



The Conceptualization of Journey in Surah Al-Baqarah: A Cognitive Semantic Study

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the importance of understanding conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an as a means of representing human experience and constructing abstract meaning. One of the dominant metaphors is the concept of journey, particularly in Surah al-Baqarah, which contains various representations of human spiritual, moral, social, and physical human experiences. This study aimed to analyze the conceptual metaphor of journey in Surah al-Baqarah using a cognitive semantic approach based on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques in the form of documentation and identification of lexicons related to the concept of journey in Surah al-Baqarah. The data were analyzed through source-domain and target-domain mapping to identify conceptual relations and meaning classifications. The findings revealed 23 verses containing seven major lexical forms associated to the concept of journey. These data were then classified into four conceptual domains: spiritual, moral, social, and physical. The analysis showed that the concept of journey in Surah al-Baqarah does not merely refer to physical movement, but also functions as a conceptual framework representing guidance, struggle, responsibility, morality, social solidarity, and divine ease. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic mapping of the concept of journey as a major cognitive structure in Surah al-Baqarah. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of cognitive semantic studies of the Qur'an and provide implications for more contextual and interdisciplinary approaches to Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic studies.

Keywords: Al-Baqarah, Conceptual Metaphor, Cognitive Semantics, Journey, Meaning Mapping

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya memahami metafora konseptual dalam Al-Qur'an sebagai sarana untuk merepresentasikan pengalaman manusia dan membangun makna yang bersifat abstrak. Salah satu metafora yang dominan adalah konsep perjalanan, khususnya dalam Surah al-Baqarah yang memuat berbagai gambaran mengenai pengalaman spiritual, moral, sosial, dan fisik manusia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis metafora konseptual perjalanan dalam Surah al-Baqarah menggunakan pendekatan semantik kognitif berdasarkan Teori Metafora Konseptual Lakoff dan Johnson. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa dokumentasi dan identifikasi leksikon yang berkaitan dengan konsep perjalanan dalam Surah al-Baqarah. Data dianalisis melalui pemetaan ranah sumber dan ranah sasaran untuk mengetahui relasi konseptual serta klasifikasi maknanya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat 23 ayat yang memuat tujuh bentuk leksikal utama terkait perjalanan. Data tersebut kemudian diklasifikasikan ke dalam empat ranah konseptual, yaitu spiritual, moral, sosial, dan fisik. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa konsep perjalanan dalam Surah al-Baqarah tidak hanya bermakna perpindahan secara fisik, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai kerangka konseptual yang menggambarkan petunjuk, perjuangan, tanggung jawab, moralitas, solidaritas sosial, dan



kemudahan dari Allah. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada pemetaan konsep perjalanan secara sistematis sebagai struktur kognitif utama dalam Surah al-Baqarah. Temuan penelitian ini diharapkan dapat berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian semantik kognitif Al-Qur'an serta memberikan implikasi bagi pendekatan tafsir yang lebih kontekstual dan interdisipliner dalam studi Islam.

Kata kunci: *Al-Baqarah, Metafora Konseptual, Pemetaan Makna, Perjalanan, Semantik Kognitif*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language does not merely function as a communication tool, but also as the primary medium through which humans conceptualize and construct reality. Within cognitive semantics, language is understood as a reflection of human conceptual systems and embodied experience rather than simply as a neutral collection of signs. One of the central mechanisms in this conceptualization process is conceptual metaphor, namely the understanding of abstract concepts through more concrete experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Through this mechanism, humans commonly conceptualize life, struggle, goals, morality, and spiritual transformation using experiential schemas such as movement, direction, path, and journey. Recent studies have further demonstrated that conceptual metaphors are deeply connected to cognition, emotion, and social meaning construction across linguistic and cultural contexts (Doquin de Saint Preux & Masid Blanco, 2021; Alwan, 2025). In religious discourse, conceptual metaphors also function as cognitive instruments that shape how humans interpret spiritual experiences and moral realities (Muhajir et al., 2021; Shahiditabar et al., 2025).

In the Qur'an, the concept of journey appears not merely as a form of physical movement, but also as a representation of spiritual, existential, moral, and social transformation. Expressions related to guidance, deviation, return, path, and movement repeatedly emerge as conceptual structures that shape the Qur'anic worldview regarding human life and divine orientation. Surah al-Baqarah, as the longest surah in the Qur'an, contains various narratives concerning faith, law, community formation, trials, obedience, and divine guidance, all of which are closely associated with movement and directionality. This indicates that the journey schema functions not as an isolated linguistic ornament, but as a systematic cognitive framework underlying the representation of human experience in the Qur'an (Ahmed & Li, 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Djamdjuri et al., 2022; Fauzi, 2022). The repeated occurrence of journey-related

expressions across different thematic contexts also suggests that the Qur'an consistently employs movement-based conceptualization to construct abstract religious meanings.

