

The Hierarchy of *Wāḍiḥ al-Dalālah* in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: An Analysis of *Zāhir*, *Naṣṣ*, *Mufassar*, and *Muḥkam* in Legal Verses



Ahmad Solikin^{*1}, Abad Badruzaman², Ishthifaul Ashfia³

¹²Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, ³Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Diponegoro Tulungagung

Email: [*ahmadsolikin.id@gmail.com](mailto:ahmadsolikin.id@gmail.com)

Abstract: The study of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* constitutes an important aspect of *qawā'id lughawiyah* in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as it concerns the determination of the degree of semantic clarity in textual expressions (*alfāz*) in the process of understanding scriptural texts and deriving legal rulings. This study aims to analyze the hierarchy of *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam* and examine its application to legal verses by taking into account the differences in the methodological frameworks of *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars. This research employs a qualitative approach using library research. The data were obtained from classical and contemporary works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, particularly the works of al-Sarakhsī, al-Āmidī, Qāḍī Abī Ya'īlā, al-Zarkashī, and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf. The data were analyzed through content analysis by identifying, categorizing, and comparing the characteristics of each category and applying them to Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:228, Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:3, and Q.S. al-Nūr [24]:4. The findings indicate that the hierarchy of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* cannot be applied mechanically solely on the basis of the degree of textual clarity. The analysis of the term *qurū'* in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:228 demonstrates that the existence of two possible meanings requires an examination of the strength of linguistic and juridical evidence before the expression can be categorized as *zāhir*. Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:3 demonstrates that the determination of *naṣṣ* must take into account *siyāq al-kalām* and the relationship among textual expressions, rather than relying solely on the literal meaning of a particular phrase. Q.S. al-Nūr [24]:4 demonstrates that semantic clarity may apply to a particular expression or textual structure, such as the specification of *thamānīna jaldah* (eighty lashes), without automatically assigning the entire verse to a single category. Meanwhile, the expression *abadan* indicates that a linguistic meaning denoting continuity must be distinguished from the *uṣūlī* determination of *muḥkam*, which still requires examination of other evidences and the possibility of *naskh*. Thus, the study finds that *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* functions as a framework for controlling interpretation, particularly in determining the strength of *dalālah*, limiting the scope of *ta'wīl*, and supporting the process of *tarjīḥ*. However, the hierarchy does not automatically resolve legal issues; the determination of each category remains dependent on linguistic structure, *siyāq*, *qarīnah*, the relationship among evidences, and the methodological framework of *uṣūl* being employed.

Keywords: *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*, *qawā'id lughawiyah*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *istinbāt al-aḥkām*, *dalālat al-lafz*

Abstrak: Kajian *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* merupakan bagian penting dalam kaidah lughawiyah *uṣūl al-fiqh* karena berkaitan dengan penentuan tingkat kejelasan makna *lafz* dalam proses memahami *naṣṣ* dan menetapkan hukum. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis hierarki *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, dan *muḥkam* serta menguji penerapannya pada ayat-ayat hukum dengan mempertimbangkan perbedaan kerangka metodologis para *uṣūliyyūn*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*). Data diperoleh dari karya *uṣūl al-fiqh* klasik dan kontemporer, khususnya pemikiran al-Sarakhsī, al-Āmidī, Qāḍī Abī Ya'īlā, al-Zarkashī, dan 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf. Data dianalisis melalui content analysis dengan mengidentifikasi, mengelompokkan, dan membandingkan karakteristik setiap kategori serta menerapkannya pada QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228, QS. al-Nisā' [4]:3, dan QS. al-Nūr [24]:4. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hierarki *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* tidak dapat diterapkan secara mekanis hanya berdasarkan tingkat kejelasan *lafz*. Analisis terhadap *lafz qurū'* dalam QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228 menunjukkan bahwa adanya dua kemungkinan makna menuntut pengujian terhadap kekuatan dalil kebahasaan dan dalil *shar'ī* sebelum suatu *lafz* ditempatkan sebagai *zāhir*. QS. al-Nisā' [4]:3 menunjukkan bahwa penentuan *naṣṣ* harus mempertimbangkan *siyāq al-kalām* dan hubungan antar*lafz*, bukan hanya makna literal suatu bagian ayat. QS. al-Nūr [24]:4 menunjukkan bahwa kejelasan dapat melekat pada *lafz* atau struktur tertentu, seperti ketegasan jumlah *thamānīna jaldah*, tanpa menjadikan seluruh ayat otomatis berada pada satu kategori. Adapun *lafz abadan* menunjukkan bahwa makna kebahasaan yang mengandung keberlangsungan perlu dibedakan dari penetapan status *muḥkam* secara *uṣūlī*, yang tetap



memerlukan pemeriksaan terhadap dalil lain dan kemungkinan nasakh. Konsep *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* berfungsi sebagai kerangka pengendali interpretasi, terutama dalam menentukan kekuatan dalālah, membatasi ruang *ta'wīl*, dan mendukung proses *tarjīḥ*. Namun, hierarki tersebut tidak secara otomatis menyelesaikan persoalan hukum; penentuan kategori tetap bergantung pada struktur kebahasaan, *siyāq*, *qarīnah*, hubungan antardalil, dan kerangka metodologis *uṣūl* yang digunakan.

