Bureau of Statistics Editorial Team, "Percentage of Poor People in March 2024 Decreased to 9.03 Percent," Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024, https://www.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2024/07/01/2370/persentase-penduduk-miskin-maret-2024-turun-menjadi-9-03-persen-.html.

[3] Churun In Fauzan, "CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE HADITH OF THE PABI BEING FRIENDLY TO RUDE AND FORCING PENGEMIS" (Thesis: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2025), 1; Allisa Akhidatul Idza, "GELANDING AND PENGEMIS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMON PEACE AND ORDER: ANALYSIS OF IMPACT AND SOLUTIONS," *Tatapamong Journal* 5, no. 2 (2023): 150, https://doi.org/10.33701/jurnaltatapamong.v5i2.3859.

[4] Dimas Dwi Irawan, *Beggars Undercover The Secret Life of Beggars* (Jakarta: Titik Media Publisher, 2013), 6.

[5] Mukhammad Alfani, Farichatul Fauziyah, and Dakhirotul Ilmiyah, "Methods of Understanding Hadith on the Prohibition of Begging in the Perspective of Yusuf Al-Qardhawi," *Lathaif Literacy of Hadith Interpretation and Philology* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1, https://doi.org/10.31958/lathaif.v3i1.12439; Samsidar, Sohra Sohra, and Ahmad Mujahid, "The Qur'anic View of the Solution to Poverty *Alleviation* of Muslim Families and Communities Through a Thematic Interpretation Approach," *Al-Syakhshiyyah Journal of Islamic Family Law and Humanity* 6, no. 1 (2024): 75–93, https://doi.org/10.30863/as-hki.v6i1.6579.

[6] Saheed A Busari and Adnan O Salaudeen, "The Role of Islamic Social Finance Instruments towards Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: A Juridical Analysis," *International Journal of Fiqh and Usul Al-Fiqh Studies* 8, no. 2 (2024): 173-186, https://doi.org/10.31436/ijfus.v8i2.347; Ikma P Prayitna, "Economic Weakness Between Destiny and Social Structure (A Thematic Tafsir Study)," *Al-Fahmu Journal of Qur'anic Science and Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2023): 130–142, https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v2i2.81.

complex. Research indicates that beggars who use coercion challenge not only people's willingness to give but also their understanding of social responsibility.[7] This dynamic creates a tension: while Islamic ethics promote unconditional charity, coercive behavior can elicit fear, resistance, and negative reactions from the public. Central and local governments have responded with repressive measures, such as crackdowns and punitive regulations exemplified by the 2014 Yogyakarta Regional Regulation. Yet, these efforts have not significantly reduced the number of beggars, underscoring that legal deterrence alone is insufficient without deeper engagement with the root causes of poverty and a more ethical approach to addressing the needs of the poor.

The Qur'ān also uses the term sā'il to refer to beggars, as seen in al-Dzāriyāt (51):19 and al-Baqarah (2): 273. In classical tafsir, scholars such as Imam al-Nawawi interpret these verses as an exhortation to believers to provide for those in need,[8] reflecting the high value placed on tolerance and generosity in Islam. The ethical challenge grows, however, when begging is accompanied by coercion, potentially causing harm or even facilitating organized exploitation and fraud in modern urban contexts. Consequently, contemporary Islamic scholars revisit these verses to develop ethical frameworks that remain true to the Qur'ānic message while responding to new societal realities.

Wahbah al-Zuḥaili, a prominent Syrian jurist and Qur'anic exegete, provides a comprehensive analysis of this issue in his work, *Tafsīr al-Munīr*. Distinct from commentators like Quraysh Shihab, who focuses on jihad and economic incapacity, or Hamka, who highlights the virtue of *'iffah* (dignity), al-Zuḥaili gives special attention to the phenomenon of coercive begging. His interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 273 integrates both legal and moral perspectives, considering the rights of both beggar and donor. He treats the verse not only as a theological mandate but also as a reflection of broader socio-ethical obligations, deeply informed by Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the socio-political context of contemporary Muslim societies. Al-Zuḥaili's interpretation

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[7] Tira N Fitria, Sumadi Sumadi, and Indra L Kusuma, "The Phenomenon of Seasonal Beggars in Ramadan: An Islamic Economic's Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Economics* 8, no. 1 (2022): 882, https://doi.org/10.29040/jiei.v8i1.2449; Adam Salifu and Abass U Abdul-Karim, "The Role of Community Leaders in the Eradication of Alms Begging in Nima, Ghana," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* 40, no. 2 (2023): 362–380, https://doi.org/10.1108/ijoes-10-2021-0198.

[8] Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawawi, "Marah Labid," in *Volume 2* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Ilmiyah, 1997), 451.

remains highly relevant for modern Muslim societies confronting poverty, social justice, and public policy issues. His work exemplifies how classical Islamic texts can be re-read through a hermeneutic lens that honors tradition while addressing present-day realities. His own socio-political context—marked by systemic poverty and unrest in Syria and Egypt—shaped his sensitivity to the issue of coercive begging. Furthermore, his legal scholarship, mentorship from leading scholars, and broad academic background enriched his interpretive perspective.