Based on this gap, the present study positions itself to offer a new reading of Surah al-Baqarah by treating journey as the main metaphorical domain. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to systematically map how the concept of journey functions not merely as a set of lexical variations, but as a conceptual framework that connects various domains of meaning in the Qur'an. By employing a cognitive semantic approach and conceptual metaphor theory, this study not only identifies linguistic expressions related to journey, but also traces how mappings between concrete experience such as moving, walking a path, heading toward destination and abstract concepts such as faith, guidance, trial, struggle, and inner transformation are consistently constructed in the text.

The objective of this study is to identify, analyze, and classify the forms of journey conceptualization in Surah al-Baqarah. More specifically, this study aims to explain how journey-related expressions are represented linguistically, how their conceptual meanings are constructed through metaphorical mappings, and how these mappings generate spiritual, moral, social, and physical conceptual domains. This study contributes theoretically to the development of cognitive semantic studies on Qur'anic discourse by demonstrating how journey metaphor operates as a systematic conceptual structure that organizes multiple dimensions of meaning within the Qur'an. Practically, this study is expected to provide a broader interpretative perspective for understanding the existential and spiritual dimensions of Qur'anic language.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a descriptive-analytical orientation within the framework of cognitive semantics. The study applied Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) to examine how journey-related expressions in Surah al-Baqarah represent conceptual mappings between concrete and abstract domains. The cognitive semantic approach was used to analyze linguistic expressions not only at the lexical level but also at the conceptual level through source-domain and target-domain mappings. In this study, journey was conceptualized as a conceptual schema that represents various dimensions

of human experience, including spiritual, moral, social, and physical aspects. To maintain interpretative consistency within Qur'anic studies, the linguistic analysis was supported by Tafsir Ibn Kathir as the primary exegetical reference.

The primary data source of this study was Surah al-Baqarah from the Standard Indonesian Qur'an published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The data consisted of verses containing journey-related conceptual elements. The research instrument used in this study was the researcher herself, supported by documentation techniques, conceptual metaphor theory, and the Quranic Arabic Corpus as an auxiliary linguistic resource for identifying relevant lexical items. Data collection was conducted through documentation and keyword-based searches of lexemes associated with movement, direction, path, return, and goal orientation. Through this process, 23 verses containing seven principal lexemes namely *sabīl*, *ṣirāṭ*, *al-rusyd*, *safar*, *turja'ūna*, *mashaw*, and *jā'ilun* were identified and selected based on their contextual and metaphorical relevance.

The data analysis was carried out through several stages. First, each verse was interpreted contextually by referring to Tafsir Ibn Kathir to ensure interpretive accuracy. Second, the literal meanings of the identified lexemes were examined as the basis for conceptual interpretation. Third, conceptual metaphor analysis was conducted by mapping the relationship between source domains, such as movement, path, direction, destination, and obstacles, and target domains related to spiritual, moral, social, and existential meanings. Fourth, the conceptual relations among the identified expressions were examined to determine how journey functions as a broader metaphorical structure in Surah al-Baqarah. Finally, all findings were classified into four major conceptual domains of journey: spiritual journey, moral journey, social journey, and physical journey.

The validity and credibility of the data were ensured through theoretical triangulation and source triangulation. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by integrating cognitive semantic analysis, conceptual metaphor theory, and Qur'anic interpretative approaches, while source triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of linguistic analysis with explanations found in Tafsir Ibn Kathir. These procedures were applied to ensure that the findings remained linguistically systematic, conceptually coherent, and academically reliable within the field of Qur'anic studies.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the examination of Surah al-Baqarah, this study identified 23 verses containing the concept of journey represented by seven main lexemes, namely *صِرَاطِ السَّبِيلِ*, *رَجَعِ*, *مَشَوْا*, and *جَاعِلِ*. All of these data are then classified into four conceptual domains: spiritual, moral, social, and physical. The classification results showed that the spiritual domain was the most dominant category, comprising 13 verses. The social domain consisted of 5 verses, the moral domain comprised 3 verses, and the physical domain included 2 verses. This distribution indicates that the concept of journey in Surah al-Baqarah is predominantly used to represent human spiritual processes.

In brief, the results of the data classification are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Classification of Journey Metaphors in Surah al-Baqarah

No	Domain	Lexical Data	Number of Verses	Verse Numbers
1	Spiritual	رَجَعِ, السَّبِيلِ, صِرَاطِ, سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ	13	18, 108, 142, 154, 190, 195, 213, 217, 218, 244, 246, 261, 281
2	Moral	مَشَوْا, جَاعِلِ, الرَّشْدِ	3	20, 30, 256
3	Social	ابْنِ السَّبِيلِ, سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ, سَفَرِ	5	177, 215, 262, 273, 283
4	Physical	سَفَرِ	2	184, 185

These findings indicate that the journey metaphor in Surah Al-Baqarah is not limited to a single conceptual dimension, but rather distributed across various domains of human experience.

