

A Statistical Study of the Concepts of Mercy and Violence in the Meccan and Medinan Surahs: An Analysis of a Fallacy

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Abstract

One of the fallacies raised by some critics, especially orientalist, is that the Prophet of Islam's behavior underwent a fundamental change from the Meccan to the Medinan period. They claim that his messages in the Meccan period were peaceful and mercy-oriented, but in the Medinan period, upon gaining power, he adopted a violent approach, and this is evident in the Meccan and Medinan surahs. To investigate this issue, a statistical study was conducted comparing the frequency of concepts related to violence and mercy in the Meccan and Medinan surahs of the Quran. The phrases related to mercy and violence were scored, and then the obtained values were normalized for analysis. The results show that the values for violence-based concepts are (0.20) in the Meccan surahs and (0.19) in the Medinan surahs. Furthermore, the concepts related to mercy are (0.24) in the Medinan surahs and (0.21) in the Meccan surahs. These findings indicate that the raised claim is not only unverifiable but that during the Medinan period, which was a time of establishing and expanding the government, a greater emphasis on mercy is observed. The content differences between the Meccan and Medinan surahs are attributed to the historical and social circumstances of each period. These results highlight the need for a re-evaluation of such interpretations and for attention to statistical methods for the analysis of religious and historical concepts.

Keywords: Statistical Analysis, Mercy in the Quran, Violence in the Quran, The Prophet.

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Introduction

The Holy Quran, as the sacred book of Muslims, has long been at the center of research topics and is always considered a vast source for scientific investigations. On the other hand, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), as the recipient and conveyor of this divine message, has also been the subject of numerous studies. The Quran has been meticulously examined and evaluated from various aspects. Issues such as its source (divine revelation or the Prophet's creation), the dating of verses, linguistic and literary style, the content of its teachings, its application to contemporary conditions, and more have all been thoroughly investigated and analyzed by researchers (Syukron & Khairiyah, 2023; Elalami, 2022). In parallel with these studies, the Prophet of Islam has also been explored from different dimensions, such as his personality traits, historical and social role, and his performance in managing society (Khan & AL-olagi, 2022; Husni, 2022: 47-57). One of the topics that has sparked extensive debates among orientalist and critics of Islam is the issue of violence in the religion of Islam. This issue has been raised not only in the analysis of the Prophet's behavior but also in relation to the content of the Quran. It has been examined from various angles. For instance, some have claimed that Islam is a violent religion (Montesquieu, 1983 AD/1402 SH: 671), while others have described it as a religion of mercy (Baidowi et al, 2021; Alidoust, 2020 AD/1399 SH). Some have focused on the Quran itself, stating that it is a book of violence (Zunz & Kahan, 2002; Churchill, 2012). In contrast, others argue for its merciful nature (Makarem Shirazi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 21; Bani Talebi et al, 2024 AD/1403 SH). The same applies to the Prophet, with some introducing him as the Prophet of Mercy and others as a warmonger and a proponent of violence (Abbasi & Rezaei, 2024 AD/1385 SH: 3, 440-458). These are among the studies presented by researchers, each reaching their intended conclusion through different methods.

One of the prominent views about the Prophet is that at the beginning of his mission, due to the nascent state of Islam, he adopted a peaceful and conciliatory approach. According to this view, the Prophet (PBUH) during this period, in the face of pressures and threats from opponents, adopted behaviors based on patience, forgiveness, and tolerance, and refrained from any violent confrontation. However, in the Medinan period, when the Prophet gained more power and authority by establishing the Islamic state, his approach underwent a change according to some individuals like William Muir and Goldziher (Goldziher, 1978 AD/1357 SH: 33; Buaben, 1996: 35-42). Thus, this view presents the Prophet as contradictory in the two periods: a peaceful character in the Meccan period and a warmongering one in the Medinan period.

Those who believe that the Prophet turned to violence in the Medinan period due to his acquisition of power also extend their view to the content of the Quranic surahs. They believe that the content of the Meccan surahs is primarily focused on topics such as peace, calling for patience, mercy, and tolerance. In contrast, the Medinan surahs contain more verses about jihad, military matters, war, and similar issues (Dashti, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 182).

The issue that this research intends to address is the quantitative comparison of the presence of concepts related to violence and mercy in the Meccan and Medinan surahs. In other words, this research examines whether in the Meccan surahs, peaceful and merciful

concepts are more prominent, and in the Medinan surahs, with the expansion of Islamic power and the establishment of the Prophet's government, violent concepts are more prevalent. The present research is necessary because previous studies have mainly focused on interpretive and historical analyses and were limited to specific examples. This research, using statistical methods and data analysis, takes a new step to fill this research gap and helps clarify the changes in mercy and violence in the Quran during the two periods of Mecca and Medina.