A review of the literature reveals only three comparable scholarly works—Azeem,[9] Macleod,[10] and Rizki JJ[11]—all of which focus on begging but do not address coercive begging from either classical or contemporary tafsir perspectives. Therefore, this study analyzes the phenomenon of coercive begging as interpreted by al-Zuḥaili, within the framework of modern Islamic ethics. This research seeks to answer: How does al-Zuḥaili interpret coercive begging in QS. al-Baqarah (2): 273, and what are the epistemological and socio-political factors influencing his view? How relevant is al-Zuḥaili's interpretation today, especially amid the ongoing tension between scriptural texts and modern social realities, particularly in Indonesia? To explore these questions, the study employs Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, which integrates key concepts such as effective historical consciousness, pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*), the fusion of horizons, and the application of meaning.[12]

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[9] Hafiz M Azeem, Muhammad Umar, and Mubashar Tariq, "Beggary in Law and Islam: A Call to Amend the Law in Pakistan," *Al-Qamar*, 2023, 131–1 46, https://doi.org/10.53762/alqamar.06.03.e08.

[10] Shona L. Macleod, "'There are talibés and talibés': Exploring the boundaries of the category of talibés who beg," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 139, no. October 2021 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105422.

[11] Muhammad Rizky JJ, "COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SAYINGS ABOUT begging in TAFSIR AL-MUNIR AND TAFSIR AL-MISBAH" (Thesis: UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2024), https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/85323/2/SKRIPSI FULL EXCEPT CHAPTER IV.pdf.

[12] P Regan, "Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: Concepts of reading, understanding and interpretation," 2012, 286-303, https://consensus.app/papers/hansgeorg-gadamers-philosophical-hermeneutics-concepts-regan/a7a7bbddb39653df837b93e91db8dbf3/; Liang Xiao-Ling, "Three Principles of Philosophical Hermeneutics and Translation Studies," 2012, https://consensus.app/papers/three-principles-of-philosophical-hermeneutics-and-xiao-ling/0a4a9376ed34505e9f9d97bd99674a83/; Nurliana Damanik, "Gadamer's Dialectic," *Al-Hikmah: Journal of Theosophy and Islamic Civilization*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.51900/alhikmah.v5i2.19391; Yousuf Aboujanah and Akhmad Aidil Fitra, "Gadamer's Hermeneutic Analysis of Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy's Interpretation of QS. Luqman (31):6 in the Context of Contemporary Entertainment Discourse," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v3i1.6839; Rasha Alsaigh and I Coyne, "Conducting Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research Anchored by Gadamer's Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211047820; Muhammad Hisyam Syafii et al., "Uncovering Annemarie Schimmel's Interpretation of Sufi Texts Through Gadamer's Philosophical

By adopting the hermeneutic method, this study critically evaluates the interpretive text in relation to the author's social context. The text is re-examined multiple times to ensure internal coherence, in accordance with the principles of the hermeneutic circle. This approach highlights the interplay between al-Zuḥaili's historical perspective and contemporary socio-ethical challenges. Ultimately, this methodology supports a balanced interpretation that upholds the message of the Qur'ān while engaging with the socio-political realities surrounding coercive begging. This study is a literature review utilizing Gadamer's hermeneutic approach to assess tafsir in the context of the author's social reality.[13] The primary source is *Tafsir al-Munir* by Wahbah al-Zuḥaili, with secondary sources drawn from relevant scholarly literature. For objective analysis, the study applies the interactive data analysis technique of Huberman and Miles, involving data collection, data reduction for clarity, narrative presentation, and conclusion drawing.[14]

Discussion

Categorization of Beggars according to al-Zuḥaili

Wahbah al-Zuḥaili's interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 273 offers a nuanced categorization of those eligible to receive charitable assistance, particularly the poor who strive to maintain their dignity. His approach is deeply rooted in classical exegesis, while also responding to contemporary socio-economic realities. Traditionally, Qur'anic exegesis and jurisprudence identify the recipients of *zakāt* and *ṣadaqah*—commonly referred to as *mustahiq*—as outlined explicitly in QS. at-Taubah (9): 60. These include the poor (*fuqarā ʾ*), the needy (*masākīn*), *zakāt* administrators (*ʿāmilīn*), those whose hearts are to be reconciled (*mu'allafāt al-qulūb*), slaves seeking freedom (*riqāb*), debtors (*ghārimīn*), those fighting in the cause of Allah (*fī sabīlillāh*), and travelers (*ibn al-sabīl*).[15]

Hermeneutics Analysis," *Afkaruna: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Indonesian Islamic Studies*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v20i2.23900.

[13] Damanik, "Gademer's Dialectic"; Alsaigh and Coyne, "Conducting Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research Informed by Gadamer's Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis."

[14] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and John Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook* (United States: Sage Publication Inc, 2014), 31.