Discussion

1. Journey in the Spiritual Domain

The findings indicate that the journey metaphor in Surah Al-Baqarah is not monolithic, but rather distributed across various domains of human experience. This confirms that the Qur'anic use of journey-related expressions functions as a multi-layered conceptual system rather than a single, uniform metaphorical pattern. Such findings are consistent with previous studies in cognitive semantics which have argued that Qur'anic metaphors systematically construct abstract religious meanings through concrete experiential schemas (Pirmansyah & Nur, 2021; Djamdjuri et al., 2022; Ahmed & Li, 2022).

The spiritual domain refers to all concepts related to the human relationship with God, particularly those concerning faith, obedience, guidance, and striving for divine approval. In this domain, a word or expression is categorized as spiritual when its meaning does not merely denote physical movement, but points to an inner process through which humans draw closer to God. The indicators of this domain include: (1) its association with worship, striving in the path of God, divine guidance, or divine pleasure; (2) its representation of inner journey, steadfastness of faith, or spiritual struggle; and (3) its use of lexemes that are literally physical but conceptually oriented toward the vertical relationship between humans and God.

Accordingly, the journey metaphor in this domain is consistently understood as an existential movement in which human beings traverse a path toward truth and divine guidance. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, the mapping between physical movement and spiritual orientation reflects the cognitive mechanism whereby abstract religious concepts are understood through embodied human experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Similar patterns were also identified in previous Qur'anic metaphor studies, particularly in analyses of body-part metaphors and directional semantics in the Qur'an (Subhan et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2022). In Surah Al-Baqarah, 13 verses were identified as belonging to the spiritual domain, as illustrated in the following examples.

1. صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمِّي فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

/*Ṣummun bukmun 'umyun fahum lā yarjī'ūn.*/

'Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not **come back**.' (QS Al-Baqarah:18)

2. أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سَأَلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

/Am turīdūna an tas'alū rasūlakum kamā su'ila Mūsā min qabl, wa man yatabaddalil-kufra bil-īmāni faqad ḍalla sawā'a s-sabīl./

'Would you question your Apostle as Moses was questioned formerly? Whoever changes faith for unfaith certainly strays from **the right way.**' (QS Al-Baqarah:108)

3. *مُسْتَقِيمٍ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ*

/Yahdī man yasyā'u ilā ṣirāṭin mustaqīm./

'To Allah belong the east and the west. He guides whomever He wishes to a **straight path.**' (QS Al-Baqarah:142)

4. *أَمْوَاتٌ ۖ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ. وَاللَّهُ لَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ*

/Wa lā taqūlū liman yuqtalu fī ṣabīlillāhi amwāt, bal ahyā'un walākin lā tasy'urūn./

'And do not call those who were slain in **Allah's way** 'dead.' Rather they are living, but you are not aware.' (QS Al-Baqarah:154)

5. *الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ. وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ*

/Wa qātilū fī ṣabīlillāhi l-ladzīna yuqātilūnakum wa lā ta'tadū, innallāha lā yuḥibbul-mu'tadīn./

'Fight in **the way of Allah** those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed Allah does not like transgressors.' (QS Al-Baqarah:190)

6. *وَلَا تُنْفِقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ. وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ*

/Wa anfiqū fī ṣabīlillāhi wa lā tulqū bi aydīkum ilā t-tahlukah/

'Spend in **the way of Allah**, and do not cast yourselves with your own hands into destruction; and be virtuous. Indeed Allah loves the virtuous.' (QS Al-Baqarah:195)

7. *وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ*

/Wallāhu yahdī man yasyā'u ilā ṣirāṭin mustaqīm./

'Allah guides whomever He wishes to a **straight path.**' (QS Al-Baqarah:213)

8. *وَصَدُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ*

/wa ṣaddun 'an ṣabīlillāh/

'... but to keep [people] from **Allah's way**' (QS Al-Baqarah:217)

9. *إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ*

/Inna l-ladzīna āmanū wa l-ladzīna hājarū wa jāhadū fī ṣabīlillāh/

‘Indeed those who have become faithful and those who have migrated and waged jihād in **the way of Allah**’ (QS Al-Baqarah:218)

10. وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

/Wa qātilū fī sabīli llāhi wa‘lamū anna llāha samī‘un ‘alīm./

‘Fight in **the way of Allah**, and know that Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing.’ (QS Al-Baqarah:244)

11. قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَرَى إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ اإْبِعْثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أَخْرَجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَانَا ۖ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَابُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا نُقَاتِلُوا ۗ قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ نَالِ تَوَلَّوْنَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

/A-lam tara ilā l-malai min banī Isrā‘īla min ba‘di Mūsā idh qālū li-nabiyyin lahumu b‘ath lanā malikan nuqātil fī sabīli llāhi. Qāla hal ‘asaytum in kutiba ‘alaykumu l-qitālu allā tuqātilū. Qālū wa-mā lanā allā nuqātīla fī sabīli llāhi wa-qad ukhrijnā min diyārinā wa-abnā‘inā. Falammā kutiba ‘alayhimu l-qitālu tawallaw illā qalīlan minhum. Wa-llāhu ‘alīmun bi l-zālimīn./

