
Ihsan as a Core Principle of Filial Piety: A Comparative Thematic Exegesis of Al-Misbah and Al-Munir

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to examine the meaning and relevance of the teachings of *birrul walidain* (filial piety to one's parents) in modern life through a comparative analysis of two contemporary thematic interpretations: *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili. **Theoretical framework:** This research is based on the theoretical framework of Islamic ethics and the approach of thematic interpretation (*maudhu'i*), taking into account the normative and contextual dimensions of the verses of the Qur'an related to *birrul walidain*. Islamic morality theory is also used as a foundation in understanding the formation of individual and societal morals. **Literature review:** The literature review includes literature on contemporary thematic interpretations, the values of *birrul walidain* in the Qur'an, and socio-cultural dynamics related to changes in family values and moral challenges in the modern era. The literature also highlights the difference in approach between Quraish Shihab and Wahbah Az-Zuhaili in interpreting Islamic values. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Primary data sources were obtained from two main tafsir works, namely *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Al-Munir*, while secondary data came from relevant supporting literature. **Results:** The results of the study show that both interpretations affirm *birrul walidain* as a form of obedience to Allah and the moral foundation of life. *Tafsir Al-Misbah* emphasizes the social and psychological aspects contextually, while *Tafsir Al-Munir* emphasizes the normative and legal aspects of Sharia. Both agreed that *birrul walidain* includes respect, emotional support, financial assistance, and maintaining parental honor. **Implications:** These findings enrich the understanding of the relevance of the value of *birrul walidain* in the modern era and show the importance of an adaptive approach in applying the teachings of the Qur'an in the contemporary social context. This research also contributes to the development of thematic interpretations that are responsive to the dynamics of society. **Novelty:** This research offers a new contribution by comparatively analyzing two contemporary interpretations from the perspective of applying the value of *birrul walidain* in the modern context. This approach has not been widely used in the study of thematic interpretations that connect traditional values with contemporary reality.

Keywords: ihsan, filial piety, thematic exegesis, al-misbah, al-munir.

INTRODUCTION

Islam, as a perfect and comprehensive religion, emphasizes the importance of harmonious relationships between humans, both vertically to Allah SWT and horizontally to fellow humans. One form of horizontal relationship that is highly emphasized in the Qur'an is filial piety to both parents, which in Islamic terminology is known as *birrul al-walidain*. This commandment is not only explicitly mentioned, but even in many verses it is juxtaposed directly with the commandment of monotheism, as in QS. Al-Isra' [17]: 23: "*And your Lord has commanded that you should worship none other than Him and that you should do good to your parents...*" [1].

The position of parents in Islam is so high that good treatment of them is not only a form of social ethics, but a Sharia command that has a theological and spiritual dimension. In this context, the terms *al-birr* and *al-ihsan* are important keys in understanding the scope of the meaning of *birrul walidain*. *Al-birr* reflects all forms of kindness and obedience that are consistently performed as a manifestation of faith, while *Al-Ihsan* contains the meaning of doing good in the most perfect, sincere, and loving way. These two terms show that *birrul walidain* is not just a formal action, but an overall involvement of the heart, mind, and deeds [2].

Nevertheless, in the reality of modern society, the values of *birrul walidain* face serious challenges. Lifestyle changes, increased social mobility, and the development of individualistic values often strain the relationship between children and parents. The busy tendency of modern society, even in many cases to make the elderly a "burden", has obscured the true meaning of the *birrul walidain* taught in the Qur'an. In addition, changes in the family system, such as the rise of nuclear families and neglect of the elderly, are indicators of the weakening of the implementation of these values in daily practice [3].

To understand how the Qur'an interprets *birrul walidain* more comprehensively and contextually, it is necessary to study through works of thematic interpretation that combine textual and contextual aspects. In this case, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili are important references. These two interpretations are not only widely known among academics and society but also represent two different approaches: *Al-Misbah* with its strong contextual and cultural approach, and *Al-Munir* with its in-depth fiqh and normative approaches. Through a comparative study of these two interpretations, a diversity of perspectives can be found in understanding and implementing the concept of *birrul walidain* [6]. [4].

This research is important because it raises fundamental themes that are beginning to be marginalized in contemporary life. By delving deeply into how the Qur'an, through two representative interpretations, explains the concept of *birrul walidain*, this research not only enriches the scientific treasures of interpretation but also makes a real contribution to the formation of the character of the nation's children with noble character. In addition, this research also encourages a more contextual understanding of how Qur'anic values can be implemented in an ever-changing world, without losing their spiritual and ethical essence. This effort is also a form of revitalization of the values of *al-birr* and *al-ihsan* in building more harmonious family relations, based on divine values [4].