[15] Salahuddin E Ayyubi and Henni E Saputri, "Analysis of the Impact of the Distribution of Zakat, Infaq, and Sadaqah on Poverty Alleviation Based on the CIBEST Model (Case Study: Baitul Maal Jogokariyan Mosque, Yogyakarta)," *Journal of Zakat* 3, no. 2 (2018): 85-97, https://doi.org/10.37706/ijaz.v3i2.80; Abdullah A Faruque et al., "The Impact of Islamic Social Finance on

Al-Zuḥaili extends this framework by clearly describing five subcategories within the broader context of the *fuqarā'* as derived from QS al-Baqarah (2) 273. These groups include those who strive in the cause of Allah but cannot earn a living, individuals who are incapacitated due to illness or conflict, the poor who maintain their self-respect, those who are obviously in need, and finally, individuals who do not force others when requesting alms. Among these, al-Zuḥaili places special emphasis on the last group— those who do not coerce when seeking assistance—by interpreting the phrase *lā yasʾalūn al-nās ilḥāfā* as a specific prohibition against coercive begging. This interpretation contrasts with the common perspective that views this phrase as a total rejection of begging.

Al-Zuḥaili's focus on non-coercive conduct aligns with ethical teachings found in both the Qur'anic tradition and the Prophetic narrations, which stress dignity, discretion, and mutual respect in charitable acts. His view is supported by hadiths that criticize excessive or manipulative begging, especially when driven by greed rather than genuine necessity.[16] He advocates a balanced approach where charity is a moral imperative but should be given in a manner that preserves the dignity of the recipient and avoids fostering dependency. This goal can be realized when a robust system of *zakat* management or similar institutions, such as those led by Baznas and Regional Social Services, operates effectively.[17]

Furthermore, al-Zuḥaili acknowledges the moral obligation of the donor and asserts that even when approached by beggars—coercive or otherwise—one should still offer help if capable. This principle of "responsible giving" reflects an ethical ideal in Islamic charity in which the mode of giving is as significant as the act itself. As Abba and Ngah note, recipients should receive assistance in a manner that upholds their dignity and

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Sustainable Development Goals for Poverty Alleviation in Muslim Countries: A New Paradigm for Zakat Organization in Bangladesh," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i04.5707; Muhammad H Riyaldi, Suriani Suriani, and Ridwan Nurdin, "Optimizing Zakat for Sustainable Development Goals: Evidence From Baitul Mal Aceh," *International Conference of Zakat*, 2020, 339-354, https://doi.org/10.37706/iconz.2020.223.

[16] Wahbah al-Zuhaili, "Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fii al-Aqidah Wa al-Syariah Wa al-Manhaj," in *Volume 3* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2009), 88-89.

[17] Sarah Asmalia, Rahmatina A Kasri, and Abdillah Ahsan, "Exploring the Potential of Zakah for Supporting Realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Indonesia," *International Journal of Zakat* 3, no. 4 (2018): 51-69, https://doi.org/10.37706/ijaz.v3i4.106; Kamel Fantazy and Alaa-Aldin Abdul Rahim A Al Athmay, "Ethics and Religion in Higher Education," *International Journal of Commerce and Management* 24, no. 2 (2014): 180-1 96, https://doi.org/10.1108/ijcoma-02-2014-0018.

avoids public humiliation.[18] Al-Zuḥaili also introduces the notion of *qarāʾin al-mumayyizah* (distinguishing signs), urging society to be attentive and compassionate toward the "silent poor," who often remain unseen because of their reluctance to ask for aid.

In the landscape of modern urban poverty in Indonesia, al-Zuḥaili's interpretation holds particular relevance. The problem of coercive begging has become more visible and concerning in many Muslim-majority societies, prompting legal and social interventions. Kurnia et al., emphasize that QS al-Baqarah (2) 273 not only promotes structured giving but also ethical discernment, reminding society that those truly in need may not vocalize their struggles.[19]

Therefore, spiritual support characterized by justice, integrity, mercy, and compassion—especially toward the vulnerable—needs to be strengthened. Likewise, material assistance in the form of fundraising, the distribution of *zakat*, *infaq*, and alms is essential to reinforce solidarity and promote economic empowerment in Indonesia.[20] According to Robert Payton and Michael Moody, both spiritual and material values are rooted in individual religiosity, which in turn fosters collective benefit and overall community welfare.[21]

Contemporary Islamic thought echoes al-Zuḥaili's stance by advocating a shift from mere charity to more sustainable models for alleviating poverty. Faruque et al. (2023) stress the need to reinterpret traditional recipient categories of *zakat* and other forms of giving to align with present economic conditions, ensuring that modern strategies remain consistent with Qur'anic principles.[22] Scholars also highlight the importance of targeting assistance through accurate socio-economic assessments, which

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[18] Rabiu Abubakar Abba and Besar Bin Ngah, "Forms of Almsgiving in Islamic Economics: An Analysis in the Quran and Sunnah (As Reported in Bukhari and Muslim)," 2020, https://consensus.app/papers/forms-of-charity-in-islamic-economics-an-analysis-in-the-abba-ngah/a26f180307b15c1abc72d134c612d343/.

[19] Zahra N Kurnia et al, "Optimizing Zakat in Achieving Maqashid Syariah," *International Conference on Zakat*, 2020, 159-178, https://doi.org/10.37706/iconz.2020.237.