Kata Kunci: *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*, kaidah lughawiyah, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *istinbāt al-ḥukm*, *dalālat al-lafẓ*.

Article History: Submitted: 13-08-2026 Revised: 01-09-2026 Accepted: 01-09-2026

Introduction

Kaidah lughawiyah occupies an important position in *uṣūl al-fiqh* because it functions as a methodological instrument for understanding the semantic indications of *lafẓ* in Al-Qur'an and hadis. The linguistic character of the sources of syariat requires attention to the form of *lafẓ*, sentence structure, context of usage, and the range of meanings they may contain.¹ In the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, this attention to linguistic aspects produced various classifications of dalālah *lafẓ* used to determine degrees of semantic clarity and the strength of a *lafẓ* as a basis for *istinbāt al-ḥukm*. One important classification is *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*, namely a *lafẓ* whose semantic indication can be understood with a certain degree of clarity through its structure and use in *naṣṣ*.²

In the literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* is commonly discussed through four categories: *ẓāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*. These four categories, however, cannot simply be understood as universal and uniform linguistic levels. The definition and characteristics of each category are related to the methodological framework employed by the *uṣūliyyūn*. Al-Sarakhsī, for example, represents the Hanafiyah tradition, which gives particular attention to the relationship between the form of *lafẓ*, the speaker's intended meaning, and the possibility of *ta'wīl*.³ The accuracy of interpreting *naṣṣ* is influenced by the ability to understand the Arabic linguistic principles underlying the use of each *lafẓ*. These differences show that the classification *ẓāhir-naṣṣ-mufassar-muḥkam* must be examined not only in terms of definition but also in terms of the epistemological basis used to determine the degree of clarity of a *lafẓ*.⁴

Kaidah lughawiyah consists of two terms, namely kaidah and *lughawiyah*. In Indonesian usage, kaidah refers to a rule, principle, or guideline that serves as a foundation in a field of knowledge. Etymologically, kaidah derives from the Arabic qa'idah, the singular form of *qawa'id*, meaning a foundation, principle, or rule.⁵ Ahmad al-Fayumi in *al-Misbah al-Munir* defines kaidah as a general principle applicable to all constituent parts falling within its scope. The attention of ushul scholars to linguistic aspects arises from the importance of

¹ Muhammad, "Qawaid Tafsir: Kaidah-Kaidah Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," n.d.h 43

² 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibrāhīm al-Kaylānī, *Qawā'id al-Maqāṣid 'inda al-Imām al-Shāṭibī: 'Arḍan wa-Dirāsatan wa-Taḥlīlan* (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr, 2000), 117

³ Muhammad Agus Yusron, "Kaidah Yang Diperlukan Mufassir," *Tafakkur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2021): 63–86, <https://ejurnal.stiqarrahman.ac.id/index.php/tafakkur/article/view/52>.

⁴ Sulaiman Uki, *Makna Figuratif Senjata Dalam Idiom Bahasa Arab* (Yogyakarta, n.d.); Roby Fathan Alifiansyah, Bambang Irawan, and Nur Hasan, "Hubungan Kata Dan Makna Dalam Bahasa Arab," *Alsina: Journal of Arabic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 73–92, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.5.1.16868>.

⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Kaidah Tafsir: Syarat, Ketentuan, Dan Aturan Yang Patut Anda Ketahui Dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an*, cet. ke-5 (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2015), 34.

understanding the characteristics of *lafẓ* and *uslub* used in *naṣṣ* syariat. Each *lafẓ* conveys a different semantic indication according to its form, structure, and context of use.⁶ Based on the degree of semantic clarity, *dalālah lafẓ* is divided into two principal categories, namely *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*, which indicates meaning clearly, and *khafī al-dalālah* or *mubham*, whose meaning is less clear.

One central issue is how differences in the methodological frameworks of the *uṣūliyyūn* affect the interpretation of the four categories of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*. Studies of the hierarchy of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* tend to present *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam* as a single hierarchical sequence, while the basis for determining each category and the possibility of conceptual differences across *uṣūl* traditions have not received sufficient attention. Yet using the definitions of al-Sarakhsī, al-Āmidī, al-Zarkashī, Qāḍī Abī Ya‘lā, and Khallāf within one analysis requires a comparative reading so that concepts constructed within different methodological frameworks are not simply merged. This issue becomes especially important when the classification of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* is applied to legal verses. Classifying a *lafẓ* affects the strength of *dalālah*, the possibility of *ta‘wīl*, and the manner in which apparently divergent evidences are reconciled. For example, the *lafẓ qurū’* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228 cannot be explained merely as a *lafẓ* with two possible meanings; it must be analyzed in light of the linguistic and methodological considerations used to determine which meaning is stronger. Likewise, QS. al-Nisā’ [4]:3 must be examined through *siyāq al-kalām* in order to determine whether its meaning truly meets the characteristics of *naṣṣ*.