1. Literature Review

A review of previous research shows that studies on the concepts of "Mercy" and "Violence" in the Holy Quran have generally been focused on qualitative analyses. Although some studies have adopted a statistical approach to examine Quranic concepts, there seems to be no statistical research on this specific topic. In this section, we will review some of the relevant research.

In a study titled "What Changed in Medina: The Place of Peace and War in the Life of Prophet Muhammad," the author states that the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) was peaceful in Mecca, and in Medina, the wars were primarily defensive and limited to 79 days out of his 8000 days of prophethood. The article focuses on debunking misconceptions about the relationship between Islam and violence and emphasizes the Prophet's role in establishing peace (Sertkaya, 2023).

Another article, "A Prophetic Stance against Violence: An Analysis of the Peaceful Attitude of Prophet Muhammad during the Medinan Period," also addresses this issue. The author states that the Prophet always preferred peace, forgiveness, and peaceful solutions in the face of tensions and harassment. Examples such as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah demonstrate his approach to avoiding conflict and maintaining peace (Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

Furthermore, Motahari in his book "Familiarity with the Quran" raises the point through verses that the Prophet had one character in both Mecca and Medina, and it is not the case that he followed one path in Mecca and changed his path in Medina (Motahari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 8, 279).

In another study titled "Behavioral Analysis of the Prophet of Islam against the Polytheists during the Meccan Invitation Period," the authors, using a descriptive-analytical approach and relying on historical and Quranic sources, have tried to examine the Prophet's behavior in the Meccan period. Their results show that the Prophet of Islam adopted a tolerant, patient, and lenient approach in dealing with the polytheists of Mecca. Despite repeated harassment and threats, he always preached faith, tolerance, forgiveness, and kindness. They also state that this kind of gentle and lenient behavior was influential in winning the hearts of many people and their inclination towards the religion of Islam (Mazaheri & Tarapi, 2016 AD/1395 SH).

Another article titled "Islam Is the Religion of Peace: Analytical Review from the life Of Holy Prophet (PBUH)" addresses and refutes accusations such as violence and terrorism in Islam by relying on Quranic teachings and the Prophet's life story. The authors, by citing the Prophet's behaviors, have shown that Islam is a peace-centered religion and the Prophet was

always a manifestation of mercy, tolerance, kindness, and good morals. They also emphasized, citing hadiths about suicide and extremism, that violence and creating chaos are condemned by God and are in conflict with Islamic teachings (Akhter & Qadoos, 2017).

In the article "Mercy in the Midst of Mayhem: Muhammad and the Origins of Islam," the author uses historical and interpretive sources to examine false views about the relationship between Islam and violence. According to the authors, the Prophet's actions were mostly a defensive reaction, and the message of the Quran emphasizes mercy, peace, and justice. Furthermore, concepts like jihad have been misinterpreted as violence-oriented (Miller, 2019).

A review of previous research revealed that no statistical study has been conducted to compare the concepts of mercy and violence in the Meccan and Medinan surahs.

2. Mercy and Violence

Mercy and violence are among the concepts that have taken on multiple meanings over time (Hazavaei, 2004 AD/1383 SH; Zarei, 2012 AD/1391 SH). In this research, these two concepts are examined from a Quranic perspective and in today's semantic context. In examining concepts such as violence and mercy, two semantic paths run parallel to each other: the path of violence, which is associated with harshness and roughness, the opposite of gentleness and softness (Dekhoda et al., 1994 AD/1373 SH: 6, 8630), and the path of mercy, which represents kindness, compassion, and pity (Dekhoda et al., 1994 AD/1373 SH: 7, 10520). These two concepts have always been in opposition in the history of human thought and are in a way two sides of the same coin.

Violence, in the terminology of the World Health Organization, is the use of force or power against an individual, group, or community that can lead to physical or psychological harm, deprivation, and even death (Krug et al., 2002). This comprehensive definition categorizes violence into four main dimensions: physical, psychological, sexual, and violence resulting from deprivation.

Based on the conducted studies, mercy, in a formal sense, does not have a specific definition. Therefore, in this research, everything that is the opposite of violence is considered mercy. Since the related verses were extracted and scored based on these terms, we will first define them in more detail and then examine their Quranic instances.

2.1. Types of Violence and Mercy

Physical violence includes any behavior that causes harm to a person's body. Beating, slapping, pushing, and similar injuries are among the clear examples of this type of violence (Bonamigo et al., 2022). In contrast, physical affection is defined as behaviors such as hugging, caressing, and expressing love through touch (Gulledge et al., 2004). Psychological violence is another type of violence that affects a person's psyche. This type of violence manifests in forms such as humiliation, blame, ridicule, threats, and creating a sense of worthlessness (Council of Europe, 2011). On the other hand, psychological affection can be considered the opposite of this type of violence. In other words, psychological mercy includes behaviors that strengthen a sense of worth and trust in individuals.