‘Have you not regarded the elite of the Israelites after Moses, when they said to their prophet, ‘Appoint for us a king, that we may fight in **the way of Allah**.’ He said, ‘May it not be that you will not fight if fighting were prescribed for you?’ They said, ‘Why should we not fight in **the way of Allah**, when we have been expelled from our homes and [separated from] our children?’ So when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned back except a few of them, and Allah knows best the wrongdoers.’ (QS Al-Baqarah:246)

12. كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ مِّثْلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

/Mathalu lladhīna yunfiqūna ‘amwālahum fī sabīli llāhi ka-mathali ḥabbatin ‘anbatat sab‘a sanābila fī kulli sunbulatin mi‘atu ḥabbatin/

‘The parable of those who spend their wealth in **the way of Allah** is that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains.’ (QS Al-Baqarah:261)

13. فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ

/Wattaqū yawman turja‘ūna fīhi ilallāh/

‘And beware of a day in which you will be **brought back** to Allah (QS Al-Baqarah:281)

Based on the overall findings within the spiritual domain, the Qur'an consistently employs the concept of path as a central metaphor to depict the human spiritual process. All the examined verses indicate that religious life is understood as a "journey," encompassing the journey toward guidance, the struggle to maintain faith, the process of sacrifice for the pleasure of Allah, and ultimately the return to Him at the end of human life. Thus, the journey metaphor functions as a conceptual framework that integrates various spiritual aspects within the Qur'an.

In Data (1), in QS Al-Baqarah, verse 18, the phrase *يَرْجِعُونَ* /yarji'ūn/ ("return") conveys the notion of a halted spiritual journey. The hypocrites are portrayed as "deaf, mute, and blind," incapable of returning to the righteous path, namely the path approved by Allah. This loss of spiritual awareness signifies the cessation of the inner journey toward Allah.

Data (2) verse 108, Data (3) verse 142, and Data (7) verse 213 depict the "journey" through the terms *السَّبِيلِ* /s-sabīl/ and the phrase *صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ* /ṣirāṭin mustaqīm/ ("straight path"), which denote the path toward divine guidance. The straight path is understood as the spiritual route to truth and obedience, whereas deviation from it is construed as misguidance. This relation demonstrates that the outward direction of a physical journey is projected onto the inward orientation of spiritual progress.

Similarly, namely Data (4) verse 154, Data (5) verse 190, Data (6) verse 195, Data (9) verse 218, and Data (12) verse 261, specifically discuss the "journey" using the phrase *سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* /sabīlillāhi/, emphasizing that the path of Allah represents a spiritual arena that demands sacrifice whether through jihad, charitable giving, or patience. The journey is no longer understood merely as physical movement but reflects the existential motion of humans toward Allah's pleasure and mercy. Acts of charity are metaphorically represented as seeds that grow and multiply, illustrating that the spiritual journey involves not only traversing a path but also cultivating deeds that yield significant rewards. Consequently, the spiritual journey is represented as a trajectory requiring effort and struggle.

Furthermore, Data (10) verse 244 and Data (11) verse 246, employing the phrase *سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* /sabīlillāhi/, further extend the meaning of the journey by introducing the concept of "journey in the way of Allah" as a field of spiritual struggle. In verse 244, the command to "fight in the way of Allah" demonstrates that the journey toward Allah requires courage

and steadfastness in facing life's challenges. Verse 246 illustrates the collective dynamics of the Children of Israel, who request the appointment of a king to fight in Allah's way, but then falter when the command is enforced. Both verses reinforce the conceptual relation between physical journeys or warfare (source domain) and the spiritual journey encompassing tests of commitment, obedience, and faithfulness (target domain). Accordingly, the "path of Allah" is construed as a course of inner struggle requiring alignment between intention and action.

Data (8) verse 217 and Data (9) verse 218 further contrast those who obstruct humans from following the path of Allah with those who remain adhere to it. In verse 217, *وَصَدُّ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* /*wa ṣaddun 'an sabīlillāh*/ ("obstructing from the path of Allah") depicts preventing others from the divinely sanctioned path as closing off access to spiritual truth. Conversely, verse 218, *وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* /*wa jāhadū fī sabīlillāh*/ ("strive in the way of Allah"), portrays the believers who migrate and engage in jihad as actively endeavoring to remain on the path of truth.