Studies of *kaidah lughawiyah* in *ushul fikih* have been widely conducted, especially with regard to the concept of *dalālah lafẓ* as a basis for understanding *naṣṣ* al-Qur’an and *hadis*. Among them is the study by Zahrul Mubarak, “*Metode Istinbāt Kaidah-Kaidah Lughawiyah Dalam Ushul Fiqh*,”⁷ which examines the method of *istinbāt* through *kaidah-kaidah lughawiyah* in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and therefore emphasizes the function of linguistic principles as instruments for establishing law. Another study by Hermansyah, “*Kaidah Wadih Al-Dilalah: Hierarki dan Urgensinya dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an*,”⁸ specifically examines *wāḍiḥ al-dilalah* by placing the concept within the framework of hierarchy and its importance for the interpretation of al-Qur’an.

Furthermore, Muhammad Faruq Bahril et al., “*The Stratification Concept of Clear Meaning Naṣṣ Text and Its Application in The Field of Family Law*,”⁹ discuss the concept of clear-meaning stratification in *naṣṣ* texts and its application in the field of family law. In addition, the study by Muhammad Ikhwan, “*Telaah Kritis Terhadap Kaidah Ushuliyah Lughawiyah*,”¹⁰ offers a broader critical examination of *kaidah uṣūliyyah lughawiyah*.

⁶ Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī, *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr fī Gharīb al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 512.

⁷ Zahrul Mubarrak, “Metode *Istinbāth* Kaidah-Kaidah Lughawiyah Dalam Ushul Fiqh,” *Ameena Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 70–88.

⁸ Hermansah Hermansah and Ahmad Faizal Basri, “Kaidah Wadih Al-Dilalah: Hierarki Dan Urgensinya Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur’an,” *KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin* 13, no. 1 (2023): 135–53.

⁹ Muhammad Faruq Bahril, Zainal Azwar, and Muhamad Ferdian, “The Stratification Concept of Clear Meaning Nash Text and Its Application in The Field of Family Law,” *The Indonesian of Islamic Law and Civil Law* 5, no. 2 (2024).

¹⁰ Muhamad Ikhwan and Kasiyono Kasiyono, “Telaah Kritis Terhadap Kaidah Ushuliyah Lughawiyah,” *Fitua: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (2021): 20–37.

Various studies have examined the classification of *dalālah lafz*, both from the perspective of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* and *khafī al-dalālah*, as well as their implications for the process of *istinbāṭ al-ḥukm* Islam. Other studies have focused on methods of *istinbāṭ* through kaidah lughawiyah, the characteristics of *lafz* in ushul fikih, and the application of linguistic principles to legal verses. Nevertheless, these studies have generally remained descriptive and have not comprehensively explained the characteristics of each level of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*—*zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*—together with differences in the strength of *dalālah* and their implications for the establishment of Islamic law.

On the basis of these issues, this study aims to analyze the concept of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* through a comparative approach to the thought of several *uṣūliyyūn*, with particular attention to differences in the methodological frameworks used to formulate *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*. It also examines the application of these categories to legal verses by considering linguistic elements, context (*siyāq*), possible meanings, and the position of evidence in the process of *istinbāṭ*.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. Data sources were selected on the basis of their relevance to the study of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* and their representation of several traditions of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Primary sources include *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī* by al-Sarakhsī as a representation of the Ḥanafīyyah tradition, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* by al-Āmidī as one representation of the mutakallimūn tradition, *Al-'Uddah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* by Qāḍī Abī Ya'lā, and *'Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh* by 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf as a contemporary *uṣūl* source. Data collection was conducted by reading and recording discussions related to *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*. The data were then analyzed using content analysis in three stages: identifying, grouping, and comparing the views of the scholars. The comparison focused on similarities and differences in determining the degree of clarity of *lafz*, especially on the basis of the meaning of *lafz*, context (*siyāq*), *qarīnah*, and the possibility of *ta'wīl*. The verses analyzed were selected according to their relevance to the categories of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah*. QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228 is used to examine the problem of the *lafz qurū'*, QS. al-Nisā' [4]:3 to examine the relationship between *lafz* and context (*siyāq*), and QS. al-Nūr [24]:4 to analyze the clarity of legal provisions and the *lafz abadan*. These three verses are analyzed by considering the meaning of *lafz*, the context of the verse, *qarīnah*, possible meanings, and their implications for *ta'wīl* and *istinbāṭ al-ḥukm*.

Results and Discussion

Wāḍiḥ al-Dalālah

Wāḍiḥ al-Dalālah refers to a *lafz* whose meaning is clear and can therefore be understood directly from its wording without requiring an external indicator or clue (*qarīnah*). This clarity enables legal rulings to be established through an understanding of the text itself.¹¹ In usul fikih, the *lafz wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* is classified into four levels: *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*. These four levels are distinguished by the degree of semantic clarity

¹¹ Hermansah and Basri, "Kaidah Wadih Al-Dilalah: Hierarki Dan Urgensinya Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an.

contained in each *lafẓ*. The sequence indicates that each level has a different strength of *dalālah*, beginning with *zāhir* as the level with the lowest degree of clarity and ending with *muḥkam* as the level with the highest degree of semantic clarity. The higher the level, the smaller the possibility that a *lafẓ* may be shifted from its original meaning through *ta'wīl* or another interpretation.