[20] Muh Rizki, "Spiritual Philanthropy Values of Raja Ali Haji's Thought in the Context of Social Transformation" (Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2024), 5-8.

[21] Robert L. Payton & Michael P. Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning And Mission* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 137-38.

[22] Faruque et al., "The Impact of Islamic Social Finance on Sustainable Development Goals for Poverty Alleviation in Muslim Countries: A New Paradigm for Zakat Organizations in Bangladesh."

enables responsible charity and helps reduce social tensions associated with public begging. [23]

Al-Zuḥaili's categorization bridges classical ethical standards and contemporary challenges. His legal and spiritual analysis upholds the Islamic principle that supporting the poor should be both generous and ethical. Accordingly, his tafsir represents the Qur'an's broader vision of a society in which charitable giving is not just a ritual obligation but a conscious moral choice grounded in justice, dignity, and empathy.

Grammatical and Lexical Interpretation

A clear understanding of the grammatical and lexical structure of QS al-Baqarah (2) 273 is essential to uncover its ethical, social, and legal significance. Arabic grammar and morphology, especially the study of *i'rab* (grammatical inflection), serve as vital tools in Qur'anic hermeneutics, enabling scholars to interpret both the meaning and intent of the sacred text. Wahbah al-Zuḥaili's interpretation of this verse offers a model of linguistic precision that remains faithful to the depth of the classical tradition while engaging with the demands of modern interpretation. His attention to grammar not only clarifies the central message of the verse, but also shapes how society responds to poverty, begging, and charitable obligations.

Al-Zuḥaili's analysis begins with the syntactic structure of the phrase *li al-fuqarā'* (for the poor) at the start of the verse. He identifies three possible grammatical relationships for this phrase. First, it can function as the predicate (*khabar*) of an implied subject (*mubtada'*), suggesting the structure "*al-ṣadaqāt li al-fuqarā'*," or "alms are for the poor." Second, it may relate back to the closing segment of the previous verse, QS al-Baqarah (2) 272, so that "*wa mā tunfiqū min khayrin li al-fuqarā'*" means "whatever wealth you spend should go to the poor." Third, it can be linked to an implied verb, such as *i'tū* (give), thereby conveying an imperative: "give to the poor."[24] While each grammatical reading is slightly different, all reinforce the core message that assistance must reach those genuinely in need. These alternative readings illustrate the richness of

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[23] Rabiu Abubakar Abba and Besar Bin Ngah, "Forms of Almsgiving in Islamic Economics: An Analysis in the Quran and Sunnah (As Reported in Bukhari and Muslim)," 2020, https://consensus.app/papers/forms-of-charity-in-islamic-economics-an-analysis-in-the-abba-ngah/a26f180307b15c1abc72d134c612d343/; Kamel Fantazy and Alaa-Aldin Abdul Rahim A Al Athmay, "Ethics and Religion in Higher Education," *International Journal of Commerce and Management* 24, no. 2 (2014): 180-1 96, https://doi.org/10.1108/ijcoma-02-2014-0018.

[24] Al-Zuhaili, "Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fii al-Aqidah Wa al-Syariah Wa al-Manhaj," 79.

Arabic linguistic analysis. As noted by Tahat et al., nuances in *i'rab* significantly shape the meaning and ethical impact of a verse. By carefully assigning subjects, verbs, and objects, scholars clarify the intended recipients, the recommended actions, and the specific contexts. Grammatical flexibility in this context does not alter the core obligation to support the *fuqarā'*, but it provides multiple perspectives: descriptive, imperative, or referential. Al-Zuḥaili further demonstrates sensitivity to key lexical terms, especially *al-ta'affuf*, *bi-sīmāhum*, and *lā yasʾalūna al-nās ilḥāfā*. Each term plays a crucial role in forming both the semantic and ethical structure of the verse.

The term *al-ta'affuf*, rooted in *'iffah*, signifies self-restraint and dignity. It describes individuals who, despite their poverty, avoid begging and strive to maintain self-respect. Al-Zuḥaili regards it as a moral virtue that prevents a person from appearing needy, sometimes causing society to overlook their actual hardship. This aligns with the Qur'anic value of preserving dignity in adversity and cautioning against degrading forms of appeal.[25] As a verbal noun (*maṣdar*), *ta'affuf* conveys the idea of a sustained ethical trait rather than a single act. From a linguistic perspective, as Isnaniah and Agustina explain, such morphological forms suggest a deep and ongoing character disposition, not just outward behavior.[26] The implication is that people who do not visibly ask for help should not be ignored. The verse therefore encourages greater awareness and proactive engagement with the so-called "silent poor."

The second phrase, *bi-sīmāhum*, refers to clear signs or indicators. Al-Zuḥaili interprets this as referring to physical or behavioral clues that can help identify those in need, whether they beg or not. These may include worn clothing, a frail appearance, or signs of physical or mental disability.[27] However, such indicators can also be ambiguous; while some people feign poverty, others truly need help yet remain unnoticed. Believers are thus urged to use discernment and empathy, combining rational judgment with compassionate intuition. This approach resonates with Gadamer's principle of

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[25] Al-Zuhaili, 80.