Sexual violence is a type of violence that includes any sexual behavior or act without the

consent of the individual (Vanwesenbeeck, 2008). In contrast, sexual mercy is the concept in which sexual relations are based on mutual respect, mutual consent, and love.

Another type of violence is violence from deprivation, which refers to a situation where individuals or groups are denied access to basic rights and essential needs of life such as food, housing, health, or education (Rios and Day, 2019 AD/1398 SH). In contrast, providing facilities and access to basic rights is considered a symbol of mercy in this context. In the next section, we will examine examples of mercy and violence in the Quran.

2.2. Mercy and Violence in the Quran

In the previous section, the categorization of violence and mercy based on their nature was explained. Given that the scoring of Quranic phrases was done based on this categorization, this section will examine their Quranic examples. It is worth noting that the extraction of behaviors related to violence and mercy from the Quran was carried out without considering the agent performing them.

In the Quran, physical violence is manifested in the verse, "They will not harm you except with a slight injury; and if they should fight you, they will turn their backs [in flight]. Then they will not be aided." (Āli 'Imrān: 111) "*Adhā*" in this verse means any kind of harm (Ben Ahmad et al., 1988 AD/1368 SH: 206). This verse promises Muslims that in war, their opponents will never be able to cause them serious harm, and their losses will be limited and insignificant. Injuries inflicted in war are considered a type of physical violence. In addition, concepts such as striking, killing, destruction, the drowning of Pharaoh in the sea, the beheading of the she-camel, the raining of stones on the people of Lot, the transformation of the people of the Sabbath, and similar cases also indicate physical violence.

Physical mercy includes concepts that are the opposite of physical violence, for example, in the verse, "And We saved him and his family, except for his wife; she was among those who remained behind," (al-A'rāf: 83) the phrase "And We saved him and his family" is in contrast to physical violence. This is because being saved is from a punishment that involves physical violence.

Psychological violence is evident in the verse "Woe to those who give less in measure." (al-Muṭaffifin: 1) The word "Woe" is threatening. Those who give less in measure are threatened in this verse. "Woe" here means evil or sorrow and grief or destruction or painful torment or a difficult and burning valley in hell, and this word is usually used when cursing and expressing the ugliness of something (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1994 AD/1373 SH: 244). Psychological mercy is like the verse "Indeed, Allah forgives all sins" in verse 53 of Surah *al-Zumar*, which opens the door of hope for sinners.

Deprivation is mentioned in various forms in the Quran. An example of this is the phrase "Preventing from the path of Allah," which in different verses indicates violence of deprivation. The verse "Indeed, those who disbelieved and avert [people] from the way of Allah and [from] al-Masjid al-Haram, which We made for the people - equal are the resident therein and the outsider - and [for] whoever intends therein deviation from the right conduct or wrongdoing, We will make him taste of a painful torment," (al-Ḥajj: 25) is related to the polytheists of Mecca who, in the early days of the prophecy, prevented believers from

entering the Masjid al-Haram (Tabatabaei & Mousavi, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 366). Preventing people from their path causes their deprivation, so it indicates violence of deprivation. In contrast, the verse "And it is He who feeds me and gives me drink" (al-Shu'arā': 79) is an instance of mercy of the benefit type, as food and drink are two important blessings in life.

Sexual violence in the Quran can include the verses of *lian*, *Īlā'*, *Zihār* and the like. For example, the phrase "And they keep your women alive" in verse 49 of Surah *al-Baqarah* can refer to sexual violence. Pharaoh would keep women to have sexual intercourse with them. An example of sexual mercy is verse 33 of Surah *al-Nūr*. The phrase "And do not compel your [slave] girls to prostitution, if they desire to be chaste," forbids compelling slave girls to have sexual relations. The prohibition of compelling slave girls to have sexual relations indirectly indicates mercy.

3. Research Method

In this section of the research, the research method will be explained in detail. To identify concepts related to violence and mercy in the Quran, initially, the first, middle, and last parts were examined as a test sample to determine the components, and then this method was applied to identify the concepts in the entire Quran. By examining these three parts, twelve primary components were extracted based on recurring indicators in the phrases and were selected for labeling phrases related to mercy and violence. Also, because the intensity of violence and mercy is not the same in all phrases, they were grouped into three levels: mild, moderate, and severe. These components were provided in a questionnaire to six experts¹ to place each component in one of the three levels of intensity: mild, moderate, and severe. Then, based on the average opinion of the experts, the weighting of the phrases was determined.

No	Component	Mild (Level 1)	Moderate (Level 2)	Severe (Level 3)
1	Any concept that is indirectly related to violence or mercy.			
2	Any phrase based on mercy or violence that has attributes indicating scarcity.			
3	Phrases that use the means of violence and mercy instead of the words themselves.			
4	Whenever violence and mercy are forbidden or negated in a phrase.			