Implications and Novelty. The study of *birrul walidain* (filial piety) within the framework of thematic Qur'anic interpretation offers profound implications for contemporary Muslim life, particularly amid the shifting dynamics of modern society. As one of the most emphasized ethical mandates in the Qur'an, the imperative to honor and care for parents is consistently placed adjacent to the command of monotheism. This indicates that the treatment of parents is not merely a moral preference but a divine obligation rooted deeply in Islamic theological and ethical systems. In the present context, however, the application of these values faces considerable challenges stemming from individualism, materialism, urbanization, and changing family structures. Therefore, recontextualizing *birrul walidain*

through contemporary tafsir becomes a necessary step toward preserving and revitalizing this value in everyday life [5].

One of the key implications of this research is the realization that Islamic ethical principles must be approached adaptively, without compromising their foundational integrity. The comparative analysis between Tafsir Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Munir by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili reveals that both exegetes underscore the urgency and theological weight of filial piety but offer differing interpretive emphases. Quraish Shihab's contextualized reading offers a more emotionally intelligent and socially responsive understanding, which aligns well with the psychological and relational complexities of modern familial life. On the other hand, Wahbah Az-Zuhaili's interpretation provides a strong legal-normative basis for reinforcing the sacred duty of respecting and supporting one's parents, grounding it in formal religious obligations [5].

The findings also have significant educational and societal implications. Integrating the values of birr and ihsan into educational curricula—both formal and informal—can contribute to the development of emotionally mature, spiritually aware, and socially responsible individuals. Furthermore, this study encourages religious scholars and educators to employ a dual approach: combining spiritual empathy with legal clarity when teaching Qur'anic ethics. The emphasis on gentle speech, patient care, and unwavering respect toward the elderly serves as a reminder that Islamic ethics are inherently interpersonal and not merely ritualistic. Moreover, this research sheds light on the broader role of Qur'anic ethics in shaping not only private behavior but also public morality. The value of birrul walidain—when fully understood and practiced—serves as a bulwark against moral crises, generational disconnection, and the erosion of family values. It reminds Muslim communities of the centrality of family cohesion and the sacred trust embedded in parent-child relationships, even in the face of modern socioeconomic pressures [6].

The novelty of this research lies in its methodological and thematic focus. While previous studies have explored birrul walidain in the context of classical tafsir or normative theology, few have undertaken a comparative thematic study using two widely influential contemporary exegeses. This research not only contrasts their interpretive frameworks but also situates their insights within a modern social context. By doing so, it bridges the gap between traditional Islamic scholarship and the evolving ethical challenges of the modern world. Furthermore, this study elevates the discussion from mere textual exegesis to practical theology, offering a model for how Qur'anic ethics can be interpreted and actualized in dynamic societies. It contributes to the growing field of applied tafsir studies, where classical teachings are not only preserved but also translated meaningfully into contemporary life. In essence, the study advocates for a living Qur'an—one that speaks to the moral dilemmas of the time while staying true to its divine roots [6].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The value of birrul walidain, or filial piety toward parents, holds a central position in Islamic ethical teachings. In numerous Qur'anic verses, the command to show kindness and respect to parents appears immediately after the command to worship Allah, signifying its immense importance. Two primary concepts that shape this value are birr and ihsan. While birr refers to comprehensive goodness rooted in sincerity and obedience, ihsan implies doing good in the most excellent, compassionate, and heartfelt way. Thematic interpretation (tafsir maudhu'i) has emerged as a significant approach for understanding Qur'anic values in the contemporary era. Among the prominent works in this field are Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Munir by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili. These two tafsir works represent differing methodologies: Quraish Shihab's contextual and socio-psychological approach, and Az-Zuhaili's normative and legalistic framework [7].

Quraish Shihab emphasizes the emotional, spiritual, and contextual dimensions of filial piety. For him, birrul walidain is not merely a formal act of obedience, but a deep

internalized value rooted in love, humility, and respect. Acts such as gentle speech, sincere prayers, and continued kindness even after parents have passed away reflect the essence of *ihsan*. His approach aligns closely with the realities of modern society, where emotional intelligence and moral sensitivity are essential in maintaining meaningful parent-child relationships. In contrast, Wahbah Az-Zuhaili views *birrul walidain* as a sharia-based obligation. His interpretation highlights the necessity of avoiding even the slightest offense toward parents, such as uttering disrespectful words or displaying annoyance. Fulfilling their needs, maintaining their dignity, and upholding their honor are presented as acts of worship and expressions of true obedience to Allah. His *tafsir* reflects a legal and theological grounding that reinforces the obligatory nature of this virtue [7].

Recent scholarship acknowledges the erosion of filial values in modern life due to factors like urbanization, technological distraction, and individualism. The weakening of traditional family bonds and emotional distance between generations pose significant challenges to the practice of *birrul walidain*. However, it is argued that the value remains relevant and must be revitalized through education, family modeling, and ethical use of communication technologies. By comparing these two prominent interpretations, the literature underscores that *birrul walidain* remains a timeless moral principle. Both perspectives, though different in emphasis, converge on the idea that filial piety involves holistic devotion—encompassing speech, behavior, emotional care, and spiritual consciousness. As such, the integration of *birr* and *ihsan* into contemporary Muslim life continues to offer ethical guidance for building harmonious families and societies [8].

