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Holistic classical interpretation in the relationship between satan and false God : Analysis of the rules of interpretation

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ABSTRACT

This research can examine the overall interpretation of classical Islamic interpretation regarding the complex relationship between Satan and false Gods using analysis based on Qawaaid Tarjih principles. Classical Islamic interpretation can be known as a deeper understanding of Islam which is used to study the complex interactions between these creatures. Through the application of Qawaaid Tarjih, this researcher reveals the principles of Dasara which will guide interpretation and can provide an understanding of the criteria used by scholars to differentiate between Satan and false God. This finding not only highlights the dichotomy between truth and falsehood to show the usefulness of Qawaaid Tarjih as a tool of differentiation, for this reason researchers can explore the broader impact of a holistic understanding of the Islamic community's perception of Satan and false gods which provides insight into its impact on everyday life with provides insight into the teachings of the Islamic religion

Keyword : Qawaaid Tarjih; Classical; Holistic Islamic Tafsir

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1. INTRODUCTION

Across the history of Islamic thought, holistic interpretation has been essential for explaining complex Qur'anic themes and connecting them to lived religious practice. Among the recurring themes in classical *tafsīr* is the relationship between Satan (al-shayṭān/iblīs) and false authorities that compete with divine guidance—often conceptualized through terms such as *tāghūt* (false god/tyrannical authority). Reading these concepts together is important because the Qur'an frequently links moral deviation to both an internal adversary (Satanic whispering and rationalization) and external structures of misguidance (false worship, false legislation, and social authority).

This study applies a *Qawā'id Tarjīh* (rules of preference and adjudication) approach to examine how classical exegetes build, prioritize, and reconcile interpretive evidence when dealing with Satanic influence and false gods. In the Muhammadiyah tradition, the 'manhaj tarjīh' framework is used to discipline reasoning through textual evidence, coherence, and graded argumentation (Setiawan, 2019; Abbas, 2012). Operationally, *qawā'id*-based analysis helps clarify when an interpretation is supported by clear textual indicators, when it relies on contextual reasoning, and how competing claims are weighed. As a result, it becomes possible to synthesize classical insights into a structured map of Satan's tactics, the Qur'anic meaning of *tāghūt*, and the theological safeguard of *tawhīd* (Al-Razi, 1990; Al-Tabari, 1992; Ibn Kathir, 2007).

Methodologically, the *qawā'id* lens is used to (a) identify recurrent interpretive moves in classical *tafsīr*, (b) compare how different exegetes justify their readings, and (c) extract a coherent set of principles that can be used to evaluate contemporary claims that misuse religious language for manipulation. This matters because modern publics often face religiously framed messages online and offline that attempt to normalize disobedience or sacralize harmful authority; a disciplined interpretive framework offers a way to separate sound reasoning from rhetorical religious rationalization (Hallaq, 1984; Duderija, 2010).

Accordingly, this paper asks: (1) How do selected classical exegetes describe Satan's strategies in guiding humans toward error? (2) How is *tāghūt* framed as a 'false god' or rival authority, and what are its Qur'anic semantic fields? (3) What *qawā'id*-based criteria can be derived to adjudicate interpretations about Satan, *tāghūt*, and *tawhīd*? and (4) What practical implications follow for contemporary Muslim life and public ethics?

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it offers a comparative synthesis of classical *tafsīr* insights on Satan and *tāghūt* using an explicit *qawā'id* framework, rather than treating the discussion as a collection of isolated moral warnings. Second, it translates that synthesis into an analytical vocabulary that can be used to diagnose 'Satanic' patterns of argumentation—incremental normalization, semantic distortion, and false authority claims—in modern settings. The paper proceeds with the research methods, then presents results and discussion across key themes, and ends with a conclusion that summarizes implications and future research directions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses qualitative library research with comparative textual analysis. The primary data consist of selected classical *tafsīr* works that represent major exegetical tendencies (narrative/riwāyah, rational/dirāyah, legal, and synthetic readings), namely al-Tabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*, al-Rāzī's *Mafātīh al-ghayb*, al-Qurtubī's *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*, and Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm* (Al-Tabari, 1992; Al-Razi, 1990; Al-Qurtubi, 1993; Ibn Kathir, 2007). The unit of analysis is not the entire corpus, but exegetical discussions attached to key verses that explicitly or implicitly connect Satanic influence, false authority (*tāghūt*), and the affirmation of *tawhīd* (e.g., QS. 2:168, 6:121, 2:256–257, 4:60, 16:36).