[26] Siti Isnaniah and Tiya Agustina, "Arabic Contribution to Indonesian Vocabulary: An Analysis of Q.S. Al-Baqarah," *Islah: Journal of Islamic Literature and History*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.18326/ISLAH.V1I2.155-163.

[27] Tempo Data and Analysis Center Compilation Team, *Unraveling the Beggar Network Then and Now* (Jakarta: Tempo Publishing, 2020), 49-50; Abdul Malik Iskandar, *Social Practices of Urban Beggars* (Yogyakarta: Bintang Pustaka Madani, 2021), 60-64.

Vorverständnis (pre-understanding), which holds that interpretive insights are shaped by both historical background and personal experience.

The phrase *lā yasʾalūna al-nās ilḥāfā* is especially significant. Literally, it means "they do not ask people insistently." The term *ilḥāf* implies pressure or coercion. Al-Zuḥaili, following a minority interpretation, sees this as a prohibition not against all forms of begging, but specifically against coercive begging.[28] A coercive approach involves arrogance, making demands, or repeatedly asking because the initial response was insufficient or due to urgent personal circumstances. Such behavior can result from the failure of other strategies to secure help.[29]

Al-Zuḥaili's analysis demonstrates that both grammar and word choice are not only technical matters but also central tools for constructing moral meaning. These elements shape how believers fulfill social responsibilities, determine who is eligible for charity, and adopt compassionate yet discerning approaches to poverty. By situating his linguistic analysis within a broader hermeneutic context, al-Zuḥaili participates in what Gadamer describes as a "dialogue" between the historical background of the text and contemporary reality. His interpretation bridges classical exegesis and modern social-ethical thought, reminding readers that the linguistic subtleties of the Qur'an carry deep ethical guidance as well as literary beauty.

Fiqh al-Ḥayāh (*Reflections on Legal-Ethics*)

Wahbah al-Zuḥaili's reflections on the legal and ethical dimensions of begging, based on QS al-Baqarah (2) 273, reveal a close relationship between Qur'anic ethics, prophetic tradition, and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In his tafsir, al-Zuḥaili devotes significant attention to the implications of this verse for both those who beg and those who are able to give. His analysis, situated in the section *Fiqh al-Ḥayāh* or "the fiqh of life," demonstrates how legal-ethical reasoning can be applied to contemporary social challenges. From an Islamic legal perspective, begging is generally discouraged and may even be considered *makruh* or *ḥarām* if practiced without genuine need, especially by those who are capable of working. This prohibition is rooted in the Islamic work ethic,

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[28] Al-Zuhaili, "Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fii al-Aqidah Wa al-Syariah Wa al-Manhaj," 86-87.

[29] Rizky Adha Mahendra, "Viral Beggars in Bogor Rage at Not Given Money, Caught Topping Up at Minimarket," detiknews, 2025, https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7716222/viral-pengemis-di-bogor-ngamuk-tak-diberi-duit-kepergok-top-up-di-minimarket/amp.

which sees self-reliance as an act of worship and a sign of dignity.[30] Al-Zuḥaili echoes this principle by citing traditions that strongly discourage begging for self-enrichment, including the narration equating habitual begging with accumulating coals of hellfire.[31]

Nevertheless, Islamic jurisprudence recognizes exceptions under the doctrine of necessity (*al-ḍarūra*), permitting begging in certain circumstances. Al-Zuḥaili outlines three primary conditions in which begging is allowed: severe poverty with no means of livelihood (*faqr mudqiʿ*), burdensome debt that cannot be repaid otherwise, and responsibility for paying the legal ransom of another person.[32] These categories, in line with classical *fiqh*, reflect a compassionate approach that upholds human dignity while preventing exploitation of religious leniency.[33]

Al-Zuḥaili's interpretation is underpinned by the ethical emphasis on *ʿizzah* (dignity). He stresses that even when begging is permissible, it should be approached with humility and restraint. Islam does not promote dependency but instead encourages perseverance and independence.[34] Al-Zuḥaili criticizes coercive begging—particularly when it involves threats, deception, or manipulation—as a clear ethical violation of Islamic values.

Such coercive behavior not only burdens society's conscience but also disrupts the Qur'anic vision of social harmony.[35] According to Isnawan, such conduct undermines honesty and exploits compassion for personal gain. Al-Zuḥaili is clear in distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable means of seeking help. Coercion compromises both the dignity of the one asking and the freedom of the one giving. Thus, while generosity is strongly encouraged, it must remain a voluntary and noble act rather than the result of pressure.

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[30] Erwin Hamonangan Pane and Nur Hakima Akhirani Nasution, "The Legal Concept of Supporting a Family from Begging According to Islamic Law," *International Journal of Educational Research Excellence (IJERE)*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v2i1.420.

[31] Al-Zuhaili, "Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fii al-Aqidah Wa al-Syariah Wa al-Manhaj," 88-89.

[32] Al-Zuhaili, 89.

[33] Nurul Adilla and Abd. Mukhsin, "The Role of Husbands with Disabilities in Supporting Families through Begging: An Islamic Law Perspective," *Al-Ishlah: A Scientific Journal of Law*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.56087/aijih.v28i1.513.