1. The research methodology employed was developed with the approval of six specialists:

- Ghasem Darzi, Assistant Professor, Quranic Interdisciplinary Studies Research Institute
- Mostafa Moradi, Assistant Professor, Quranic Interdisciplinary Studies Research Institute
- Farzaneh Rouhani Mashhadi, Assistant Professor, Quranic Interdisciplinary Studies Research Institute
- Zahra Besharati, Assistant Professor, Quranic Interdisciplinary Studies Research Institute
- Mohammad Sadat Mansouri, Resident Researcher, Institute for Research in Philosophy and Wisdom, Iran
- Alireza Talabpour, Associate Professor, Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering, Artificial Intelligence Department, Shahid Beheshti University

For the scoring of violence and mercy, advisory input was used from Farhad Allahverdi, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Guilan.

No	Component	Mild (Level 1)	Moderate (Level 2)	Severe (Level 3)
5	Words that do not have the meaning of violence or mercy themselves but take on the concept of violence or mercy in context, or verses whose context indicates mercy or violence but are expressed metaphorically.			
6	Any concept that is explicitly related to mercy or violence.			
7	Any event that leads to salvation from death (mercy) or destruction (violence).			
8	Any phrase related to mercy or violence where an infinite or immeasurable amount is stated.			
9	Any phrase based on mercy or violence that has attributes indicating intensity or the action of completing or adding.			
10	In any phrase where the details of mercy or violence are expressed.			
11	In any phrase based on mercy or violence where tools of emphasis are used.			
12	Exclusive violence or mercy that belongs to one or more persons.			

Then, in this way, items one to five were placed under the mild level, item six under the moderate level, and items seven to twelve under the severe level.

3.1. Quantification

As mentioned, the World Health Organization's classification was used to quantify the concepts. To elaborate, each phrase is rated based on the intensity of its impact. Level three is dedicated to physical and sexual violence, as in criminology, physical and sexual violence are considered the most severe types of violence (Dadestan, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 40; Jones, 2000: 139). In the Quran, these types of violence are mainly discussed in the concepts of hell, war, and jihad.

Another type of violence is related to psychological harm and verbal violence. Psychological-verbal violence occurs in the form of threats, humiliation, insults, and similar issues. These types of violence have a destructive effect on a person's psyche, but their severity and the punishment for them are generally less than for physical injuries. For this reason, we considered level two for these types of violence. Level one is for deprivation violence, which typically causes less harm than physical and psychological violence. For example, deprivation of rights or opportunities can be a type of violence, but its harm is usually less than that of physical or psychological violence. Of course, it should be noted that physical and sexual violence may not necessarily cause more harm than verbal and deprivation violence in every single case, but this is the case in most instances, and the way violence is punished in law and criminology also supports this claim.

Another important point in this research is the overlap of some types of violence. For example, a phrase might include both physical and psychological violence. For more clarity,

worldly and otherworldly violence have been separated. Otherworldly violence, such as the threat of hell or deprivation of paradise, is placed at level two and in the category of psychological violence.

3.1.1. Scoring

This section explains how to score Quranic phrases. Scoring in this research means a positive or negative number assigned to a phrase. This score is also assigned to each verse and surah, which will be explained with an example.

1. First, verses that address the topics of violence and mercy are extracted from the Quran.
2. In the next step, the type of violence and mercy is determined. In other words, this step answers the question of which type of violence or mercy each Quranic phrase related to violence or mercy refers to.
3. In the third step, the level of violence and mercy is determined; the level refers to the levels mentioned in the previous section, namely mild, moderate, and severe. Coefficients of 1, 2, and 3 are considered for each level, respectively. Each phrase related to violence or mercy will receive one of these coefficients, and the number of phrases at the specified level is multiplied.
4. Since different levels are considered for each type of violence and mercy, the fourth step is to multiply the value obtained in the previous step (according to the level of each phrase) by the degree of the type of violence it has. In other words, the obtained value, if related to physical violence or mercy, is multiplied by three, for psychological and verbal violence or mercy it is multiplied by two, and for deprivation or benefit it is multiplied by one.

A single verse might contain several types of violence or mercy; therefore, after calculating the amount of violence and the amount of mercy separately, the sum of each gives the score for violence and mercy. To measure the dominance of violence or mercy in the verse, the value obtained from the violent phrases is subtracted from the value obtained from the merciful phrases, and the result is considered the verse's score. For example, we will explain verse 8 of *Isrā'*, which you can see in the table below. According to the method explained, after extracting the verses, the nature of violence and mercy in the phrases of the verse must be determined. In this verse, the two phrases "And if you return, We will return. And We have made Hell for the disbelievers a prison" are based on psychological violence, and "It may be that your Lord will have mercy upon you" is based on psychological mercy.