The analytical framework follows *qawā'id*-based reasoning (*Qawā'id Tarjīh*), which treats interpretation as a disciplined process of weighing evidence. In practice, the study proceeds in four steps. First, relevant verse clusters are identified and mapped to thematic codes (Satanic tactics, semantic fields of *tāghūt*, and *tawhīd* safeguards). Second, each *tafsīr* passage is excerpted and coded for claims, supporting arguments, and interpretive warrants (linguistic, intertextual, prophetic reports, juristic reasoning, or moral exhortation). Third, competing readings are compared and adjudicated using preference criteria widely

discussed in contemporary tarjih discourse—textual clarity, coherence across verses, and the avoidance of interpretive excess (Abbas, 2012; Setiawan, 2019). Fourth, the derived principles are tested against modern scholarly discussions of Satan and *ṭāghūt* to check whether the synthesis remains conceptually robust beyond a single exegete or single verse (Silverstein, 2013; Muhammin & Asif, 2017).

To strengthen trustworthiness, the study uses triangulation across exegetes (comparing convergences and divergences), maintains an audit trail of coding decisions, and applies a ‘negative case’ check when an exegete appears to diverge from the dominant pattern. Because the research relies on texts rather than human participants, ethical risks are minimal; however, interpretive caution is maintained by distinguishing between descriptive claims (what a *tafsīr* says) and normative inference (how a principle might be applied today). The purpose is not to claim a single definitive reading, but to articulate a defensible, *qawā'id*-informed synthesis that can guide both scholarly interpretation and practical moral reasoning in contemporary life (Hallaq, 1984; Duderija, 2010).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. A Deep Understanding of Satan's Role

Classical interpretation as the intellectual heritage of Muslims provides a basis for a deep understanding of the role of the devil in influencing humans. Through the classical interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith, scholars reveal a complex picture of the nature, motives, and tactics of the devil (Al-Qurtubi, 1993). If the researcher looks more closely, the researcher will see that the devil is considered the agent of the main enemy of man, for which the devil tries to mislead people who are on the path of truth. Classical interpretation carefully to consider how the nature of the devil is. They can be described as the most evil creatures and seek to deceive humans so that they can exploit human weaknesses and desires.

A deeper understanding of the characteristics of the devil can provide perspective on how the devil tries to tempt mankind. To know the motives of the devil is also important in the classical holistic analysis, it can be known that the devil has a deep hatred for humans because the devil wants to prove that they are not worthy of receiving revelation from Allah SWT (Al-Qurtubi, 1993). For this reason, researchers show that the motive of the devil is based on malice and evil intentions that lead humans astray from goodness, in addition, the tactics of the devil can open the door to see how the devil seeks to achieve his evil goals.

In classical interpretation it can be described as the devil trying to mislead people through their deception and seduction. For this reason, Muslims teach to face the temptations of the devil carefully and wisely. The importance of a deeper understanding of the role of the devil lies in the identification of the spiritual threats that humans face (Al-Qurtubi, 1993).

Classical interpretation is a source of enlightenment for Muslims to understand that guarding themselves from the deception of the devil is an obligation that must be fulfilled by Muslims, which can be related to this classical interpretation to know that the success of Satan in misleading humans does not only depend on his strength but also has an impact on human weakness and carelessness (Al-Qurtubi, 1993). Therefore, classical interpretation can suggest that Muslims should strengthen their faith, maintain their faith and get closer to Allah SWT to avoid the deception of the devil. Classical interpretation not only discusses the role of the devil as a separate element, but can also describe how the devil can be associated with the concept of a false god. Satan and false gods will often work together to mislead humans and the interpretation of these passages can give a complete picture of the complex relationship. This analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of the importance for the rejection of false gods in classical interpretation. In interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, the scholars explain that the worship of false gods is one of the errors so that it can weaken a person's faith.