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study with a library research approach [9]. This aims to study and analyze concepts *Birrul Walidain* in the Qur'an through a comparison between *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the research lies in the analysis of the text and the interpretation of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an in the view of the two contemporary thematic interpretations. This type of research uses documentation techniques, namely by collecting data from various literature sources that are relevant to the topic being studied [10].

Based on this approach, the researcher collected references that are closely related to the title of the study, namely *Birrul Walidain*, according to the interpretation of Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and Wahbah Az-Zuhaili in *Tafsir Al-Munir* (Comparative Study) [11]. These data sources include *tafsir* books, scientific journals, papers, and other supporting literature. The approach used in this study is a descriptive-analytical method, which is a method that aims to explain the verses of the Qur'an by deciphering the various aspects contained in it, as well as interpreting the implied meanings according to the approach and expertise of each *mufasir* in interpreting these verses [12].

Table 1. Research Methodology

Aspect	Description
Research Type	Qualitative research with a library research approach
Research Focus	Comparative analysis of the concept of <i>Birrul Walidain</i> in the Qur'an based on two contemporary thematic interpretations
Primary Sources	<i>Tafsir Al-Misbah</i> by Quraish Shihab and <i>Tafsir Al-Munir</i> by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili
Secondary Sources	Books of <i>tafsir</i> , scientific journals, academic papers, and other relevant literature
Data Collection	Documentation technique – collecting and reviewing textual data relevant to the topic
Analytical Method	Descriptive-analytical – aiming to explain Qur'anic verses and interpret implied meanings based on each <i>mufassir</i> 's approach and interpretive style
Reason for Approach	To deeply explore the textual meaning of Qur'anic verses and their contextual relevance in modern interpretation

Comparative
Aspect

Highlights differences and similarities between Shihab's contextual-sociological approach and Az-Zuhaili's normative-legal perspective

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Birrul Walidain from the Perspective of the Qur'an

Linguistically, the word "birr" comes from the root of the word ب-ر-ر which means kindness, virtue, or generosity. In religious terms, birr is often interpreted as a broad virtue encompassing speech, deeds, intentions, and attitudes that reflect sincerity and respect. Meanwhile, walidain comes from the word walid, which means "parents", especially fathers and mothers [13].

Thus, the meaning of filial piety to parents (*Birrul Walidain*) includes elements of truth, kindness, compassion, and sincere obedience to both [14]. These values are in line with the meaning of ihsan, which is to do good optimally with full awareness of the presence of Allah SWT. In the context of the relationship between children and parents, Ihsan is reflected in an attitude of respect, gentleness, and sincere service to them. This is manifested in the act of treating the elderly with kindness, obeying their orders as long as it is not contrary to the sharia, taking care of and caring for them as well as possible, and always trying to obtain their pleasure. In addition, a child is encouraged not to hurt the hearts of parents either through words or deeds, because hurting them can bring the wrath of Allah SWT. Thus, birrul walidain is not only a social obligation, but also part of the practice of ihsan in daily life [15].

The concept of birrul walidain is highly upheld in the Qur'an. In many verses, God emphasizes the importance of doing good to parents, even after the command to worship Him. This shows the urgency and honor of the position of the parents in Islam [16].

The Qur'an places the birrul walidain in a very great position. In QS. Al-Isra' verse 23, Allah SWT says:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِنَّمَا يُبَلِّغُنَّ عَنْكَ الْكِبَرُ أَخَذَهُمَا أَوْ كَلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا وَلَا تَهْزُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

"And your Lord has commanded that you should worship none other than Him and that you should do good to your parents as best you can. If one of them or both of them grows old in your care, then you must not say the word "ah" to them and do not yell at them, and speak to them noble words."

This verse shows that *birrul walidain* is a direct command from Allah and is aligned with monotheism. That is, after the obligation to serve Allah, the most important obligation for a Muslim is to do good to one's parents [17].

Table 2. This Command is Also Repeated in Many Verses

No.	Letter	Sound
1.	Qs. Luqman (31): 14	"We command people to give thanks to Me and your parents. Only to Me shall you return."
2.	Qs. Al-Ankabut (29): 8	"And We commanded man (to do good) to his parents..."
3.	Qs. Al-Ahqaf (46): 15	"We command man to do good to his two parents, his mother conceived him with difficulty, and gave birth to him with difficulty..."

The repetition of this command shows the urgency, strength, and consistency of Islamic teachings in honoring parents. In the Qur'an, the command to be devoted to one's parents

(birrul walidain) is repeated many times in various surahs and contexts. This repetition is not without reason [18]. Rhetorically and theologically, it signifies urgency (urgency and importance), strength (necessity and moral weight), and consistency (harmony and continuity of Islamic teaching values) to the importance of respect and glorification of parents. Overall, the repetition of the commandment to be devoted to one's parents in the Qur'an is an affirmation that these values are not only important in the ethical aspect but also part of the foundation of a Muslim's faith and pious deeds [19].