The principal differences among the four categories concern the relationship between *lafẓ*, the meaning it indicates, the context of discourse, and the possibility of alternative meanings. A *zāhir lafẓ* indicates a stronger meaning while still allowing another possible meaning. *Naṣṣ* indicates a meaning that is not only understood from the structure of the *lafẓ* but also constitutes the principal intent of the context of discourse. *Mufassar* indicates a meaning that has received explanation, thereby further restricting the possibility of *ta'wīl*, whereas *muḥkam* is the strongest level because its meaning no longer accepts *ta'wīl* or cancellation through *nasakh*. Thus, this classification cannot be understood merely as an order from “clear” to “clearest”; rather, it must be tested through the characteristics of each *lafẓ* when applied to the text of al-Qur'an.¹² The categories are discussed as follows:

a. *Zāhir*

Usul fikih scholars differ in formulating the concept of the *lafẓ zāhir*, although they generally agree that it indicates a meaning that can be understood directly from its wording. Their differences lie in the emphasis placed on the characteristics and degree of clarity of the meaning conveyed.

Al-Zarkashī defines the *lafẓ zāhir* as follows:¹³

ما يفهم املراد منه بنفس السماع من غري أتمل

Translation: “A *lafẓ zāhir* is a *lafẓ* whose intended meaning can be understood merely by hearing it, so that the speaker's purpose can be known without requiring deep reflection.”

The meaning of the *lafẓ zāhir* can therefore be understood directly because language is used to convey meanings that are readily comprehensible to the hearer.

Meanwhile, al-Āmidī provides the following explanation:¹⁴

اللفظ الظاهر ما دل على املعن ابوضع الأصلى أو العرف وحيتمل غريه احتمال مرجوحا

Translation: “A *lafẓ zāhir* is a *lafẓ* that indicates a meaning according to its original or customary usage, while still admitting another meaning, although that possibility is weaker.”

According to al-Āmidī, the principal characteristic of the *lafẓ zāhir* lies in the predominance of its apparent meaning. Although it can still be redirected to another meaning through *ta'wīl*, that possibility is weak and can only be accepted when supported by strong evidence.

Another view is offered by Qāḍī Abī Ya'lā through the following definition:¹⁵

¹² Abdul Basid, “Kaidah Kualifikasi Intelektual Mufasssir,” *Al Yasini: Jurnal Keislaman, Sosial, Hukum Dan Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (2018): 25–33.

¹³ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakā'uhu, 1972), h 57

¹⁴ Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1982), h 82

¹⁵ Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā', *Al-'Uddah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyyah, 1990), 173

ما احتمل معنيي أحدهما أظهر من الخر

Translation: “A *lafẓ* that admits two possible meanings, one of which is clearer than the other.”

A *lafẓ ṣāhir* may therefore contain more than one possible meaning. However, one meaning possesses a higher degree of clarity and must consequently be given priority in interpretation unless there is evidence that redirects it to another meaning.

Abdul Wahhab Khallaf formulates a more comprehensive definition as follows:¹⁶

ما دل بنفس صيغته على امراد منهم غري توقف فهم امراد منه إبل أمر خارجي ومل يكن امراد

منه هو الملقصود من السياق وحتمل التأويل

Translation: “A *lafẓ* whose wording itself indicates the intended meaning without depending on an external indication, but whose meaning is not the principal purpose of the context of discourse and remains open to *ta’wīl* into another meaning.”

The *lafẓ ṣāhir* has a meaning that can be understood directly through its linguistic structure. However, that meaning is not the principal purpose of the context of discourse; therefore, it remains possible to perform *ta’wīl* when stronger evidence exists. One of the primary characteristics of the *lafẓ ṣāhir* is the predominance of its apparent meaning together with the possibility of redirecting it to another meaning through a process of *ta’wīl* based on a valid argument.¹⁷

In Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 228

وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ

Translation: “Divorced women shall wait by themselves for three *qurū’*.”

This verse is categorized as *lafẓ ṣāhir* because the command to observe the waiting period can be understood directly. However, the word *qurū’* has two possible meanings in Arabic: a period of purity and a period of menstruation. Both meanings are linguistically possible, but one is selected on the basis of the evidence and the method of *istinbāṭ* adopted by each mazhab.

In general, the verse indicates that divorced women are required to observe an *’iddah* of three *qurū’*. The problem arises, however, with the *lafẓ qurū’*, because in Arabic usage it may refer either to menstruation or to a period of purity. This difference has produced divergent opinions among the *fuqahā’*. The Hanafiyah and Hanabilah understand *qurū’* as menstruation, whereas the Malikiyah and Syafi’iyah understand it as a period of purity. The existence of two meanings in the *lafẓ qurū’* does not automatically make it an ideal example of *ṣāhir*. If both meanings have strong linguistic foundations, the issue is not simply the existence of a *rājiḥ* and a *marjūḥ* meaning, but also how linguistic evidence and *dalil shar’ī* are used to determine the stronger meaning. The case of *qurū’* is more appropriately regarded as a borderline case demonstrating that the classification of *ṣāhir* cannot be based solely on

¹⁶ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf, ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Haramain, 2004), 172.