In this understanding, it can provide a moral and spiritual foundation for Muslims to avoid all forms of association with the Allah SWT. For Muslims, in classical interpretation it can make a valuable contribution in understanding the complexity of the role of Satan with the relationship of false god, in deep understanding it can provide spiritual guidance that can inform Muslims to strengthen their faith, to distance themselves from the temptation of Satan who holds to monotheism as the most important foundation in life.

A more precise reading also benefits from clarifying Qur'anic terminology. The Qur'an uses *al-shayṭān* both as a proper referent (Iblīs) and as a functional category for any agent that pushes humans

beyond divine limits. Classical *tafsīr* frequently notes that ‘shayāṭīn’ can include not only jinn but also human actors who propagate falsehood, exploit desires, and normalize moral inversion a point supported by Qur’anic language about “devils from humankind and jinn” (Q.S 6:112). Modern philological work further shows that *al-shayṭān al-rajīm* functions as a theological and rhetorical marker: it identifies an adversary whose defining trait is exclusion from divine mercy due to rebellious arrogance, while also naming a recurring pattern of argumentation deception through plausible alternatives and incremental steps (Silverstein, 2013). In contemporary terms, this means that Satanic influence should not be reduced to supernatural fear; it is better understood as a structured pathway in which temptation begins as cognitive reframing, then becomes emotional justification, and finally becomes habitual practice reinforced by social cues (Sakat et al., 2015). This layered account helps explain why classical exegetes spend so much time describing Satan’s ‘methods’ rather than his ‘biology’: the Qur’an’s moral message targets human agency, responsibility, and the conditions that make deception persuasive.

From a *Qawā'id Tarjīh* angle, this terminological clarity matters because it prevents interpretive confusion between ontological claims and ethical functions. When a verse frames Satan as an ‘enemy’ or speaks of ‘footsteps,’ the exegetical task is to identify the practical mechanism being described: is the verse warning about a specific act, a recurring cognitive pattern, or a social channel through which misguidance spreads? *Tarjīh* principles push the interpreter to anchor claims in textual indicators, to compare parallel passages, and to avoid importing speculative details that distract from the Qur’an’s moral intent. This approach also helps adjudicate modern disputes in which “Satan” is used as a vague label for anything disliked. A disciplined reading requires specifying the warrant: Which textual features support the claim that a behavior is Satanic (e.g., incremental normalization, moral inversion, or incitement to injustice), and which features do not? By keeping the focus on evidence and coherence, *qawā'id*-based analysis preserves the Qur’anic goal of moral accountability while avoiding rhetorical overreach (Abbas, 2012; Setiawan, 2019).

3.2. Identify the Concept of a False God

Based on classical interpretations to identify the concept of false god, the researcher examines all verses of the Qur'an, hadith and scholars' views of various forms of deviation from pure faith. So in classical interpretation, false gods can take various forms, from monotheism, worship of inanimate objects, humans and other entities so that they can reflect deviations from the oneness of God. The scholars strongly emphasize the serious risks in associating Allah with others. It can be understood in classical interpretation, by having a warning that is not only a moral threat, but also a fundamental understanding in maintaining the faith or belief of Muslims.

This concept shows how important it is for Muslims to truly understand and purify monotheism and avoid all forms of exclusion (Al-Qurtubi, 1993). Classical interpretations also provide various examples of false gods that Islam avoids or affirms, For example, the idolatry that prevalent during the *Jahiliyah* period is described as a very dangerous deviation of belief. It can be elaborated with examples of classical interpretations giving a concrete and actionable view through the concept of false gods. It is very important to identify false gods in the context of overcoming the challenges and temptations of the modern world. Classical interpretation can provide views that are irrelevant to their time, but can be applied in everyday life (Al-Qurtubi, 1993).