The Meaning of "Birr" and "Ihsan" in the Qur'an and Hadith

Meaning of the word "Birr"

According to various studies of tafsir and mu'jam, including those referring to the Ma'ani approach, pronounce "albirr" (البرّ) is mentioned in the Qur'an, it is mentioned as many as 8 times. Meanwhile, Kitāb al-Ma'ani itself, like the work of Ibn Farrā', which focuses on the analysis of language per word and syntax, does not explicitly list the number of occurrences of the word "birr". The book emphasizes meaning, grammatical arrangement, and diction selection in the context of verses, rather than calculating the frequency of words. So, of course, the data on the number eight comes more from the static study of the Qur'an and mu'jam-mu'jam as mentioned above [20].

The "*Albarra*" of the word "*Barra*" is also sometimes interpreted as honesty, because honesty is part of that broad goodness. As mentioned in an example sentence, "*Barra Fii Qaulihi*" means that he is honest in his speech, or as in the example, "*Barra Fii Yaminihi*" means that he is honest in his oath. And here are some verses of the Qur'an as in Qs. Maryam:14, Qs. Maryam: 32.

A person who is honest in his oath is called "*Baarun*". Therefore, there is a sentence "*Baaraat Yamiinii*." It means that I swear to be honest. And the sentence "*Khajjun Mabruurun*" means that Hajj is mabrur or accepted. Plural "*Albaaruun*" be "*Abraaruun*" and "*Bararatun*". And here are some verses of the Qur'an, such as in Qs. Al-Muthaffifin: 13, Qs. Al-Infithar: 13, Qs. 'Abasa: 16.

Deep *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, M. Quraish Shihab explained that the word "birr" (البرّ) comes from the root of the word, which shows the meaning of broad, airy, and all-encompassing goodness. He interprets "birr" as a form of goodness that is not only outward, but also inward, that is, that arises from sincerity, compassion, and deep appreciation [21].

In context, *Birrul Walidain* Quraish Shihab explained that "birr" includes various forms of good treatment based on sincerity, not solely because of social or customary obligations. He said that *Birr* To the elderly is respect, service, tenderness, and prayer continuously, even after they have passed away [22].

Quraish Shihab also emphasizes that "birr" is broader than just obedience, because if obedience is done without intention and gentleness, then it is not necessarily called *birr*. On the contrary, *birr* is an expression of kindness full of love and moral awareness, making the act not only social but also spiritual [23].

In *Tafsir Al-Munīr*, Wahbah az-Zuhailī explained that the word "birr" (البرّ) contains the meaning of overall goodness, both in the form of deeds, words, and attitudes of heart, which reflects obedience to Allah and good treatment of others, especially to both parents (*Birrul Wālidayn*) [24].

Az-Zuhailī affirms that "birr" is not just a form of outward goodness, but also includes a sincere and consistent inner commitment. In the context of a relationship with parents, "birr" means to fulfill their rights, treat them with tenderness and respect, and pray for them, whether they are alive or dead [25].

According to him, the command to do birr to the elderly is in the Qur'an, as in QS. Al-Isra' verse 23 shows the high position of this commandment, which is immediately mentioned after the command to worship Allah alone. This shows that birr to parents is the most important part of worship and obedience [26].

Meaning of the word "Ihsan"

In the book *Al-Mu'jam al-Mu'na bi Kalimāt al-Qur'ān* (Kitab al-Ma'ani) by Ahmad Mukhtar Umar and his team, it is stated that the word "ihsān" (الإحسان) in various forms of derivation is mentioned in the Qur'an 194 times in the form of verbs and nouns, with various meanings depending on the context [27]. However, if what is meant is the root word "ihsan" (الإحسان) explicitly in the form of isim (noun), it is mentioned 12 times in the Qur'an [28].

Table 3. Examples of Verses That Contain the Word Al-Ihsān, in This Context, Birr and Ihsan Are Juxtaposed

No	Surah & Verses	Sound
1.	QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 195	"Wa-aḥsinū inna Allāha yuḥibbul-muḥsinīn"
2.	QS. Al-Nahl [16]: 90	"inna Allāha ya'muru bil-'adli wal-ihsān"
3.	QS. Luqman [31]: 14	"An-ishkur lī wa li-wāliḍayka ilayya al-maṣīr",

The book *Al-Mu'jam al-Mu'na bi Kalimāt al-Qur'ān* traces the word in its basic form and its derivation. Thus, although *ihsān* explicitly in the form of nouns appears 12 times, if it includes all forms such as *aḥsana*, *muḥsinīn*, *yuḥsinūna*, etc., the total mention amounts to about 194 times [29].