[34] Salam Abdallah, "Islamic Ethics: An Exposition to Resolve ICT Ethical Dilemmas," *Journal of Information Communication and Ethics in Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 289–301, https://doi.org/10.1108/14779961011071088.

[35] Sabil Mokodenseho et al., "Analysis of the Influence of Fiqh and Maqasid Al-Syariah in the Formation of Islamic Legal Policy in Indonesia," *WSiSS* 2, no. 01 (2024): 30–37, https://doi.org/10.58812/wsiss.v2i01.590.

Al-Zuḥaili's approach also considers the ethical responsibility of donors. While giving when able is commendable, donors are encouraged to be discerning—assessing both the legitimacy of the beggar's need and the broader impact of their giving. His analysis is in line with contemporary Islamic thought, which seeks a balance between compassion and accountability.[36] This perspective aligns with broader Islamic legal principles that assess the permissibility of actions in the context of social obligations and ethical outcomes. The principle of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life), a central *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objective of Islamic law), supports the view that individuals in desperate situations may seek help, including through begging, to survive. However, this should never become a habitual practice that erodes personal dignity or social cohesion.[37]

Importantly, al-Zuḥaili frames begging as a societal issue. He argues that the primary responsibility for preventing such situations rests with society and its institutions. Islamic teaching obliges both the state and the community to proactively address poverty through mechanisms such as obligatory *zakat* and voluntary *ṣadaqah*. Al-Zuḥaili thus encourages vigilance and the development of organized charitable networks to prevent anyone from being forced into begging. His interpretation also supports modern empowerment-based solutions over passive assistance. Programs such as vocational training, microfinance, and employment initiatives are recommended as sustainable alternatives. These approaches promote self-reliance, reduce the stigma of poverty, and reflect the comprehensive spirit of Islamic economic ethics.[38] Al-Zuḥaili's insights encourage a move from reactive charity to strategic social investment, simultaneously upholding personal dignity and collective well-being.

The *Fiqh al-Ḥayāh* dimension of al-Zuḥaili's interpretation demonstrates a sophisticated legal-ethical balance. He combines compassion for those in need with a clear rejection of coercion and manipulation. By grounding his perspective in classical jurisprudence, prophetic teachings, and present-day realities, al-Zuḥaili offers guidance that is both spiritually authentic and socially relevant. His reflections urge Muslim

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[36] Abba and Ngah, "Forms of Almsgiving in Islamic Economics: An Analysis in the Quran and Sunnah (As Reported in Bukhari and Muslim)."

[37] Kresnawidiansyah Agustian et al., "Comparative Analysis of Ethical and Legal Principles in the Islamic Business Management Model," *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (Adman)* 1, no. 2 (2023): 101–107, https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.52.

[38] Ayman Shabana, "Law and Ethics in Islamic Bioethics: Nonmaleficence in Islamic Paternity Regulation" 48, no. 3 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12041.

societies to practice the ethics of giving and receiving aid not only through ritual compliance but through a sincere commitment to justice, dignity, and social responsibility.

Hadith Support and Scientific References

The ethical discussion regarding begging in Islam is anchored in both the Qur'an and Hadith, which together offer detailed guidance on when seeking help is acceptable and when it is discouraged or even prohibited. Wahbah al-Zuḥaili's interpretation of QS al-Baqarah (2) 273 is enriched by references to various Prophetic traditions that establish clear boundaries for begging within Islamic law and ethics. These traditions reinforce the Qur'anic emphasis on dignity and charity and provide practical standards for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate forms of begging.

One well-known hadith cited by al-Zuḥaili is the saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "Whoever asks others for money in order to accumulate wealth is only asking for burning coals, whether the request is small or large."[39] This hadith, authenticated in *Sahih Muslim* and referenced by Fitria et al.,[40] serves as a strong warning against begging for personal enrichment rather than out of true need. Al-Zuḥaili uses this tradition to highlight that begging motivated by greed or accompanied by coercion is ethically indefensible and religiously forbidden. The hadith is not only a theological principle but also a social ethic, intended to prevent exploitation and to uphold the integrity of giving.

On the other hand, the tradition also affirms the value of compassion and acknowledges genuine necessity. As explained by Alfani et al.[41] the Prophet stated, "Wait until someone brings you *ṣadaqah*, then I will instruct you to give it."[42] This guidance reflects the principle of *al-ḍarūra* (necessity), which permits asking for charity during severe hardship. Al-Zuḥaili accepts this view, allowing begging in cases of overwhelming debt, physical incapacity, or valid financial obligations, each supported by categories in

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[39] Al-Naisaburi, "♀ Shahih Muslim," 720.

[40] Fitria, Sumadi, and Kusuma, "The Phenomenon of Seasonal Beggars in Ramadan: An Islamic Economic Perspective."

[41] Alfani, Fauziyah, and Ilmiyah, "Methods of Understanding Hadiths on the Prohibition of Begging in the Perspective of Yusuf Al-Qardhawi," 8.

[42] Al-Naisaburi, "♀ Shahih Muslim," 720.