By clearly identifying these false gods, Muslims can distance themselves from the deviations of their beliefs. Deviations of beliefs can manifest in many ways even in modern times, so classical interpretations can show that identifying false gods is a form of spiritual protection for Muslims. Through understanding, Muslims can inform them to be more critical and wary of various forms of deviation of faith that can damage the foundation of faith. A detailed analysis of classical interpretations reflects the urgency of deepening Islamic teachings. The findings of this study encourage Muslims to not only know but understand the teachings of their religion.

A deeper understanding of the concept of a false god can help Muslims strengthen their faith and religion. The clear identification of the concept of false gods in classical interpretation ultimately laid the foundation for the development of the spirituality of Muslims. In this understanding, it does not only protect the values of monotheism, which are the pillars of morality and ethics in daily life. Therefore, the results of this study make a significant contribution to the religious views and religious practices of Muslims.

One additional point from the comparative reading is that classical *tafsīr* implicitly differentiates between (a) the object of devotion (what is worshipped), (b) the channel of devotion (how worship or obedience is socially organized), and (c) the justification narratives that make deviation feel legitimate. ‘False god’ language often targets the first dimension, while *ṭāghūt* captures the second and third dimensions authority and governance of moral judgment. This distinction is analytically useful because contemporary forms of misguidance may not present themselves as explicit ‘idols,’ but as persuasive moral systems that claim to define right and wrong without accountable evidence. Semantic analyses of *ṭāghūt* emphasize this governance function and explain why the Qur'an frequently connects disbelief in *ṭāghūt* to moral liberation and clarity (Muhammin & Asif, 2017; Priastomo, 2020; Talafihah et al., 2017). In *tarjīh* terms, the interpreter should therefore test whether an interpretation reinforces *tawhīd* as both worship and authority, or whether it quietly transfers moral ultimacy to something else status, power, charisma, or desire.

3.3. The Relationship Between Satan and *Ṭāghūt* (False Authority)

Classical *tafsīr* often distinguishes between two layers of misguidance. The first layer is internal: Satanic whispering, doubt, and incremental normalization of disobedience. The second layer is external: structures of false authority that invite worship, loyalty, or obedience that properly belongs to God captured in the Qur'anic vocabulary of *ṭāghūt*. While exegetes may not always describe a literal ‘alliance’ between Satan and *ṭāghūt*, the interpretive pattern is consistent: Satan drives the psychological process of deviation, and *ṭāghūt* provides the social object or authority through which that deviation becomes publicly institutionalized (Al-Tabari, 1992; Al-Qurtubi, 1993). Modern semantic studies of *ṭāghūt* support this layered reading by showing that the term spans idols, tyrannical leadership, false legal arbitration, and agents of digression all of which can function as rival authorities that exploit human susceptibility (Muhammin & Asif, 2017; Priastomo, 2020; Talafihah et al., 2017).

A *qawā'id*-based synthesis helps clarify the relationship: it is primarily functional rather than metaphysical. In other words, the Qur'an does not need to posit that Satan and *ṭāghūt* coordinate in an ontological sense; it is sufficient to observe that they converge in outcome redirecting devotion, obedience, and moral judgment away from *tawhīd*. This is why classical exegetes repeatedly tie protection from Satanic influence to guarding the boundaries of worship and authority, especially when religious language is used to justify practices that the Qur'an frames as shirk or fisq (Al-Razi, 1990; Ibn Kathir, 2007). Contemporary discussions on Satan and evil similarly emphasize that ‘Satanic’ processes often appear as rationalizations embedded in social narratives, not only as private temptations (Awwaliyah & Tajuddin, 2024; Sakat et al., 2015). From a *tarjīh* perspective, the practical implication is to evaluate claims about religion by asking: Does this claim strengthen *tawhīd* and moral responsibility, or does it smuggle in rival authority under a sacred veneer?

3.4. Analysis of Related Key Verses

The scholars' view of the relationship between the devil and false gods is reflected through the exploration of classical interpretations of relevant verses of the Quran. One of the key verses that is the focus is in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:168):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا حُطُومَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۝ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Transliteration: Yā ayyuhā al-nāsu kulū mimmā fī al-arḍi ḥalālan ṭayyiban wa lā tattabi'ū khuṭuwāti al-shayṭān; innahu lakum 'aduwwun mubīn. Paraphrase: O people, consume what is lawful and wholesome on earth and do not follow Satan's footsteps—he is your clear enemy.