In *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, M. Quraish Shihab explains that the word "ihsān" (الإحسان) comes from the root word ḥ-s-n (ح-س-ن), which means good, beautiful, and noble. He interprets *ihsān* as doing good optimally, that is, going beyond mere obligation or justice, by giving more than what is demanded and not demanding in return.

According to Quraish Shihab, *ihsān* has two main sides:

1. Ihsan to Allah, that is, worshipping as if seeing Him, as explained in the hadith of Jibril: "*Ihsan is that you worship Allah as if you saw Him, and if you do not see Him, then He does see you.*" It reflects spiritual awareness and deep sincerity in worship.
2. Ihsan to fellow human beings, that is, doing good to others with tenderness, affection, and selflessness. This includes courtesy to parents, neighbors, the poor, and all creatures [30].

Quraish Shihab emphasizes that *ihsān* is not only an outward action, but requires inner subtlety, sincerity of intention, and sincerity of feeling. He also explained that *ihsan* is the highest level in Islam, higher than just Islam (outward submission) and faith (believing in the heart), because *ihsan* unites the two with the perfection of morality and spirituality [31].

Thus, according to Quraish Shihab in *Al-Misbah*, *Ihsān* is the ultimate value in Islamic teachings that reflects the beauty of religion as a whole: faith, charity, and noble morals. Deep *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, Wahbah az-Zuhailī explains that the word "ihsān" (الإحسان) has the meaning of doing good to the maximum, both to Allah and to fellow human beings, and it includes excellence in charity, sincerity in intention, and perfection in attitude [32].

Az-Zuhailī emphasized that *Ihsān* is the highest level in religion, after Islam and faith, as mentioned in the hadith of Jibril. In the context of worship of Allah, *Ihsān* means worshipping as if we see God, or at least realize that God sees us. This shows a high spiritual awareness in every charity. Meanwhile, in human relationships, including to parents, neighbors, the poor, and the general public, *Ihsān* means doing good with compassion,

gentleness, and without expecting anything in return. Az-Zuhailī also explains that *Ihsān* not only applies to ordinary social relationships, but also includes being fair even to those who are hostile to us [33]. As in the words of Allah:

"Indeed, Allah has commanded (you) to be just and to do ihsān..." (QS. An-Nahl: 90).

According to him, *ihsān* is not limited to the legal aspects or formalities of the sharia, but also touches on the ethical and spiritual aspects, making a person have noble character in all circumstances, including when giving, forgiving, and restraining anger. Overall, in the view of Wahbah az-Zuhailī, *ihsān* is the pinnacle of moral and spiritual virtue in Islam, which makes the deeds of a believer of higher value because they are accompanied by perfection of intention, subtlety of attitude, and virtue of behavior [34].

Birrul Walidain from the Perspective of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Munir

Birrul Walidain (Filial to) parents have their meaning according to Quraish Shihab and Wahbah Az-Zuhayli. According to Quraish Shihab, filial piety to both parents is a noble obligation emphasized in the Qur'an, especially in Surah Al-Isra verses 23-24. He emphasized the importance of doing good to the elderly in words, deeds, and intentions, and praying for them with love. Quraish Shihab also explained that birrul walidain is not just a formal obligation, but must also be done with sincerity and good deeds (*ihsan*). Meanwhile, according to Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, pay great attention to the concept of *birrul walidain* (filial piety to both parents), which is mentioned in various verses of the Qur'an, such as QS. Al-Isra' verse 23, Luqman verse 14, and others. This concept is an important part of Islamic teachings related to morals and social relationships, especially in the context of the family [35].

According to Tafsir Al-Misbah in QS. Al-Isra': 23

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

"Commanding to worship Him only without associating with Him, because the sentence qadaa in the above verse means "has commanded"

The meaning of the above verse is that Allah commands you not to worship other than Him, because worship is the peak of exaltation that should not be done except to God, from whom pleasure and grace come to His servants, and no one can give blessings except Him. Therefore, Allah includes it with a will to be devoted to both parents (وَبِأَوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا), and you should do good to your parents as well as possible, meaning Allah commands you to be devoted to your parents [36].

The meaning of the above verse with the word "*ihsan*" or doing good in the verse is to be devoted to both, which aims to remember the goodness of parents because, in fact, with the existence of parents, a child exists, and Allah strengthens the rights of parents by positioning themselves in a position after worshipping Allah, namely to serve Allah.

إِذَا يَبْتَغَىٰ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَهٌّ وَ

"If one of them or both of them reaches an old age in your keeping, then you should never say to them the word 'ah'"

This means that they should not hear harsh words, in fact they should not hear the word 'ah' or the word 'ah' is one of the rude words that are the least rude. (Not to be outdone) "And you shall not yell at them." The meaning of the above verse is that if both parents or one of them is by your side until you reach a state of *Lalu*, and Allah forbids harsh speech and bad deeds, then Allah includes them by commanding good words and deeds. Allah SWT says:

وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

And speak to them noble words", meaning gentle, kind, polite, and respectful speech." The above verse is meant by the word noble as a kind and polite word, a gentle and kind word that is intended to be respectful.