In the next step, the level of violence and mercy of the phrase must be identified. In the verse, there are two phrases based on violence at moderate and severe levels and one phrase based on mercy at a moderate level. In the fourth step, we multiply the number of phrases by their level. The mentioned verse has two phrases based on violence at moderate and severe levels. The number of each phrase is multiplied by the said level. Their sum shows the violence score. We also do the same to get the mercy score of the verse. To get the dominance of mercy and violence in the verse, the violence score is subtracted from the mercy score.

Table 1

Violence						Verse	Verse Address	Number
Physical and Sexual Violence (Degree Three)								
Severe		Moderate		Mild				
No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase			
						"It may be that your Lord will have mercy upon you. And if you return, We will return. And We have made Hell for the disbelievers a prison."	Al-Isrā': 8	

Violence										
Deprivation (Degree One)				Psychological Violence (Degree two)						
Mild		Moderate		Severe			Mild		Moderate	
No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase		No.	Phrase		
				1	And We have made Hell for the disbelievers a prison.		1	And if you return, We will return.		

Mercy								Violence	
Psychological Mercy (Degree Two)				Physical Mercy (Degree Three)				Deprivation (Degree One)	
Mild		Severe		Moderate		Mild		Severe	
No.	Phrase			No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase

Mercy									
Benefit (Degree One)					Psychological Mercy (Degree Two)				
Severe		Moderate		Mild	Severe		Moderate		
No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase	No.	Phrase
								1	It may be that your Lord will have mercy upon you.

Result	Verse Score	
	Violence	Mercy
6	10	4

In summary, the method used in this research is an innovative quantitative model designed to measure the amount of violence and mercy in Quranic verses. This method, by considering the intensity and type of violence and mercy, provides the possibility of quantitative and comparative analysis and, by assigning weighted coefficients, increases the reproducibility of the results.

3.2. Surah Predominance

The predominance of a surah means determining the dominance of mercy or violence in each

surah. In this process, the amount of mercy and violence in each surah is examined, and then by assigning scores to these concepts, the algebraic sum of the scores of each surah is calculated. This algebraic sum indicates the predominance of one of them in the surah. For example, in Surah *al-Muzzammil*, after extracting concepts related to mercy and violence and scoring them, it was determined that the surah has a total of 62 points for mercy and 52 points for violence. The surah's predominance is obtained by the algebraic sum of the violence and mercy scores. In Surah *Al-Muzzammil*, with 10 points, mercy is predominant. In this research, similarly, the predominance of different surahs of the Quran was obtained in the same way.

3.3. Normalization

To compare the values based on mercy and violence in the surahs, normalization must be performed. The normalization process was done in two ways. The first method is for comparing the values of mercy, violence, and predominance in the Meccan and Medinan surahs. This is because Meccan and Medinan surahs differ in length, so to be able to compare the amount of mercy and violence concepts in these surahs, normalization is performed. For this purpose, the total scores of mercy in the Meccan surahs were first calculated. This value was then divided by the number of words in the verses of the Meccan surahs to get the mercy score relative to the volume of the Meccan surahs. This process was also carried out for the Medinan surahs; the total mercy score in the Medinan surahs was divided by the total number of words in the Medinan surahs. This process was similarly performed to compare the values of violence and predominance in the surahs. The second method is for comparing the dispersion of mercy, violence, and predominance in the Meccan and Medinan surahs. In this normalization, the number of words is considered a criterion for the size of the surah. Normalization is done by dividing the score obtained from each surah by the number of words in the verses of each surah.

4. Analysis

In this section, the data results are presented using various charts to provide a better understanding of the research findings.

4.1. Comparison of Violence-based Concepts in Meccan and Medinan Surahs

Chart (1)

According to the chart, the normalized violence value is 0.20 in the Meccan surahs and 0.19 in the Medinan surahs. This statistic shows that violence exists almost to the same extent in both categories of surahs, and the difference is only 0.01. This slight difference indicates that the violent content is slightly more in the Meccan surahs than in the Medinan ones.