In classical interpretation, this verse is explained by scholars as a warning for people not only to pay attention to halal and good aspects in daily life but also to stay away from the steps of the devil. (Al-Tabari, 1992) This view underlines that the devil seeks to tempt people to forget the good and follow their path to evil. Another verse that focuses is in Surah Al-An'am (6:121):

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكُرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفَسْقٌ ۝ وَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَيُوحِي إِلَيْ أَوْلِيَائِهِ أَنْ يُجَادِلُوكُمْ ۝ وَإِنْ أَطْعَمْتُمُهُ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ

Transliteration: Wa lā ta'kulū mimmā lam yudhkar ismu Allāhi 'alayhi wa innahu la-fisq; wa inna al-shayāṭīna la-yūhūna ilā awliyā'ihim li-yujādilūkum, wa in aṭa'tumūhum innakum la-mushrikūn. Paraphrase: Do not consume what was not dedicated in God's name; it is disobedience. Devils inspire their allies to argue with you, and obeying them draws you into associationism.

Classical exegetes treat this verse as an ethical and epistemic warning: the prohibition is not merely dietary, but a reminder that Satanic influence often operates through plausible-sounding disputes, normalizing what is religiously prohibited and reframing disobedience as "reasonable" (Al-Tabari, 1992; Ibn Kathir, 2007). This interpretation fits a broader Qur'anic pattern in which Satan tempts humans by incremental steps first by doubt, then by justification, and finally by habitual practice (Silverstein, 2013; Sakat et al., 2015).

3.5. The Importance of Affirming Tawheed

Affirming tawhīd (the oneness of God) is a central thread in classical exegesis, because it functions as both theology and moral architecture. It anchors worship ('ibādah) exclusively to Allah, rejects all rival authorities in devotion, and provides the ethical compass by which Muslims evaluate impulses, social pressures, and competing claims of truth. In contemporary Islamic scholarship, tawhīd is also framed as a worldview that integrates belief, reason, and practice—a framework that can discipline interpretation and prevent the slide from legitimate reasoning into religious rationalization (Zakariya, 2019; Abbas, 2012). Classical commentators operationalize tawhīd through close reading of Qur'anic language, inter-verse coherence, and attention to how shirk (associating partners with God) is enabled by gradual concessions to "small" deviations that later become normalized (Al-Razi, 1990; Baehaqi et al., 2023).

وَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۝ لَا إِلَهٌ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

Paraphrase: Your God is One God there is no deity worthy of worship except Him, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

These kinds of verses underline the essence of monotheism, ensuring that Muslims understand that Allah is the only God worthy of worship. Classical interpretation leads us to understand the practical implications of this monotheistic belief. When one understands that God is the sole ruler of the universe, this has direct implications for everyday behavior. Scholars highlight that faith in monotheism is not only a theological concept, but must be reflected in all aspects of life, including ethics, morality, and social relationships. In classical interpretation, the rejection of false gods is also strongly emphasized. Verses that remind Muslims to stay away from worship of other than Allah are the subject of much emphasis on them. For example, in Surah Al-Ankabut (29:17):

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أُوْتَانَا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِنْكَارًا ۝ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ
وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاسْكُرُوا لَهُ ۝ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Paraphrase: You worship idols besides God and fabricate falsehood. Those you worship cannot provide for you; seek provision from God alone, worship Him, and be grateful to Him you will return (Al-Tabari, 1992; Al-Qurtubi, 1993).

This verse emphasizes that Muslims should not justify or engage in worship that is not in accordance with the principles of monotheism. The importance of affirming monotheism also appears in the context of protection against possible heresy and temptation of the devil. In classical interpretation, the emphasis on monotheism is considered a bulwark against the deceptions of the devil who seeks to tempt people to deviate from the right path. The scholars also highlight the great consequences of negligence in upholding monotheism. In many interpretations, it is emphasized that deviation from monotheism can bring serious consequences, including loss of blessings, spiritual confusion, and potential entry into disbelief.