¹⁷ Zul Akhyar et al., “Pengertian Kaidah Wadhih Al-Dalalah: Al-Zhahir, Al-Nash, Al-Mufassar Dan Al-Mukham Zul,” *Journal of Innovative and Creativity* 5, no. 2 (2025): 11307–12.

the existence of another possible meaning; it must also be accompanied by an argument concerning the relative strength of each meaning.

b. *Naṣṣ*

In this discussion, the term *naṣṣ* does not refer to a written legal proof such as al-Qur'an and hadis, nor to *naṣṣ* in the terminology of *madhhab fiqh*, where it refers to the opinion (*qawl*) of a *mujtahid* imam used as a basis for *ijtihad* by adherents of the *madhhab*. Rather, *naṣṣ* is discussed from the perspective of *dalālah lafẓ*, namely the degree of clarity with which a *lafẓ* indicates the meaning intended by the speaker. Usul fikih scholars provide diverse formulations of the meaning of the *lafẓ naṣṣ*. In *Al-'Uddah* it is explained as follows:¹⁸

ماكان صرحيا بف حكم من الأحكام وإنكان اللفظ حتمالاً بف غريه

Translation: "A *lafẓ* that clearly indicates a legal ruling, although the *lafẓ* may still be understood in another meaning."

The definition of the *lafẓ naṣṣ* indicates a clear meaning with respect to the intended legal ruling, thereby avoiding uncertainty at the initial stage of understanding. Nevertheless, theoretically another meaning may still be possible, although this possibility does not diminish the clarity of the principal meaning indicated by the *lafẓ*.

Al-Sarkhisi argues that the position of the *lafẓ naṣṣ* is stronger than that of the *lafẓ zāhir*. This is because the *lafẓ naṣṣ* is supported by a *qarīnah* arising from the context or sentence structure of the speaker, so that the intended meaning becomes more explicit. Without such a *qarīnah*, a *lafẓ* remains at the level of *zāhir* and has not yet reached the degree of *naṣṣ*. The distinction between *zāhir* and *naṣṣ* cannot therefore be explained merely by saying that *naṣṣ* is "clearer." The difference concerns the position of the meaning within the context of discourse. In *zāhir*, the meaning understood from the wording is stronger, but it is not necessarily the principal purpose of the discourse. In *naṣṣ*, that meaning is simultaneously the principal intent conveyed through the context of the verse.¹⁹

The Hanafīyah scholars define the *lafẓ naṣṣ* as follows:²⁰

هو ما دل بنفس صيغته على املعن الملقصود على سيق له وحيتمل التأويل

Translation: "A *lafẓ* whose wording itself indicates the meaning that constitutes the principal purpose of the discourse according to the context in which it is expressed, while still remaining open to *ta'wīl*."

The principal characteristic of the *lafẓ naṣṣ* lies in the correspondence between the wording and the purpose of the discourse (*siyāq al-kalām*). This can be seen in Q.S. al-Nisa': 3:

فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً

¹⁸ Al-Farrā', *Al-'Uddah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, Juz I.

¹⁹ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993), 163.

²⁰ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Wajīz fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), h 187

Translation: “Marry women of your choice, two, three, or four. But if you fear that you will not be able to deal justly, then marry only one.”

This verse is an example of the *lafẓ naṣṣ* because the principal purpose of the discourse (*siyāq al-kalām*) is to explain the maximum number of wives and the requirement of justice in polygamy. This meaning is not only understood from the wording of the *lafẓ* but is also reinforced by the overall context of the verse. Although certain details may theoretically remain open to *ta’wīl*, the basic meaning concerning the permissibility of polygamy up to four wives subject to justice remains the principal purpose of the *naṣṣ*.²¹

Nevertheless, this verse cannot be understood solely through the phrase “two, three, or four.” The overall context of the verse shows that the discussion of the number of women who may be married is connected with the issue of justice toward orphans. At the beginning of the verse, Allah Swt. states:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

Translation: “If you fear that you will not be able to deal justly with the rights of orphan girls, then marry other women of your choice.”²²

This structure shows that the provision concerning the number of wives does not stand independently, but forms part of a broader discourse on justice. Accordingly, the limitation “two, three, or four” can be analyzed as part of the verse’s principal intent in explaining the rules of marriage and the maximum number of wives, rather than merely as a literal meaning arising from a single *lafẓ*. The category of *naṣṣ* in this verse cannot be determined simply by labeling a certain meaning as the “principal purpose.” The determination of *maqṣūd al-siyāq* must be supported by sentence structure, the relationship among *lafẓ*, and the context of the verse. This distinction has implications for *istinbāt*. Once a *lafẓ* reaches the degree of *naṣṣ*, the meaning that constitutes the principal purpose of the discourse carries greater force than a meaning that is merely understood from the apparent wording. Nevertheless, *naṣṣ* may still be subject to *ta’wīl* when supported by strong evidence.

c. *Mufassar*

The *lafẓ mufassar* occupies the third level in the classification of *wādiḥ al-dalālah*, indicating a degree of semantic clarity higher than that of *lafẓ ṣāḥih* and *naṣṣ*. At this level, the meaning of a *lafẓ* has been explained in detail so that it no longer gives rise to uncertainty or leaves room for being redirected through *ta’wīl*. Al-Sarkhisi defines *mufassar* as follows:²³

هو اسم املكشوف الذي يعرف به مكشوفاً على وجه اليبقى معه احتمال التأويل

Translation: “A designation for something made manifest and known in such a clear manner that no possibility of *ta’wīl* remains.”