In Data (13) verse 281, the journey is expressed through the phrase *تُرْجَعُونَ* /*turja'ūna*/ ("you will be returned"), which represents the concept of the human spiritual journey through the depiction of the Day when all humans are "returned to Allah." Literally, the verse refers to the process of returning from worldly life to the Hereafter. Conceptually, "returning to Allah" signifies an existential journey marking the culmination of human life on earth. The relationship between literal and conceptual meaning lies in the mapping the physical action of "returning" to a place as a metaphor for the inner journey toward accountability before Allah. Thus, this verse reinforces the journey metaphor within the spiritual domain by portraying human life as a long trajectory ultimately culminating in reunion with Allah, emphasizing the importance of piety as provision for this final journey.

Overall, the path metaphor emerges as the primary pattern that unifies all the analyzed verses within the spiritual domain into a coherent semantic structure. The source domain physical journey with elements of direction, trajectory, objectives, struggle, and obstacles is mapped onto the target domain of spiritual progression. This relation yields depictions such as walking toward truth, straying from the path, treading the path, striving in the way, being obstructed from the path, or being unable to return to guidance. Collectively, these verses indicate that the Qur'an conceptualizes human

spiritual life as a journey toward returning to Allah a journey requiring obedience, sacrifice, courage, steadfastness, and the awareness that the ultimate destination is reunion with Him. This finding strengthens previous cognitive-semantic studies which suggest that Qur’anic discourse consistently utilizes metaphorical structures to organize theological and existential understanding through concrete experiential patterns (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020; Fauzi, 2022; Alwan, 2025).

2. Journey in the Moral Domain

This section discusses the verses that represent the concept of journey within the context of human morality. The moral domain pertains to human traits, character, and inner qualities that determine whether an individual proceeds along the path of truth or deviation. Words are considered part of the moral domain when they refer to internal human conditions, such as steadfastness, free will, fragility of faith, spiritual imbalance, or moral commitment. In cognitive semantics, abstract moral concepts are frequently conceptualized through concrete experiential schemas such as movement, balance, direction, light, and darkness, allowing ethical understanding to be represented through bodily experience and spatial orientation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Subhan et al., 2019; Fauzi, 2022).

Indicators of the moral domain include: (1) the depiction of an individual’s ethical choices, such as following guidance or going astray; (2) the representation of inner qualities, such as consistency, doubt, or firmness; and (3) the mapping of physical concepts (path, light, darkness) onto moral meanings, representing behavioral balance or imbalance. Accordingly, the moral domain emphasizes the inner journey of humans in cultivating virtue and commitment to the principles of truth. Several verses illustrating the moral domain are as follows:

14. فِيهِ ۖ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ ۖ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا ۗ
 ۗ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*/Yakādu l-barqu yakhtaful-abṣārahum, kullamā aḍā’a lahum **mashaw** fih; wa idzā aẓlama ‘alayhim qāmū; walaw shā’a-llāhu ladhahaba bisam’ihim wa abṣārihim; inna-llāha ‘alā kulli shay’in qadīr./*

‘The lightning almost snatches away their sight: whenever it shines for them, **they walk** in it, and when the darkness falls upon them, they stand Still. Had Allah

metaphorical structures have also been identified in previous cognitive-semantic studies of Qur'anic discourse, particularly in analyses examining how concrete sensory experiences are projected onto moral and spiritual meanings (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020; Djamdjuri et al., 2022).

Additionally, verses addressing the creation of humans as caliphs on earth enrich the metaphorical understanding of morality. In Data (15), verse 30, which reads *جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً* /*jā'ilun fī l-arḍi khalīfah*/appointed as a caliph on the earth, humans as caliphs reflect that human existence begins with a divine command that requires a moral journey. Literally, a caliph is a being entrusted with the management of the earth. Conceptually, this position marks the beginning of a "trust journey," a process in which humans move from creation toward responsibility, from potential to moral actualization. This conceptual relation illustrates that the task of caliphate constitutes a long trajectory demanding intellect, freedom, and moral choice. Consequently, this verse emphasizes that the human moral journey commences at creation, when humans are entrusted with the responsibility to care for the earth and uphold goodness. From a cognitive semantic perspective, this metaphorical construction demonstrates how existential responsibility is conceptualized as a form of movement from potentiality toward ethical realization. The journey metaphor therefore functions not only as a representation of physical movement but also as a framework for understanding moral responsibility and human agency (Muhajir et al., 2021; Shahiditabar et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, in Data (16), verse 256, the phrase *الرُّشْدُ* /*r-rushdu*/ presents a contrasting moral depiction, namely the unstable morality and faith of the hypocrites. They are likened to travelers walking through a stormy night, stepping forward when illuminated by lightning, yet halting directionless when darkness returns. Literally, "walking when it is light and stopping when it is dark" represents the navigation of a physical journey. Conceptually, this action projects onto a spiritual and moral condition that is inconsistent sometimes aligned with truth, sometimes returning to the darkness of doubt. The relation between literal and conceptual meaning demonstrates that their moral journey is fragmented, lacking guidance, and unsupported by firm conviction. This conceptual instability illustrates how the Qur'an employs movement-based metaphors to portray fluctuating faith and inconsistent moral orientation. Such findings support previous studies arguing that conceptual metaphors in religious discourse cognitively

structure human understanding of ethical struggle, belief, and spiritual uncertainty (Alwan, 2025; Fauzi, 2022).