The importance of affirming monotheism in classical interpretation also involves understanding that monotheism is not just an abstract doctrine, but is a practical foundation for building a just and moral society.

Muslims, by holding fast to monotheism, are reminded to build a social order that reflects the values of justice, compassion, and mutual respect. In this emphasis, classical tafsir scholars play an important role as guides who help Muslims understand and implement monotheism in their daily lives. Classical interpretation produces a practical guide for Muslims, emphasizing that monotheism is not only the basis of belief, but is also the main driver for positive change in actions and behavior.

Thus, through a search of classical interpretation, it is revealed that the importance of affirming monotheism is a solid basis in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings. In an effort to understand and apply monotheism, Muslims are given a deep understanding of the relationship with Allah, moral responsibility.

3.6. Relevance in contemporary life

The classical discussion of Satan and *ṭāghūt* remains relevant because it addresses enduring mechanisms of moral deviation rather than a time-bound set of cultural practices. Exegetes portray Satanic temptation as gradual and adaptive operating through doubts, plausibility, and social normalization an account that resonates with contemporary environments where persuasive messages are accelerated by digital platforms and emotionally charged narratives (Silverstein, 2013; Sakat et al., 2015). From this perspective, modern media is not 'the cause' of deviation, but a high-speed channel that can magnify the same incremental steps described in classical tafsīr. A disciplined interpretive method is therefore needed to prevent religious language from being weaponized for manipulation or moral inversion (Duderija, 2010).

Likewise, the Qur'anic concept of *ṭāghūt* is not limited to ancient idols; it also captures rival authorities that demand obedience or loyalty in ways that displace divine guidance. Semantic analyses show that *ṭāghūt* ranges across idols, propagandists of misguidance, and false legal arbitration meanings that map well onto contemporary forms of 'sacralized' authority, including charismatic influencers, coercive ideologies, or systems that claim moral legitimacy while normalizing injustice (Muhamin & Asif, 2017; Priastomo, 2020; Talafihah et al., 2017). In practical terms, this means that affirming *tawhīd* today requires vigilance not only against explicit worship of other-than-God, but also against subtler transfers of moral authority for example, treating popularity, consumer desire, or partisan loyalty as the final arbiter of right and wrong.

The 'footsteps' (*khuṭuwāt*) metaphor is especially useful for contemporary moral diagnosis. In digital information ecologies, harmful content rarely persuades by direct command; it persuades by sequencing small nudges that shift what feels normal, what feels permissible, and what feels 'obvious'. A *qawā'i*-informed reading treats this as an epistemic problem: when people repeatedly consume fragments that are stripped from context, they become vulnerable to selective quotation, semantic drift, and pseudo-arguments that mimic religious reasoning. Here, *tarjīh* principles coherence across verses, clarity of textual indicators, and restraint against interpretive excess operate as a practical safeguard for everyday media consumption (Abbas, 2012; Setiawan, 2019).

For religious education, the synthesis of Satan–*ṭāghūt* dynamics offers a concrete curriculum logic: strengthen *tawhīd* as a worldview, then train interpretive literacy so that learners can recognize Satanic rationalization and false-authority claims when they appear in everyday discourse. Studies on *tawhīd*-oriented learning emphasize that monotheism is not merely doctrinal; it shapes how believers evaluate claims, control desires, and translate faith into public ethics (Zakariya, 2019; Baehaqi et al., 2023). In this sense, *qawā'i*-based *tarjīh* functions as 'critical thinking' within a religious epistemology helping Muslims distinguish between legitimate difference of opinion and manipulative misuse of scripture (Abbas, 2012; Setiawan, 2019).

This educational angle also addresses contemporary psychological pressures. Classical tafsīr repeatedly links Satanic influence to emotional volatility fear, anger, envy, and despair because such states reduce moral deliberation and increase impulsive obedience to social cues. Modern discussions of Satan and evil in Qur'anic interpretation similarly highlight that 'Satanic' narratives can be internalized as self-justification, blame-shifting, or moral cynicism (Awwaliyah & Tajuddin, 2024; Sakat et al., 2015). A holistic approach therefore supports not only ritual piety, but also emotional regulation and ethical resilience, especially when online environments reward outrage and performative religiosity.