There are common violent concepts in both categories of Meccan and Medinan surahs. These concepts include the description of otherworldly punishments for disbelievers and deniers (*al-Ghāshīyah*: 2-7; *Āli 'Imrān*: 88), a reference to their painful fate on the Day of Judgment, etc. (*al-Mursalāt*: 18-43; *al-Mā'idah*: 80). On the other hand, the Meccan surahs contain violence that is not found in the Medinan surahs. In this period, the emphasis on divine warnings and threats for the polytheists of Mecca is very prominent. In other words, a detailed and recurring description of punishments in the Meccan surahs is very noticeable,

such as burning in fire (al-Mu'minūn: 104), drinking boiling water (al-Naba': 25), and physical torture (Ibrāhīm: 50), which are prominent features of these surahs. Also, direct cursing and damnation of the polytheists and deniers, in response to their harassment of the Prophet (al-Masad: 1), is expressed in these surahs. The emphasis on the destruction of previous nations and the threat to the polytheists of Mecca with a similar fate is another example of violent concepts specific to the Meccan surahs that are consistent with the context of opposition and pressures from the polytheists (al-Shu'arā': 10-191 and al-Qaṣaṣ: 59).

In contrast, the Medinan surahs contain violence that has more legal, social, and military aspects and is not seen in the Meccan surahs. In these surahs, the rulings of jihad and war (al-Anfāl: 41), punishment laws for crimes such as adultery (al-Nūr: 2), theft (al-Mā'idah: 38), and murder (al-Baqarah: 178) are mentioned.

In Mecca, Muslims were a minority and under pressure from the polytheists. In such a context, verses with a threatening and warning nature played an important role in instilling fear in the hearts of opponents and strengthening the resilience of Muslims. But in Medina, with the formation of a government, the violent content was more dedicated to executive and social issues.

4.2. Comparison of Mercy-based Concepts in Meccan and Medinan Surahs

Chart (2)

According to the chart, the normalized mercy value to the total words is 0.21 in the Meccan surahs and 0.24 in the Medinan surahs. These numbers show that the difference in mercy-based concepts in the Meccan and Medinan surahs is not great, and the difference is only 0.23. However, a study of the content of the surahs suggests that the type of mercy differs in the Meccan and Medinan surahs. In the Medinan surahs, where the audience is mainly Muslims, the merciful concepts are more based on social issues and human relations. In these surahs, mercy is emphasized in areas such as supporting the oppressed (al-Nisā': 75), respecting made treaties (al-Anfāl: 72), being kind to orphans, family rights (al-Baqarah: 233), freeing slaves (al-Nūr: 33), and other matters. For example, in Surah An-Nisa', the rights of orphans and the importance of respecting women's rights in the family, etc., are emphasized (al-Nisā': 2-10, 127-130).

In contrast, in the Meccan surahs, mercy-based concepts are more related to individual and spiritual dimensions. In these surahs, since the Muslims in Mecca were under severe harassment and pressure, God has emphasized strengthening individual faith and morale. For example, God's merciful promises to those who believed in those circumstances and God's consolation to the Prophet in the face of injustice are among the mercies observed in the Meccan surahs. For instance, in Surah Ash-Sharh, God reminds the Prophet (PBUH) of His blessings to console him.

4.3. Comparison of the Dispersion of Violence-based Values in Meccan and Medinan Surahs

Chart (3)

This chart shows the normalized violence values based on the number of words in each surah. From the beginning of the chart to Surah *al-Qamar*, many fluctuations are observed. The

dispersion of violence is highest in surahs such as *al-Takāthur*, *al-Masad*, *al-Qāri'ah*, *al-Qīyāmah*, and *al-Kawthar* among the Meccan surahs, while in surahs like *al-Fātiḥa* and *Quraysh*, there are no concepts based on violence. The trend of the chart shows that from Surah Sad to Surah *al-Baqarah*, the dispersion of violence continues almost uniformly. After Surah *al-Baqarah*, with the start of the Medinan surahs, violence gradually decreases and reaches zero in Surah *al-Naṣr*. After that, up to Surah *al-Tawbah* (the last surah), violence is used to a small extent compared to other surahs. Surah Muhammad has the highest amount of violence among the Medinan surahs, and Surah *al-Kawthar* has the highest violence among the Meccan surahs.

4.4. Comparison of the Dispersion of Mercy-based Concepts in Meccan and Medinan Surahs

Chart (4)

Chart number four shows the normalized values of mercy concepts based on the number of words in each surah. From the beginning of the chart to Surah *al-Qīyāmah*, the values related to mercy concepts are significantly high in the surahs. Surahs such as *al-Fātiḥa*, *al-Ḍuḥā*, *al-Sharḥ*, *al-'Aṣr*, *al-Kawthar*, *al-Ikhlāṣ*, and *Quraysh* are among the surahs that have caused an increase in the chart's fluctuations in this time frame. After that, the chart trend shows that from Surah *al-Qīyāmah* to Surah *al-Ḥashr*, the concepts of mercy are distributed almost similarly. In other words, in the Meccan surahs, from the beginning of the chart until before Surah *al-Qīyāmah*, values based on mercy concepts are noticeably observed. But from Surah *al-Qīyāmah* to Surah *al-Muṭaffifīn* (the last Meccan surah), the distribution of mercy concepts becomes more balanced. After Surah *al-Baqarah*, which is the first Medinan surah, until Surah *al-Ḥashr*, this trend continues, and the dispersion of mercy concepts in the surahs is observed to be almost regular. In Surah *al-Naṣr*, the chart line increases sharply, but after that, the values of mercy concepts remain almost stable. Among the Meccan surahs, Surah *Quraysh* has the most mercy-related concepts, and in the Medinan surahs, Surah *al-Naṣr* has the highest amount of mercy concepts.