Collectively, these three verses form a coherent metaphorical structure regarding morality: the steadfast moral journey in verse 20, the trust-based journey rooted in humans' designation as caliphs in verse 30, and the fragile, fragmented journey in verse 256. The metaphors of path, light, darkness, and trust function as the principal conceptual framework mapping moral behavior into a trajectory of life. Thus, morality in the Qur'an is not merely a set of rules but an inner journey requiring steadfastness, responsibility, and consistency in following Allah's guidance. These findings reinforce previous cognitive-semantic studies which suggest that Qur'anic metaphors systematically organize ethical understanding through embodied experiential structures and conceptual mappings (Subhan et al., 2019; Ahmed & Li, 2022; Alwan, 2025).

3. Journey in the Social Domain

The social domain concerns human relations with other living beings, particularly interactions involving solidarity and social responsibility. A word is categorized within the social domain if its meaning reflects human conditions within a social structure, namely needs, assistance, and interpersonal relations. Indicators of the social domain include: (1) the mention of social groups such as relatives, orphans, the poor, travelers, or eligible recipients (mustahiq); (2) literal meanings referring to social situations, such as journeys, physical needs, or aid; and (3) conceptual meanings that map physical concepts (path, journey, mobility) onto social meanings involving empathy, care, and human connectedness. In cognitive semantic studies, social relations are frequently conceptualized through spatial and movement-based schemas, allowing abstract ideas such as solidarity, dependence, and responsibility to be understood through embodied human experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Muhajir et al., 2021; Shahiditabar et al., 2025).

Within this domain, the journey metaphor extends beyond spiritual significance to depict the dynamics of social life and the importance of mutual assistance. Five verses illustrate the social domain, including the following:

17. السَّبِيلَ وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ

/Wa-in kuntum 'alā safarin wa-lam tajidū kātiban fa-rihānun maqbūdah. Fa-in āmina ba'dukum ba'dan fa-l-yu'addi alla dhī u'tumina amānatah. Wa-l-yattaqi llāha rabbah. Wa-lā taktumu sh-shahādah. Wa-man yaktumhā fa-innahu āthimun qalbuḥ. Wa-llāhu bimā ta'malūna 'alīm./

'If you are on a **journey** and cannot find a writer, then a retained pledge [shall suffice]. And if one of you entrusts to another, let him who is trusted deliver his trust, and let him be wary of Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal testimony; anyone who conceals it, his heart will indeed be sinful. And Allah knows best what you do.'

(QS Al-Baqarah:283)

Across all the aforementioned verses, the journey functions as a source domain derived from humans' highly tangible human experiences, namely traveling along a path, leaving a safe place, facing risks, and requiring assistance. Literally, terms such as *ibna al-sabīl*, *sabīli llāh*, and *safar* refer to the physical condition of a person in transit or lacking provisions. However, in conceptual metaphor mapping, the journey is projected onto the social domain, shifting its meaning to depict human vulnerability and the imperative of mutual assistance. In Data (17), verse 177, and Data (18), verse 215, the phrase *وَإِنَّ السَّبِيلَ* /*wa ibna al-sabīl*/ ("the traveler") does not merely refer to a wayfarer but symbolizes individuals undergoing social trials, separated from resources and in dire need of community solidarity. Here, the journey becomes a metaphor for social conditions that place individuals in situations of helplessness. This metaphorical construction demonstrates how physical displacement is cognitively projected onto social vulnerability and dependence. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies showing that Qur'anic metaphors systematically transform concrete bodily and spatial experiences into representations of social and ethical realities (Djamdjuri et al., 2022; Ahmed & Hassan, 2020).

In Data (19), verse 262, and Data (20), verse 273, the concept *سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* /*sabīli llāh*/ no longer refers simply to a physical path toward a destination but represents a "social trajectory" undertaken through righteous deeds. Charity (*infak*) is understood as part of the inner journey toward sincerity, so behaviors such as boasting about charitable acts or harming recipients are metaphorically construed as "straying" or "halting midway." Meanwhile, the poor who are "obstructed in the way of Allah" are literally unable to achieve economic mobility but, conceptually, are advancing along a higher spiritual

journey through their sacrifices. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, this mapping illustrates how charitable actions and social sacrifice are conceptualized as movement toward moral and spiritual fulfillment. The “path of Allah” therefore functions simultaneously as a spiritual and social trajectory that connects religious devotion with collective human responsibility (Fauzi, 2022; Alwan, 2025).