In the context of Islamic law and public ethics, classical tafsīr provides a foundation for understanding why *tawhīd* must inform social order: it prevents the substitution of arbitrary power for divine

normativity. The debates on *ijtihād* and authority remind us that renewal is possible, but it must be methodologically accountable otherwise ‘reform’ becomes another form of *ṭāghūt* that legitimizes itself without disciplined evidence (Hallaq, 1984; Duderija, 2010). Read through *qawā‘id tarjīh*, contemporary legal and ethical reasoning can remain flexible while still anchored in clear textual commitments: justice, the protection of faith and life, and the refusal to sacralize oppression.

Overall, classical exegesis can be read as a bridge between inherited Islamic intellectual heritage and the realities of modern life. By combining classical insights with a transparent set of preference rules, Muslims and scholars can better diagnose moral and epistemic threats whether they come as private temptations or as public claims of sacred authority. The relevance is therefore not nostalgic; it is practical: a *qawā‘id*-informed understanding of Satan and *ṭāghūt* strengthens ethical agency, protects *tawhīd* from semantic erosion, and supports a more critical, compassionate, and just engagement with contemporary society.

3.7. Extending the Verse Map: *Ṭāghūt*, Arbitration, and Epistemic Authority

Beyond the verses discussed above, two Qur’anic passages make the Satan–*ṭāghūt* linkage especially explicit. First, Q. 4:60 criticizes those who claim belief yet seek judgment (*taḥākum*) to *ṭāghūt* instead of God’s revelation, then adds that “Satan wants to lead them far astray.” Classical exegetes treat this as a warning about epistemic loyalty: error begins when a community transfers the authority to define truth from divine guidance to rival arbiters whether an idol, a tyrant, a soothsayer, or a social order that rewards injustice (Al-Tabari, 1992; Ibn Kathir, 2007). In other words, *ṭāghūt* is not only ‘what is worshipped’; it is also the process of legitimizing decisions and norms through non-divine authority when revelation is knowingly bypassed. This helps clarify why Satan and *ṭāghūt* appear together: Satan supplies the rationalizations (“this is more practical,” “this is our custom,” “this is the only realistic path”), while *ṭāghūt* provides the institutional endpoint where those rationalizations are codified.

Second, Q. 2:256–257 frames faith as a double movement: disbelieving in *ṭāghūt* and believing in God, followed by a contrast of guardianship (*walāyah*). God is the guardian of believers, bringing them from darkness into light, while *ṭāghūt* is the guardian of disbelievers, pulling them from light into darkness. Read holistically, this suggests that *ṭāghūt* functions as an alternative regime of moral and epistemic governance. The term therefore overlaps with what modern readers might call ‘authority structures’ systems that shape what people accept as normal, true, and permissible. Semantic studies underline this breadth by showing that *ṭāghūt* is used for idols, deviant leaders, false arbitration, and agents who invite people to cross the limits of God (Muhammin & Asif, 2017; Priastomo, 2020; Talafihah et al., 2017). This breadth is critical for contemporary application: a community may avoid explicit idol-worship yet still live under *ṭāghūt*-like guardianship if its moral decisions are effectively governed by coercion, propaganda, or sacralized human authority.

Once these passages are included, *Qawā‘id Tarjīh* can be operationalized into practical criteria for identifying *ṭāghūt* claims without reducing the concept to polemics. Based on the comparison of classical *tafsīr* and contemporary semantic analysis, at least four indicators recur. (1) Rival ultimacy: an authority demands final, unconditional loyalty in a way that competes with *tawhīd*. (2) False arbitration: decisions are routed to non-divine arbiters despite awareness of divine guidance, especially when such routing legitimizes injustice. (3) Moral inversion: prohibited acts are reframed as virtuous or necessary through selective evidence and semantic distortion. (4) Captive guardianship: the authority shapes the community’s moral imagination so that disobedience feels normal and obedience feels unreasonable. These indicators mirror the Qur’anic logic that Satan rarely begins with direct rebellion; rather, he engineers a cognitive pathway that ends in rival authority and public normalization (Silverstein, 2013; Sakat et al., 2015).