According to Tafsir Al-Munir in QS. Al-Isra': 23

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

"And your Lord has commanded that you should worship none other than Him."

According to Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, the word "*qaḍā*" in this verse does not only mean "deciding" in qadha destiny, but in this context, it means a shari'i order or a will that must be obeyed. That is, Allah obliges people to worship Him alone (*monotheism*) and not to associate with Him in any form. The placement of monotheism at the beginning shows that the worship of Allah is the main foundation of religion and the basis for other good deeds.

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

"And you shall do good to your parents."

After the command of tauhid, Allah immediately commanded to show mercy to both parents, showing how great the position of parents is in Islam. According to Az-Zuhaili, the word "*ihsan*" here contains the meaning of doing good as a whole, both in terms of speech, behavior, and providing support and maintaining one's honor. This is a form of social service that cannot be separated from servitude to God.

إِذَا يَبْتَغَىٰ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا

"If one of the two or both of them reaches an advanced age in your care."

According to Az-Zuhaili, when parents reach old age, their condition becomes weaker physically and emotionally, and they even tend to return to a child who needs attention and nurturing. The phrase "*indaka*" (by your side) indicates that the child is the main person responsible for them, both physically, economically, and emotionally. This is the real form of the true birrul of the walidain: nurturing, caring for and caring for them with love.

فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ

"So do not say the word 'ah' to them."

This is a prohibition against the mildest form of disturbance, namely, complaining or showing irritation towards parents. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili emphasized that if only small expressions such as "uf" are prohibited, then actions or words that are ruder and more hurtful are certainly even more prohibited. This shows the high sensitivity of Islam to the feelings of parents, especially in their old age.

وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا

"And you shall not yell at them."

An-nahr means to scold, reprimand, or speak harshly in a high tone. According to Az-Zuhaili, this prohibition is a form of strengthening the previous prohibition (saying "uf"), namely, so that children do not act harshly verbally towards parents. Even when they say things that make no sense or make it difficult, the child is still required to be patient and respectful of them.

وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

"And speak to them noble words."

This phrase indicates the positive command after the prohibition, which is how children should treat parents: with noble, gentle, loving, and respectful words. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili

emphasized that this is not only not rude, but also actively uses words that make parents feel respected and loved. For example, by calling them with affectionate calls, answering patiently, and speaking with empathy.

From the meaning described by the two above, it can be concluded that both have similarities and differences in the meaning of filial piety to both parents. The similarity between the two is that both interpret *birrul walidain* as a great obligation after monotheism, which includes doing good to one's parents comprehensively, both in word and deed. Both emphasized the importance of speaking softly, not hurting the parents' hearts even with light words like "uf", and maintaining manners when the elderly are elderly. As for the differences that can be seen, Quraish Shihab interprets *Birrul Walidain* as a form of affection and respect born from a child's spiritual and emotional awareness of his parents. Meanwhile, Wahbah Az-Zuhaili interpreted *Birrul Walidain* as a shari'i obligation which includes legal obligations, such as not hurting parents, providing support, taking care of them, and speaking politely according to the guidance of sharia [37].

Forms of Birrul Walidain in the Qur'an

The Qur'an describes the concrete forms of *birrul walidain*, including:

a. Speak Kindly and Gently

"... So do not say to them the word 'ah', and do not yell at them, and speak to them noble words." (QS. Al-Isra': 23)

Abusive, disparaging, or showing resentment toward parents is strictly prohibited. Islam teaches us to always respect them with soft, polite, and affectionate speech.

b. Humble Yourself and Show Compassion

"And humble yourselves to them both with love..."

(QS. Al-Isra': 24)

The attitude of *tawadhu'* or humility is a tangible form of devotion to parents. This indicates that no matter how great and high a person's position is, he is still obliged to be humble to his parents.

c. Praying for Parents

"... and say: 'O my Lord, love them both, as they both taught me when I was a child.'" (QS. Al-Isra': 24)

This prayer is not only an obligation, but a form of recognition for the services and sacrifices of parents in raising their children.

d. Obedient as Long as Not in Disobedience

"If both force you to associate with Me... so do not follow them, but associate with them in the world well..."

Islam maintains a balance. In QS. In Luqman verse 15, Allah emphasizes that if parents tell them to shirk or immorality, then it should not be obeyed. However, it still has to be treated well socially.

e. After Parents Pass Away

Devotion to them (*birrul walidain*) can still be continued in various ways. Among them are sincerely repenting to Allah SWT if there has been any disobedience during their lifetime, praying and escorting their body to the cemetery, always asking for forgiveness for both, paying off their debts, carrying out their will according to the guidance of the Shari'ah, establishing good relations with relatives or people with whom they used to be in contact, respecting their friends, and constantly praying for them [38].