Islamic law.[43] The critical point remains necessity, not opportunism; begging is tolerated only as long as genuine hardship persists.

Further reinforcing this ethical stance, Pane and Nasution note the statement: "Allah forbids begging but does not prohibit receiving alms from someone."[44] This means that receiving aid is permitted as long as it is not obtained through begging. The narrative emphasizes the importance of community solidarity and active care, a point consistently highlighted by al-Zuḥaili. He insists that society should not only respond passively but should engage directly to understand and address the root causes of hardship.

In addition to prophetic traditions, al-Zuḥaili integrates insights from classical tafsir. He refers to scholars such as al-Qurṭubi, al-Ṭabari, and al-Zamakhshari to strengthen the ethical and legal dimensions of QS al-Baqarah (2) 273. Al-Qurṭubi underscores the importance of preserving personal dignity, interpreting the verse as an encouragement for lawful means of earning a living.[45] Al-Ṭabari sees it as a call for structured social justice, promoting collective support through *zakat*, *waqf*, and fair economic policy—a vision that al-Zuḥaili affirms.[46] Al-Zamakhshari highlights the risks to *'izzah* (dignity) and the need for social mechanisms to avoid coercion in begging.[47] By combining these ethical perspectives, al-Zuḥaili asserts the importance of protecting the dignity of the *sā'il* while advocating for reform in the Muslim social welfare system.

Through these references, al-Zuḥaili presents a nuanced reading of QS al-Baqarah (2) 273. The verse serves not only as a description but also as a set of normative guidelines promoting ethical conduct and discouraging discriminatory behavior. It calls on believers to support those who do not resort to coercion while maintaining their dignity. This message encourages the renewal of social ethics within Islamic education and practice, especially in Indonesia, by changing the widespread perception that recipients of charity are mere objects of pity rather than active participants in their own empowerment. Al-Zuḥaili also advocates for *ijtihad* based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, ensuring that

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[43] Al-Zuhaili, "Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fii al-Aqidah Wa al-Syariah Wa al-Manhaj," 89.

[44] Pane and Nasution, "The Legal Concept of Supporting a Family from Begging According to Islamic Law," 83.

[45] Imam Al-Qurthubi, "Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an," in *Volume 4* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2006), 372-377.

[46] Ibn Jarir al-Thabari, "Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an," in *Volume 2* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadis, 2010), 888-894.

[47] Muhammad Halaby, "Usury in the View of the Quran: A Thematic Interpretation Study of the Verses of Usury," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2022): 17-26, https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v1i1.12.

interpretation extends beyond the literal text to encompass the protection of life and dignity in a holistic manner. The harmony between Hadith, classical scholarship, and al-Zuḥaili's contextual insights offers a coherent ethical and legal framework for addressing poverty and begging in contemporary Muslim societies.

A Blend of Horizons and Applications

In interpreting QS al-Baqarah (2) 273, Wahbah al-Zuḥaili skillfully combines classical textual understanding with the realities of the modern social context. As observed by Anas (2024), the environment in which an interpreter lives—including political, economic, and cultural factors—inevitably shapes ethical focus and interpretive priorities.[48] Al-Zuḥaili not only draws upon the works of previous scholars such as al-Qurṭubi, al-Ṭabari, and al-Zamakhshari, but he also considers the socio-political circumstances of his time, particularly the increase in coercive and manipulative begging amid political and economic instability in Syria and Egypt. He directly witnessed the spread of begging in the streets—often marked by coercion or deceit—and the systemic failure of authorities to address the root causes of poverty.[49]

This interpretive approach aligns with Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons," which asserts that true understanding emerges from the meeting of the historical context of the text and the lived experiences of the interpreter. Al-Zuḥaili interprets the Qur'anic imperative of compassion toward the poor as a reciprocal ethical principle, requiring both generosity from the wealthy and integrity from the recipient. In this way, he establishes an ethical framework that protects the dignity of both parties involved. Al-Zuḥaili's interpretation goes beyond individual and spiritual concerns, addressing broader structural and institutional aspects. He advocates for the institutionalization of *zakat* and the creation of well-organized, systematic, and preventive mechanisms for the distribution of social assistance. The primary objective is to reach vulnerable groups before they are compelled to beg in public spaces. Technology-driven data collection systems, such as the Integrated Social Welfare Data (*DTKS*), are seen as

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[48] Ahmad Anas, "Yusuf Al-Qardhawi's Hermeneutics: An Alternative Moderate Reading of the Qur'an," *Aijqh* 2, no. 2 (2024): 34–44, https://doi.org/10.62032/aijqh.v2i2.49.