4.5. Quantitative Comparison of the Dominance of Violence-Based and Mercy-Based Concepts

Chart (5)

Chart Number 5 shows the dominance of mercy or violence in the surahs. From the beginning of the chart up to Surah *Quraysh*, there is significant fluctuation, with mercy being dominant in most surahs. From Surah *al-Qāri'ah* to Surah *al-Ḥashr*, the fluctuation decreases. Surahs *Quraysh*, *al-Naṣr*, and *al-Sharḥ* have the highest dominance of mercy, while Surahs *al-Humazah*, *al-Takāthur*, and *al-Masad* have the highest dominance of violence. From Surah *al-Naṣr* to the end of the Quran, the majority of surahs are also dominated by mercy.

Therefore, as the chart indicates, most of the early surahs of the Quran are based on mercy. However, even among those surahs, the dominance of violence is also observed, meaning it is not the case that only mercy is employed throughout. Furthermore, what the chart's trend line reveals is that mercy-based and violence-based concepts are used in the surahs in a nearly equal proportion statistically, and their difference is close to zero.

5. Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of the Ratio of Mercy and Violence in Meccan and Medinan Surahs

One of the fallacies that has been repeatedly raised throughout history in criticism of the Prophet of Islam's (PBUH) behavior is the issue of the apparent change in his way of interacting with opponents. Critics, especially in contemporary Western-centric analyses, believe that the Prophet showed a peaceful, tolerant, and moral face in the Meccan period, but after migrating to Medina and gaining political and military power, he underwent a behavioral transformation and changed from a peaceful character to a warmongering leader inclined to use violence. According to this group, such a change is a sign of the influence of social position on the Prophet's religious behavior. This view is based on the premise that the violent themes in the Medinan surahs have significantly increased compared to the Meccan surahs. Accordingly, such an interpretation suggests that in the Meccan period, due to the lack of political and military power of the Muslims, the Prophet (PBUH) was forced to advance his mission with soft and rhetorical tools such as patience, tolerance, and good news. But in Medina, with the acquisition of power and the formation of an independent social-political structure, the conditions for exercising power and resorting to violence were created, and this is reflected in the tone and content of the Medinan surahs. Although this analysis might seem convincing at first glance from a sociological and psychological perspective of power, a proper judgment about it requires a more accurate, scientific, and impersonal examination. In particular, statistical and data-driven analyses can be helpful in a more precise comparison of the Quran's content; because, unlike qualitative methods that are mostly based on subjective and interpretive perceptions, statistical analyses, by relying on numerical data, have a higher capacity for verification, reproducibility, objectivity, and comparability. In this regard, a statistical study on the content of the Meccan and Medinan surahs was conducted to check the validity of this claim. The criterion for this analysis was to measure the frequency and prevalence of concepts related to violence (such as jihad, retribution, punishment, cursing, war, penalty, etc.) and concepts related to mercy (such as forgiveness, mercy, peace, pardon, kindness, guidance, good news, etc.) in the two categories of Meccan and Medinan Quran. The main goal was to clarify whether, with the change in the Prophet's social status, a truly noticeable change occurred in the frequency of violent concepts relative to merciful concepts or not. Based on the data from this study, the ratio of violent concepts in the Meccan surahs was found to be 0.20 and in the Medinan surahs 0.19. This negligible difference (only 0.01) not only does not indicate an increase in violent concepts in the Medinan period but even suggests a slight decrease. On the other hand, the merciful concepts were estimated to be 0.21 in the Meccan surahs and 0.24 in the Medinan surahs. This finding clearly shows that the concepts of mercy gained a more prominent position in the Quran even after the formation of the Islamic government and the beginning of military conflicts. Significant results were also obtained from the qualitative analysis of the content of the verses. In the Meccan surahs, violent concepts are mainly expressed in the form of divine warnings to disbelievers, the promise of otherworldly punishment, the threat of punishment in the hereafter, cursing the Prophet's enemies, and the manifestations of polytheism. In this period, the Prophet and his followers were a minority and lacked executive and military power; therefore, these themes