Birrul Walidain's Priorities

The virtue of Birrul Walidain (filial piety to both parents) is very great in the teachings of Islam. Here are some of its virtues with explanations:

Direct Commandment After Tawheed

Allah SWT commands birrul walidain directly after the command to worship Him alone. This shows how great the position of filial devotion to the elders is.

"And your Lord has commanded that you should worship none other than Him and that you should do good to your parents..." (QS. Al-Isra: 23)

This verse affirms that devotion to one's parents is one level below the command to serve Allah, showing its urgency in Islam. This command shows that the position of parents in Islam is very high. After Allah commands man to worship Him alone, the commandment that is immediately given is to do good to both parents. This is not just an ordinary sequence, but it shows the urgency, honor, and closeness between God's rights and the rights of parents.

According to the scholars of tafsir, such as Quraish Shihab and Wahbah az-Zuhaili, this sequence indicates that being devoted to one's parents is included in a very great deed, even a great sin if it is neglected, because it is directly accompanied by the sin of shirk in some verses.

Gaining the Pleasure of Allah

The pleasure of Allah depends on the pleasure of the parents, and the wrath of Allah also depends on the wrath of the parents.

"The pleasure of Allah depends on the pleasure of the parents and the wrath of Allah depends on the wrath of the parents." (HR. Tirmidhi)

This hadith contains a very deep meaning. To get love, blessings, and pleasure from Allah, a child must first get pleasure from his parents.

If parents feel happy, pleased, and respected by their children, then Allah will also be pleased and love the child. On the other hand, if the parents feel hurt, wasted, or wronged, then the wrath of Allah will come down on the child, even though he is diligent in worship.

a. Including the Most Beloved Deeds of Allah

Birrul walidain is the most important deed after timely prayer and jihad.

When the Prophet was asked about the deeds that Allah loves the most, he replied: "Pray on time." Asked again: "Then what?" He replied: "Be devoted to the elderly." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith shows that the position of birrul walidain is right after mahdhah (special) worship, such as prayer, and even takes precedence over jihad. This means that Islam places birrul walidain as a social worship that has a very high value in the sight of Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ Muhammad deliberately arranged the sequence to show that before a person contributes to a great struggle such as jihad, he must first improve his relationship and devotion to his parents.

b. Extending Life and Opening the Door of Sustenance

"Whoever wants to prolong his life and have his sustenance free, then let him continue his friendship." (HR. Bukhari)

Although this hadith mentions "friendship" in general, scholars agree that the most important and noblest friendship is with both parents, because they are the root of our existence. So, filial devotion to both is the core of the blessed friendship.

Extending the life in question is not only a literal age number, but also: Blessed life: a time of life full of goodness, benefits, and righteous deeds, given ease and spaciousness in life.

Expanding sustenance also does not mean only material wealth, but peace of heart, a harmonious family, smooth business, and blessings in every work.

c. Getting Heaven

Heaven is very close for those who are devoted to their parents, and even parents are referred to as "the door of heaven".

"Parents are the middle gate of heaven, so if you want, waste it or guard it." (HR. Tirmidhi)

This hadith states that parents are the "middle gate of heaven", meaning that they are the fastest, straightest, and noblest access to enter heaven. "Central" in Arabic indicates glory and ease of access. 1) Guarding the door means being filial, caring, respectful, and praying for them. 2) Wasting it means disobedience, ignoring their rights and feelings.

So, whoever takes good care of his parents while he is alive or after death has guarded his way to heaven.

d. The Sin Remover

Allah SWT is Forgiving and opens the door of forgiveness for anyone who repents, especially if the repentance is accompanied by great good deeds, such as *birrul walidain*.

"Indeed, good deeds take away (sins) bad deeds." (QS. Hud: 114)

Filial piety to parents includes good deeds (*hasanah*) that are of great value, and can be a redemption for past mistakes, especially if a person has ever been disobedient or negligent in fulfilling the rights of his parents.

e. Prayer of Mustajab Parents

Prayers from parents, especially sincere ones, because their children are filial, are very obligatory in the sight of Allah.

"Three prayers that are mustajab without a doubt: the prayer of a parent for his child..." (HR. Tirmidhi)

By filial piety, children get the blessing of prayers from parents who can open many doors of goodness in their lives. Parents' prayers, especially if they come from a sincere and loving heart, or pain, have a great influence on the fate of a child. Therefore, if parents pray for goodness, children will easily get help and blessings in life. On the other hand, if parents pray for evil because of a disobedient child, then the prayer can be a real catastrophe in the child's life [39].