[49] Erica S. Moret, "The Humanitarian Impact of Economic Sanctions on Iran and Syria," *European Security*, no. 1 (2015): 120-140, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2014.893427; John. L. Eposito and John O. Voll, *Democracy in Muslim Countries* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 235; Mohammad Heikal, *Background: The Israeli Arab War* (Jakarta: Alda Publishing House, 1978), 244; Harry Pettit and Wiebe Ruijtenberg, "Migration as Hope and Depression: Existential Im/ Mobilities in and Beyond Egypt," *Mobilities* 14, no. 5 (2019): 734, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2019.1609193.

potential solutions, although they face persistent challenges such as data inaccuracy, network disruptions in remote areas, and manual recording procedures.[50]

Furthermore, al-Zuḥaili recognizes the problematic nature of repeatedly asking under pressure and strongly criticizes those who insistently target potential donors. Such conduct violates the principle of ethical reciprocity that he upholds. In modern urban settings, especially in Indonesia, although the phenomenon is not as widespread as in Egypt and Syria during al-Zuḥaili's lifetime, his perspective remains relevant given the similarities in poverty patterns and the shortcomings of the current social service system.

A challenge in Indonesia is that policymakers often criminalize begging. Some regional regulations, such as Article 6 Number 2 of the Batang Regional Regulation of 2017, stipulate criminal penalties for beggars, while others, like Article 24 Number 1 of the DIY Regional Regulation of 2014, impose strict sanctions on those who give. This tension reflects a gap between al-Zuḥaili's ethical horizon and current practices. Nevertheless, scholars strive to facilitate discussions aimed at reconciling these divergent attitudes, paradigms, and ideals—balancing effectiveness in reducing the number of beggars with the ethical imperative to protect the rights of individuals who have no alternative means of subsistence.[51]

Al-Zuḥaili ultimately advocates a middle ground as a legal and ethical alternative. He urges authorities not to rush to impose sanctions or take harsh actions but to prioritize a dignified, dialogical approach that seeks to understand the root causes of begging.[52] This perspective offers a constructive response to systemic social challenges and critiques prevailing societal tendencies to stigmatize the poor. In certain situations, al-Zuḥaili

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[50] Lusi Ariyani and Achmad Sarwandianto, "Implementation of Integrated Social Welfare Data Service Information Platform (DTKS)," *Journal Kabar Masyarakat*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.54066/jkb.v3i1.3043; Amirul Febrianto, Sadly Abdul Djabar, and Wahyu Wahyu, "Evaluation of Integrated Social Welfare Data Management in Penajam Paser Utara District," *Journal La Bisecoman*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.37899/journallabisecoman.v4i4.1518; Muhamad Akbar, Sakbir Sakbir, and Sitrun Malipi, "Implementation of Social Welfare (DTKS) Integrated Data Program through the Next Generation Social Welfare Information System (SIKS NG)," *International Journal Papier Public Review*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.47667/ijppr.v4i2.214; Thomly Stevie Ronald Lasut et al, "Integrated Social Welfare Data Management Policy in Tomohon City," *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v67i1.12106.

[51] Ahmad Syafii Rahman and Amir Mu'allim, *Local Regulation on Homelessness and Beggars in Yogyakarta: Human Rights and Maqasid of Sharia Perspectives*, Millah: Journal of Religious Studies, vol. 21, 2021, 31-39, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.20885/millah.vol21.iss1.art2.

[52] Ridi Fadhilah Khan, "VIDEO: Satpol PP Officer Stomps on Beggar's Stomach during Raid," Liputan 6, 2022, https://enamplus.liputan6.com/news/read/5006568/video-oknum-satpol-pp-injak-perut-pengemis-saat-razia.

recommends giving to those who ask, regardless of whether they do so forcefully. His concept of "responsible giving" is not limited to ritual acts, but aims to create a balance between individual worship and social benefit. He recognizes that severe hunger may drive someone to desperate measures, and that failure to address basic needs could lead to even more serious social problems.

This concept is inspired by the Prophet's forgiveness toward a Bedouin—who, due to a lack of insight and social skills, was insistent in his request, even to the point of physical contact. The focus should not be on repressive measures such as raids, punitive sanctions, or formalistic guidance, but rather on optimizing the ethical approach and improving the performance of both governmental and non-governmental social institutions. Overall, this strategy serves as a pathway for poverty alleviation and the reduction of coercive begging

Conclusion

Al-Zuḥaili's interpretation of coercive begging centers on the phrase *lā yasʾalūn al-nās ilḥāfā* in QS al-Baqarah (2) 273. In line with a minority of interpreters, he views this as a prohibition of coercion, rather than a prohibition of asking itself. Applying a hermeneutic framework to al-Zuḥaili's tafsir reveals the integration of distinctive lexical and grammatical analysis, examination of classical and modern sources, historical experiences—such as the socio-political unrest in Egypt and Syria during his lifetime—and contemporary realities. This approach offers a model of Qur'anic interpretation that is dynamic, relevant, and responsive to societal needs while remaining grounded in the core of the divine message.

A key finding of this study is that the ethical relationship between beggars and donors, as envisioned by al-Zuḥaili, favors a balanced approach. Although he encourages avoiding begging, he accepts that, in urgent situations, asking is tolerated up to three times but criticizes persistent coercion. Al-Zuḥaili emphasizes that efforts to reduce begging must go beyond repressive measures and include consistent charitable mechanisms, increased empathy, policy revisions, and the optimization of social support programs. Future research is recommended to compare the handling of begging policies in various countries and to evaluate the implementation of anti-begging regulations in both developed and developing contexts.

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