²¹ Lailatus Syafa’a and Moh. Munib Zuhdi, “Dinamika Kejelasan Makna Dalam Tafsir Hukum : Kajian Wadih Ad- Dalālah Sebagai Instrumen Ushuliyyah Dalam Interpretasi Ayat-Ayat Hukum Al-Qur’an,” *Al-Ikhlil: Jurnal Dirasah Al Qur’an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2025): 20–32.

²² Muhammad, “Qawaid Tafsir: Kaidah-Kaidah Menafsirkan Al-Qur’an.” h 56

²³ Al-Sarkhasī, *Ushul Al-Sarkhashī, Juz I* h 123

On the basis of this definition, the *lafẓ mufassar* has several characteristics. First, it indicates a meaning that is highly clear and detailed. Second, its clarity is evident from the wording itself without requiring a *qarīnah* or external indication. Third, because the meaning has been explained in detail, the *lafẓ mufassar* no longer leaves open the possibility of being redirected through *ta'wīl*.

Uṣūl scholars divide the *lafẓ mufassar* into two forms. First, there is *mufassar* whose meaning is already clear and detailed from the outset and therefore requires no additional explanation. An example appears in the words of Allah Swt. in Q.S. al-Nūr [24]: 4:

وَالَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

Translation: “Those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty lashes and never accept their testimony. They are the defiantly disobedient.”

The *lafẓ thamānīnā jaldah* specifies the exact number of punishments. Quantitatively, the number eighty does not allow interpretation as seventy or ninety. However, this example does not mean that the entire content of the verse automatically has the status of *mufassar*. The same verse in fact demonstrates that the classification of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* operates at the level of a particular *lafẓ* or semantic structure, not necessarily at the level of the entire verse. The phrase “eighty lashes” has a form of quantitative clarity different from the *lafẓ* “forever” that appears later in the verse. *Mufassar* may also arise through clarification from another piece of evidence. A *lafẓ* that initially still requires explanation may receive *bayan* through al-Qur’ān, *ḥadis*, or another *dalil shar’ī*. Once that clarification removes previously open semantic possibilities, the *lafẓ* acquires a higher degree of clarity.²⁴

Second, a *lafẓ* may initially be general (*mujmal*) and allow several interpretations, but is subsequently explained by another *dalil* so that its meaning becomes detailed and definite. This form is also known as *mubayyan*. An example is found in the words of Allah Swt. in QS. an-Nisā’ [4]: 92:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا ... فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Translation: “Whoever kills a believer by mistake must free a believing slave and pay diyat to the victim’s family, unless they remit it.... Whoever cannot find the means must fast for two consecutive months as repentance to Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

The verse establishes the obligation to pay diyat to the family of a person killed unintentionally, but it does not explain in detail the amount, form, or procedure of payment. More detailed clarification was subsequently provided by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. through *ḥadis*, so that a provision that was initially general became

²⁴ Muhammad, “Qawaid Tafsir: Kaidah-Kaidah Menafsirkan Al-Qur’ān.”

clear and detailed. With this clarification, the *lafẓ* that was previously *mujmal* becomes *mufassar* or *mubayyan*.²⁵

From the perspective of *istinbāt al-ḥukm*, the *lafẓ mufassar* requires the explicitly clarified meaning to be acted upon because it no longer leaves open the possibility of being redirected through *ta'wīl*. The degree of clarity of *lafẓ mufassar* is higher than that of *lafẓ naṣṣ* and *ẓāhir* because its semantic indication has been explained in a detailed and definite manner. Therefore, when a conflict of understanding arises between a *lafẓ mufassar* and a *lafẓ naṣṣ* or *ẓāhir*, the *lafẓ mufassar* must be given priority because it possesses the stronger *dalālah*.

d. *Muḥkam*

The *lafẓ muḥkam* constitutes the highest level in the classification of *wādiḥ al-dalālah*. At this level, the meaning of a *lafẓ* reaches the highest degree of clarity and no longer leaves room for *ta'wīl*, alteration, or cancellation by another *dalil*. For this reason, *lafẓ muḥkam* has the strongest *dalālah* in the process of *istinbāt ḥukm*. Abdul Wahab Khalaf defines *muḥkam* as follows:²⁶

ما دل على بنفس صيغته على معناه الوضعي دالة واضحة بحيث ال يقبال إبطال والتبديل والتأويل

Translation: "A *lafẓ* whose wording itself clearly indicates its conventional meaning in such a way that it does not admit cancellation, substitution, or *ta'wīl*."

The clarity of the meaning of *lafẓ muḥkam* is evident directly from its wording without requiring additional explanation or an external *qarinah*. The meaning indicated is definite and corresponds to the speaker's intent, leaving no room for alternative interpretation or legal change. The position of *lafẓ muḥkam* is above *lafẓ ẓāhir*, *naṣṣ*, and *mufassar* because the certainty of its meaning is final. Its inability to accept cancellation (*nasakh*) or *ta'wīl* may arise from the wording itself when the *lafẓ* explicitly indicates that the provision is fixed and cannot be changed. One example of *lafẓ muḥkam* is found in QS. al-Nūr [24]: 4, in the *lafẓ abadan*. The word *abadan* (forever) indicates that the prohibition on accepting the testimony of those who accuse chaste women without producing four witnesses applies continuously. The use of this word emphasizes that the legal provision is permanent and cannot be revoked, and therefore serves as an example of *lafẓ muḥkam* indicating a definite meaning.