had a more rhetorical function, strengthening faith and motivating patience and steadfastness in the face of pressures and torture. In the Medinan surahs, similar concepts are reflected in a more executive and legal form. For example, verses related to jihad, the rulings of retribution, the punishment of criminals, defense against enemies, and the organization of the social and political structure of the community are symbols of the emergence of concepts that were previously expressed in a general way. However, this change can be explained not in terms of the intensity of violence, but in terms of social function. The nascent Islamic community in Medina needed legislation, legitimate defense, a criminal system, and a judicial structure for its survival and internal organization, and such needs were answered in the form of Medinan verses. Therefore, the increase in legal and military content in Medina is not a sign of a propensity for violence or a change in the Prophet's ideology, but a symbol of executive rationality and the natural evolution of a society in the process of stabilization. The Prophet in this period still emphasizes mercy, pardon, tolerance, and a peaceful call, and these concepts are seen with greater frequency in the Medinan surahs. In other words, although violent concepts such as combat, legal punishments, etc., were considered in the Medinan period, in contrast, many merciful and gentle concepts related to believers and even non-believers were also addressed, something that would not have been meaningful in the Meccan period without the Prophet's (PBUH) significant social status. The results of this statistical and qualitative analysis seriously and numerically refute the fallacy of the Prophet's change of behavior from peace to violence. Thus, contrary to reductionist interpretations, the Prophet's (PBUH) character from the beginning to the end of his mission was characterized by coherence, moderation, and purposefulness. The concepts of mercy and violence in the Quran were used within a divine framework and with consideration for the time and place requirements, not based on a change in the Prophet's character or beliefs. Furthermore, even in verses that refer to war and combat, principles such as legitimate defense, justice in war, prohibition of aggression, the necessity of observing ethics even on the battlefield, and the recommendation for reconciliation have always been paramount. Numerous verses invite Muslims to pardon and forgiveness, good deeds in the face of evil, and preferring peace over conflict. These teachings, whether in Mecca or Medina, show the continuity and stability of moral principles in the Islamic call. Ultimately, the claim of a change in the Prophet's behavior can only be acceptable if statistical and content-based evidence points to a fundamental and substantive change in Quranic themes; while the findings of this research prove the opposite. What some critics call "Religious Violence" in the Medinan period is, in fact, part of the legal and defensive organization of a newly emerging society, not a sign of a change in the character or fundamental values of the religion of Islam. In total, the present analysis, using a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative), showed that the ratio of violence and mercy concepts in the Meccan and Medinan surahs not only does not confirm the claim of a change in the Prophet's orientation but also indicates the stability of the Quranic approach. The change in the form and structure of the themes was in line with the natural developments of a developing society and cannot be considered a sign of a personal or value-based change in the Prophet of Islam. Therefore, a correct understanding of religion and the history of early Islam requires a more precise, realistic, and scientific perspective.

Conclusion

Based on the statistical research conducted and the examination of the concepts of mercy and violence in the Meccan and Medinan surahs, although some critics, especially orientalists, claim that the Prophet, upon gaining power in the Medinan period, adopted a violent approach and that the content of the Quran in this period is more focused on violence, this research does not confirm this. The results show that the amount of violence-based concepts in the Meccan surahs (0.20) is slightly more than in the Medinan surahs (0.19). On the other hand, the concepts of mercy in the Medinan surahs (0.24) are more than in the Meccan surahs (0.21). These numbers show that there is no significant difference between the two periods in terms of the amount of violence or mercy, but rather the amount of mercy in the Medinan period was even slightly more.

In addition, a qualitative analysis of these concepts reveals interesting content differences. In the Meccan period, when Muslims were a minority and under severe pressure from the polytheists, violence-based concepts are more often seen in the form of divine warnings, descriptions of otherworldly punishments, and debates with the polytheists. But in the Medinan period, when the government was formed and there was a need for social and legal order, violent concepts were presented in the form of legal and military rulings. These changes are more indicative of the Quran's adaptation of its content to the social and historical conditions of that period.

On the other hand, the concepts of mercy are prominently present in both periods, but they find new manifestations in the Medinan surahs. In Medina, the emphasis on concepts such as pardon and forgiveness, observing economic justice, supporting the oppressed, being kind to orphans, family rights, and social rulings like freeing slaves, indicates the expansion of the practical application of mercy in social and governmental life. This is while in the Meccan surahs, the concepts of mercy were more about consoling the Prophet, divine promises to believers, and calling for patience and steadfastness in the face of difficulties.

Therefore, based on these findings, the claim of a fundamental change in the Quran's content from mercy to violence in the Medinan period is not only not confirmed but evidence suggests that it was always adjusted to suit the conditions, needs, and audience of each period and has always emphasized guidance and mercy. These results show that to analyze religious and historical concepts more accurately and deeply, it is essential to pay attention to the historical and social context and to use statistical methods. One of the challenges of the present research is that concepts related to violence in this world and the hereafter was not compared separately. Due to the complexity of separating these two types of violence in the Quran, it is suggested that this distinction be considered in future research.

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