The contemporary usefulness of these criteria is straightforward. Many modern moral crises emerge not from a lack of information, but from contested authority: who defines truth, whose interpretation is trusted, and what counts as legitimate evidence. In digital settings, religious claims circulate rapidly with minimal accountability; audiences may encounter “scriptural arguments” that are actually rhetorical tactics fragmented quotation, emotional pressure, and identity-based coercion. A *tarjīh*-informed approach requires

slowing down the claim: locate the textual basis, test coherence across verses, compare with established exegetical reasoning, and ask whether the claim strengthens *tawhīd* and justice or functions as a shortcut to obedience (Abbas, 2012). This does not eliminate disagreement, but it raises the epistemic cost of manipulation: actors cannot easily smuggle *ṭāghūt*-like authority under a sacred label when the audience is trained to demand coherence and warrant.

At the same time, the *qawā‘id* lens also sets boundaries. Over-expanding *ṭāghūt* into a catch-all label for political opponents or intra-Muslim disagreement undermines the Qur'an's ethical intent and turns interpretation into factional weaponry. Classical legal-theological debates about authority and *ijtihād* highlight this risk: when interpretive discipline collapses, communities may replace divine normativity with the authority of a group, a leader, or a slogan—ironically reproducing the very *ṭāghūt* dynamic they claim to resist (Hallaq, 1984; Duderija, 2010). Therefore, a responsible application of the Satan–*ṭāghūt* synthesis must be paired with humility, methodological transparency, and an explicit commitment to justice and moral responsibility.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that a *qawā‘id* *tarjīh* approach can illuminate a coherent relationship between Satan and *ṭāghūt* in classical *tafsīr*. Across the examined exegetes, Satan is repeatedly framed as an internal mechanism of misguidance—whispering, doubt, and step-by-step normalization while *ṭāghūt* functions as the external ‘object’ or structure that absorbs devotion, obedience, and moral authority away from God. Read together, these two concepts explain why the Qur'an links ethical deviation to both psychological persuasion and rival authority claims. The analysis of key verses further indicates that Satanic influence often manifests as plausible disputes and semantic distortions that mimic legitimate reasoning, a pattern also noted in contemporary scholarship on Qur'anic concepts of Satan and evil.

The practical implication is interpretive and ethical. *Qawā‘id*-based preference rules provide a method for evaluating religiously framed claims: prioritize clear textual indicators, test coherence across verses, and resist interpretive excess that legitimizes harm. This is particularly relevant in contemporary information environments where selective quotation and algorithmic amplification can normalize moral deviation through ‘small’ steps. The Qur'anic semantic breadth of *ṭāghūt* covering idols, false arbitration, and agents of digression suggests that safeguarding *tawhīd* today includes scrutinizing modern forms of sacralized authority, including ideologies and charismatic voices that demand unconditional loyalty. In this sense, *tarjīh* is not only a scholarly technique; it is a form of public religious literacy that supports ethical resilience.

This study has limitations. It focuses on a purposive corpus of Sunni classical *tafsīr* and a selected set of verses; it does not cover the full range of exegetical traditions (e.g., Shi‘ī *tafsīr*, mystical *tafsīr*, or modern thematic *tafsīr*) nor does it map every occurrence of *ṭāghūt* and related terms across the Qur'an. The research is also textual rather than empirical; it does not directly measure how contemporary audiences interpret Satanic or *ṭāghūt* narratives in digital or political contexts. Future research can expand the corpus, include additional interpretive traditions, and apply computational or corpus-linguistic methods to trace semantic patterns of *al-shayṭān* and *ṭāghūt* across exegetical history. Further work could also test educational interventions that teach *qawā‘id*-informed interpretive literacy and evaluate their impact on ethical decision-making and resistance to manipulative religious rhetoric.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

HJA conceptualized the study, conducted textual analysis, and drafted the manuscript. HI contributed to theoretical framework development and critical revision. MNS and S assisted in literature review, source analysis, and manuscript editing. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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