However, the use of the *lafẓ abadan* cannot automatically prove that the entire provision has the status of *muḥkam*. The *lafẓ* indeed indicates continuity, but determining the status of *muḥkam* requires consideration of the provision as a whole, the context of the verse, and the discussion among *fuqahā'* concerning possible changes or exceptions to the law. This verse therefore illustrates the distinction between linguistic analysis and *uṣūlī* analysis. Linguistically, *abadan* indicates continuity without a specified time limit. From an *uṣūlī* perspective, however, determining that a legal ruling is truly *muḥkam* requires further examination of other evidence and the possibility of *nasakh*.

²⁵ Khallāf, *ʿIlm Uṣūl Al-Fiqh*.h 154

²⁶ Khallāf.

On the basis of the explanation above, *muḥkam* is the strictest category in the interpretive process. The higher the degree of clarity of a *lafẓ*, the less room there is for a *mujtahid* to redirect it through *ta'wīl*. Even when a *lafẓ* has reached the degree of *muḥkam*, the ruling it indicates cannot be declared changed merely on the basis of rational consideration or a new interpretation without a basis in *dalil shar'ī*.

From the perspective of *istinbāt al-ḥukm*, the *lafẓ muḥkam* must be applied according to its apparent meaning because its meaning is definite and does not leave room for alternative interpretations or *ta'wīl*. In addition, the *lafẓ muḥkam* does not accept the possibility of being subjected to *nasakh* by another *dalīl*. Therefore, when an apparent conflict occurs between a *lafẓ muḥkam* and a *lafẓ mufassar*, *naṣṣ*, or *zāhir*, the *lafẓ muḥkam* must be given priority because it possesses the highest degree of clarity and strength of *dalālah*.²⁷

Implications of Different Degrees of *Lafẓ* Clarity for *Istinbāt al-ḥukm* Islam

The study of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* plays a very important role in the interpretation of al-Qur'an and the process of *istinbāt* hukum Islam. Differences in the degree of semantic clarity within each classification of *lafẓ*—*zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam*—have implications for differences in the strength of *dalālah* as well as for the way *mujtahid* understand and establish legal rulings. These implications include the following:

1. Determining the strength of *dalālah* of a *lafẓ*

The degree of semantic clarity is a primary measure in determining the strength of *dalālah* of a *lafẓ*. A *lafẓ* with a clearer meaning has a stronger position as a basis for *istinbāt al-ḥukm* than a *lafẓ* that still leaves room for alternative interpretations. Understanding the levels of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* also helps a *mujtahid* avoid errors in determining the intended meaning of *naṣṣ*. Legal determination is therefore not based solely on the apparent meaning of a *lafẓ*, but also on the degree of clarity of its *dalālah*.²⁸

2. Determining the scope of *ta'wīl*

Differences in the degree of clarity of a *lafẓ* also affect the possibility of performing *ta'wīl*. A *lafẓ* that still allows another possible meaning may be subjected to *ta'wīl* when supported by strong evidence, whereas a *lafẓ* that has reached the level of *mufassar* or *muḥkam* in principle no longer accepts *ta'wīl* because its meaning has become clear and definite.

3. Guidelines for resolving apparent conflicts among evidences

In the practice of *istinbāt al-ḥukm*, several evidences may appear to conflict at the level of their apparent meaning. Differences in the degree of clarity of *lafẓ* constitute one basis for conducting *tarjīḥ*, that is, giving preference to one *dalil* over another. A *lafẓ* with a higher degree of clarity is given priority over one with a lower degree of clarity, thereby contributing to a more precise legal determination. The concept of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* also provides a methodological framework for understanding *naṣṣ* al-Qur'an and hadis. Through a hierarchy of semantic clarity, the processes of interpretation and legal

²⁷ Yusron, "Kaidah Yang Diperlukan Mufassir."

²⁸ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl al-Diyānah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1983), 83.

determination can be made more consistent and can reduce subjectivity in understanding texts.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* cannot be adequately understood as a simple hierarchy moving from a “clear” *lafẓ* to the “clearest” *lafẓ*. Rather, it is a methodological construction related to how the *uṣūliyyūn* determine the relationship among *lafẓ*, context, *qarīnah*, the speaker’s intended meaning, and the possibility of *ta’wīl*. A comparison of the thought of al-Sarakhsī, al-Āmidī, Qādī Abī Ya’lā, al-Zarkashī, and Khallāf reveals a common tendency to place *ẓāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mufassar*, and *muḥkam* according to the strength of *dalālah*, but differences remain in the basis on which clarity is determined. *Ẓāhir* is principally determined by the predominance of a meaning understood from the wording; *naṣṣ* is connected to the meaning that constitutes the principal purpose of the discourse within its context; *mufassar* is marked by an explanation that removes alternative possible meanings; and *muḥkam* occupies the strongest level because it does not accept *ta’wīl* and, within the *uṣūl* framework employed, does not accept *nasakh*.