In Data (21), verse 283, the term *سَفَرٌ*/*safarin*/ presents the “journey” as a condition of limitation that requires moral values such as trustworthiness, honesty, and mutual confidence. Here, the journey depicts a social situation vulnerable to uncertainty due to the absence of formal structures (e.g., scribe, witness), making personal morality the “support” of the journey. The metaphor of journey in this context emphasizes that unstable social situations require stronger ethical foundations. In cognitive semantic terms, uncertainty during travel becomes a conceptual model for understanding the importance of trust, honesty, and interpersonal responsibility within human interaction (Prayudha & Sarage, 2020; Shahiditabar et al., 2025).

Overall, these five verses demonstrate that, within the social domain, the journey serves as a metaphor for the dynamics of human life within networks of needs, responsibilities, and social obligation. The literal domain (physical mobility) is projected onto the conceptual domain (solidarity, generosity, trustworthiness, and moral struggle). Accordingly, the Qur’an employs the concrete experience of “walking a path” to map social values: assisting others metaphorically “extends their life journey,” while sincere charity constitutes a moral journey guiding one toward Allah’s pleasure. These findings reinforce previous cognitive-semantic studies arguing that metaphorical structures in religious discourse function not only to explain theological concepts but also to organize social ethics and human relational understanding through embodied experiential schemas (Muhajir et al., 2021; Fauzi, 2022; Alwan, 2025).

4. Journey in the Physical Domain

The physical domain pertains to bodily conditions, biological aspects, or human physical states affecting acts of worship or daily life. A word is categorized within the physical domain when its meaning relates to bodily conditions such as illness, weakness, travel, or states that allow *rukhsah* (religious dispensations). Indicators of this domain include: (1) references to physical conditions such as */marīḍ/* (ill) or */safar/* (physical journey); (2) literal meanings indicating mobility or bodily limitation; and (3) conceptual

meanings that map physical conditions onto Islamic law regarding facilitation, ease, and flexibility. Within this domain, the journey is understood as a tangible physical activity that influences human worship. From a cognitive semantic perspective, bodily experience and physical movement function as important source domains for conceptualizing abstract human conditions, including limitation, vulnerability, and adaptation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ahmed & Hassan, 2020; Wulandari, 2022). Two verses fall within the physical domain, as follows:

22. فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامِ مِسْكِينٍ ۚ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ ۖ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

/Ayyāman ma'dūdāt. Fa man kāna minkum marīḍan aw 'alā safarin fa 'iddatun min ayyāmin ukhar. Wa 'alā lladzīna yuṭīqūnahū fidyatun ṭa'āmu miskīn. Fa man taṭawwa'a khayran fa huwa khayrul lahu. Wa an taṣūmū khayrun lakum in kuntum ta'lamūn./

“That for known days. But should any of you be sick or on a **journey**, let it be a [similar] number of other days. Those who find it straining shall be liable to atonement by feeding a needy person. Should anyone do good of his own accord, that is better for him, and to fast is better for you, should you know’ (QS Al-Baqarah:184)

23. شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۗ وَمَن كَانَ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ ۗ وَمَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ ۖ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

/Syahru Ramaḍāna lladzī unzila fīhi l-Qur'ān hudan li n-nāsi wa bayyinātin mina l-hudā wa l-furqān. Fa man syahida minkumu s-syahra fal-yaṣumhu. Wa man kāna marīḍan aw 'alā safarin fa 'iddatun min ayyāmin ukhar. Yurīdu llāhu bikumu l-yusra wa lā yurīdu bikumu l-'usra. Wa li tukmilū l-'iddata wa li tukabbirū llāha 'alā mā hadākum wa la'allakum tasykurūn./

“The month of Ramaḍān is one in which the Qur’ān was sent down as guidance to mankind, with manifest proofs of guidance and the Criterion.¹ So let those of you who witness it fast [in] it, and as for someone who is sick or on a **journey**, let it be a [similar] number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire

hardship for you, and so that you may complete the number, and magnify Allah for guiding you, and that you may give thanks.’ (QS Al-Baqarah:185)

Both of these verses position the term *سَفَرٌ* /*safarin*/ as a physical condition that allows flexibility (*rukhsah*) in the observance of fasting. Literally, *safar* refers to the physical relocation from one place to another, which typically requires energy, induces fatigue, and disrupts the stability of daily activities. From this meaning, the journey is viewed as an objective situation that may hinder the optimal performance of worship. This conceptualization demonstrates how physical experience serves as the foundation for understanding legal and religious flexibility in Islamic discourse. Similar findings have been identified in previous cognitive semantic studies which argue that Qur’anic metaphors frequently transform bodily and spatial experiences into broader theological and ethical meanings (Subhan et al., 2019; Djamdjuri et al., 2022).

Conceptually, however, *safar* is projected as a transitional phase in which humans move from a stable state to one of uncertainty, marking the limits of their physical and psychological capacities. In the framework of conceptual metaphor, the journey represents human vulnerability, prompting the Sharia to respond with concessions (*rukhsah*). The relationship between literal and conceptual meanings is evident in the link between “physical movement” that is exhausting and “departure from routine,” which metaphorically signifies an unstable situation requiring legal leniency. Thus, the journey is not merely geographical mobility but a symbol of human existence characterized by changing and often challenging circumstances. In conceptual metaphor theory, transitions from stability to instability are commonly represented through movement-based schemas, allowing physical journeys to symbolize broader existential and psychological conditions. In this context, the Qur’an utilizes *safar* not only as a legal category but also as a cognitive representation of human limitation and adaptability (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Alwan, 2025).

These verses affirm that Allah consistently provides ease rather than hardship. Here, the conceptual metaphor operates by portraying the journey as a manifestation of human fragility, inviting divine mercy through Sharia accommodations. Hence, the term *safar* in the context of fasting does not only prescribe legal boundaries but also conceptualizes the journey as a representation of human limitation, accounted for within the structure of Islamic law. Collectively, these verses indicate that when humans

undergo physically or existential transition, Sharia offers flexibility as an expression of divine compassion. These findings strengthen previous studies asserting that Qur'anic conceptual metaphors function cognitively to bridge concrete bodily experience with abstract theological and legal understanding (Fauzi, 2022; Ahmed & Li, 2022; Alwan, 2025).

The analysis revealed that the use of the journey metaphor in Surah al-Baqarah encompasses four major domains: spiritual, moral, social, and physical, each illustrating different aspects of human experience. In the spiritual domain, the journey is mapped as a process toward Allah through guidance, trials, and struggle. The moral domain presents the journey as a trajectory of values requiring steadfastness, consistency, and clarity of heart. In the social domain, the journey represents the dynamics of human relationships, particularly solidarity, assistance, and empathy. Meanwhile, in the physical domain, the journey retains its basic meaning while expanding conceptually through the notion of legal leniency. These findings demonstrate that the journey metaphor functions not merely as a rhetorical device but as a cognitive mechanism for understanding and structuring human experience in the Qur'an, supporting previous studies which argue that metaphorical structures in religious discourse systematically shape theological, moral, and existential understanding through embodied cognition (Doquin de Saint Preux & Masid Blanco, 2021; Shahiditabar et al., 2025).

These results align with previous research, such as Subhan et al. (2019), which demonstrated that body metaphors, such as "hand" in the Qur'an, serve to explain abstract concepts through concrete human experience. In the context of this study, the metaphor of the journey operates similarly, bridging the concrete experience of physical movement with abstract concepts such as faith, morality, solidarity, and legal flexibility. Moreover, prior studies in Qur'anic cognitive semantics have confirmed that the Qur'an systematically employs metaphors to construct moral and spiritual frameworks for human understanding. Therefore, this study reinforces the conclusion that metaphors in the Qur'an are primary instruments for conceptualizing religious and human realities holistically.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the concept of journey in Surah al-Baqarah functions not merely as a narrative element or an indicator of spatial movement, but as a major conceptual framework shaping the Qur'anic representation of human life. Through a cognitive semantic approach and Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this study successfully identified, analyzed, and classified journey-related expressions into four major conceptual domains: spiritual, moral, social, and physical. The findings demonstrate that linguistic expressions related to paths, movement, direction, return, and destination form a coherent conceptual network that systematically connects concrete human experiences with abstract concepts such as faith, guidance, responsibility, struggle, morality, solidarity, and human limitation.

The study further reveals that the metaphor of journey operates as a cognitive mechanism through which the Qur'an conceptualizes religious and existential experience. Human life is consistently represented as an ongoing journey requiring direction, commitment, endurance, and moral awareness. In this framework, spiritual guidance is conceptualized as a path, moral instability as deviation or halted movement, social solidarity as assisting those "on the road," and physical limitation as a condition requiring legal flexibility and divine ease. These findings confirm that conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an are not merely rhetorical ornaments, but fundamental structures organizing meaning and human understanding.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of cognitive semantics in Qur'anic studies, particularly in explaining how embodied human experience becomes the basis for understanding theological and moral concepts. Methodologically, the integration of cognitive semantic analysis with classical Qur'anic exegesis demonstrates that modern linguistic approaches can remain aligned with authoritative Islamic interpretive traditions while offering broader analytical perspectives. Practically, this study contributes to the development of Qur'anic linguistic studies, semantic interpretation, and interdisciplinary approaches that combine linguistics, tafsir, and cognitive studies. In a broader context, the findings may also encourage more contextual and human-centered approaches in understanding Qur'anic discourse, particularly in educational and religious studies.

This study is limited to the analysis of journey metaphors in Surah al-Baqarah and focuses primarily on conceptual metaphor mapping within cognitive semantics. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis to other surahs, comparative metaphorical domains, or interdisciplinary approaches involving discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, translation studies, or cognitive hermeneutics. Further studies may also explore how conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an influence contemporary religious understanding, interpretation, and social cognition in broader cultural contexts.

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