The analysis of legal verses also shows that categorization within *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* is not a simple matter. The *lafẓ qurū’* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228 demonstrates that the presence of several possible meanings requires an examination of the strength of linguistic evidence and *dalil shar’ī* before a *lafẓ* is classified as *ẓāhir*. QS. al-Nisā’ [4]:3 shows that determining *naṣṣ* must take *siyāq al-kalām* into account rather than deriving meaning merely from an isolated phrase. Meanwhile, QS. al-Nūr [24]:4 shows that the clarity of a *lafẓ* must be analyzed at the level of a particular *lafẓ* or structure, such as the explicit number *tsamānīna jaldah*, and cannot automatically be generalized to the entire verse. Even the use of the *lafẓ* *abadan* as an indication of *muḥkam* demonstrates the need to distinguish between a linguistic meaning denoting continuity and an *uṣūlī* determination of *muḥkam*, which must still consider other evidence and the possibility of *nasakh*.

Accordingly, the principal implication of *wāḍiḥ al-dalālah* for *istinbāṭ al-ḥukm* lies in its capacity to place limits on the use of *ta’wīl*, help determine the strength of *dalālah*, and provide one basis for *tarjīḥ* when differences of interpretation or apparent conflicts among evidences arise. Nevertheless, the force of this hierarchy does not mean that every *lafẓ* located at a higher level automatically resolves every legal question. Determining a category still requires analysis of linguistic structure, *siyāq*, *qarīnah*, the relationship among evidences, and the *uṣūl* framework being employed.

Bibliography

- Akhyar, Zul, Fidaus Gani, Mursal Mursal, Abdul Halim Hanafi, and Julhadi Julhadi. “Pengertian Kaidah Wadhih Al-Dalālah: Al-Zahir, Al-Naṣṣ, Al-Mufassar Dan Al-Mukham Zul.” *Journal of Innovative and Creativity* 5, no. 2 (2025): 11307–12.
- Al-Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn. *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1982.
- Al-Ash’arī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Al-Ibṣnah ‘an Uṣūl Al-Diyānah*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah, 1983.

- Al-Farrā', Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā. *Al-'Uddah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Vol. 1. Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyyah, 1990.
- Al-Fayyūmī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr fī Gharīb al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*. Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Al-Kaylānī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibrāhīm. *Qawā'id al-Maqāsid 'inda al-Imām al-Shāṭibī: 'Arḍan wa-Dirāsatan wa-Taḥlīlan*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2000.
- Al-Sarakhsī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993.
- Alifiansyah, Roby Fathan, Bambang Irawan, and Nur Hasan. "Hubungan Kata Dan Makna Dalam Bahasa Arab." *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 73–92. <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.5.1.16868>.
- Al-Zarkashī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh. *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 1. Cairo: Maktabat 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakā'uḥu, 1972.
- Bahril, Muhammad Faruq, Zainal Azwar, and Muhamad Ferdian. "The Stratification Concept of Clear Meaning *Naṣṣ* Text and Its Application in The Field of Family Law." *The Indonesian of Islamic Law and Civil Law* 5, no. 2 (2024).
- Basid, Abdul. "Kaidah Kualifikasi Intelektual Mufassir." *Al Yasini: Jurnal Keislaman, Sosial, Hukum Dan Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (2018): 25–33.
- Hermansah, Hermansah, and Ahmad Faizal Basri. "Kaidah Wadih Al-Dilalah: Hierarki Dan Urgensinya Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an." *KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin* 13, no. 1 (2023): 135–53.
- Ikhwan, Muhamad, and Kasiyono Kasiyono. "Telaah Kritis Terhadap Kaidah Ushuliyah Lughawiyah." *Fitua: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (2021): 20–37.
- Khallāf, 'Abd al-Wahhāb. *Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Haramain, 2004.
- Mubarrak, Zahrul. "Metode *Istinbāth* Kaidah-Kaidah Lughawiyah Dalam Ushul Fiqh." *Ameena Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 70–88.
- Muhammad. "Qawaid Tafsir: Kaidah-Kaidah Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," n.d.
- Ruslan, Ruslan. "Kandungan Hukum Islam Dalam Ayat-Ayat Mutasyabihat." *Journal Of Islamic And Law Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.18592/jils.v6i1.6829>.
- Shihab, M. Quraish. *Kaidah Tafsir: Syarat, Ketentuan, Dan Aturan Yang Patut Anda Ketahui Dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an*. Cet. ke-5. Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2015.
- Syafa'a, Lailatus, and Moh. Munib Zuhdi. "Dinamika Kejelasan Makna Dalam Tafsir Hukum : Kajian Wadih Ad- Dalālah Sebagai Instrumen Ushuliyah Dalam Interpretasi Ayat-Ayat Hukum Al-Qur'an." *Al-Iklil: Jurnal Dirasah Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2

(2025): 20–32.

Uki, Sulaiman. *Makna Figuratif Senjata Dalam Idiom Bahasa Arab*. Yogyakarta, n.d.

Al-Zuhaylī, Wahbah. *Al-Wajīz fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1999.

Yusron, Muhammad Agus. “Kaidah Yang Diperlukan Mufasssir.” *Tafakkur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Tafsir: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2021): 63–86. <https://e-jurnal.stiqarrahman.ac.id/index.php/tafakkur/article/view/52>.