The Relevance of *Birrul Walidain* in Contemporary Life

In today's modern era, the application of the value of *birrul walidain* faces various new and complex challenges, along with changes in people's lifestyles and cultures. The flow of globalization, technological advancements, and increasing individual mobility have affected the pattern of relationships between children and parents. The busy work and demands of life make many children have to live far away, or even live abroad. This condition creates physical and emotional distance that makes it difficult for children to pay direct attention or spend quality time with their parents. Although the development of communication technology has made it easier to interact remotely, close emotional connections are still difficult to build without presence and in-person interaction.

Instilling the value of *birrul walidain* in rapid social change requires a strategy that is in line with the realities of today's life [40]. One of the approaches that is considered effective is through education in the family environment and formal educational institutions. From an

early age, children need to be guided to understand the importance of respecting and loving their parents. In this case, the family plays the main role in forming the child's character, full of respect and love for parents. Meanwhile, educational institutions such as schools also play an important role in conveying Islamic teachings, including children's obligations to their parents. A curriculum that contains learning about ethics, noble morals, and appreciation for the role of parents in shaping children's personalities is very helpful in fostering the awareness of the younger generation about the importance of filial piety to parents.

However, the challenges in applying the value of *birrul walidain* in the modern era are increasingly complex with rapid social changes, the busyness of daily life, and the strengthening of individualistic culture; the application of the value of *birrul walidain* faces increasingly complicated challenges. Nevertheless, the cultivation of these noble values can still be done through the active role of families, educational institutions, and the intelligent use of technology as a medium to strengthen the awareness of the younger generation. The value of *birrul walidain* has an important position in creating harmony in the family and encouraging the formation of a peaceful, empathetic, and mutually respectful society. As a foundation in building cross-generational relationships, the practice of these values not only strengthens family relationships but also plays a major role in realizing a just and prosperous social order [41].

After being deduced from the many sad aspects of a child's order to parents in the current contemporary era, in the implementation and actualization of the value of *Birrul Walidain* (filial piety to parents) in the modern socio-religious context, it is concluded that there are several ways, such as the following:

1. Balancing the Currents of Individualism and Materialism

The modern era places a heavy emphasis on individual achievement, career, and personal freedom, which can indirectly erode attention to the family, especially the elderly. *Birrul walidain* is a counterbalance that reminds us of the importance of emotional and spiritual attachment between children and parents. This value teaches that success is not only measured by personal achievement, but also by caring for parents.

2. Strengthening Character Education

Modern education often emphasizes intellectual intelligence, while *Birrul Walidain* instills strong ethical and moral values, such as respect, patience, empathy, and gratitude. Instilling *birrul walidain* from an early age in children will form a generation that is more moral and caring for others.

3. Care for the Elderly

With the increasing life expectancy, many older people are reaching an advanced age and need special attention. In this context, *Birrul Walidain* teaches that caring for elderly parents is a form of charity and respect, not a burden. This is an important challenge in an urban culture that tends to hand over this responsibility to care institutions.

4. Technological Sophistication Balancer

Although technology makes communication easier, it often makes emotional relationships strained. The value of *birrul walidain* reminds us that relationships with parents are not enough to be maintained through text messages or social media, but require real presence, sincere attention, and empathetic interaction.

5. A Warning of a Moral Crisis

Moral crises in society often start from the weak foundation of the family. *Birrul walidain* is the essence of the formation of a harmonious family. When children are taught to respect and love their parents, these values will form a more responsible, unselfish, and positive contribution to society.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of *ihsan* as a core principle of filial piety (*birrul walidain*) highlights the profound interconnectedness between personal spirituality, family values, and societal harmony in Islamic thought. The Qur'an consistently places the commandment to honor parents side by side with the central tenet of monotheism, underscoring its elevated position within the moral framework of Islam. This study, through a comparative thematic exegesis of *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir Al-Munir* by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, reveals how both scholars converge in presenting *birrul walidain* as an essential manifestation of *ihsan*—doing good in the most perfect, sincere, and compassionate way. Despite this convergence, their exegetical methods reflect distinct emphases. Quraish Shihab frames his interpretation within a psychological and sociocultural lens, addressing the pressing realities of contemporary life. His approach brings relevance to modern readers who navigate shifting family dynamics, urbanization, and globalization. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, by contrast, situates his discussion in a normative-legal framework, grounding filial piety in *shari'i* obligations and jurisprudential boundaries. This distinction demonstrates the richness of *tafsir* traditions, where diverse hermeneutical approaches contribute to a more holistic understanding of the Qur'anic guidance. Both exegetes, however, strongly agree that *birrul walidain* transcends mere acts of respect and obedience. It encompasses a multidimensional practice: showing genuine affection, offering physical and emotional service, praying for one's parents, providing financial assistance, and safeguarding their dignity throughout all stages of life—whether during their presence in the world or after their passing. Such a comprehensive perspective situates filial piety as a lifelong spiritual commitment rather than a temporary social obligation. In the contemporary era, the application of these values faces significant challenges. Rapid modernization, rising individualism, and transformations in social structures often weaken intergenerational bonds. Nonetheless, the essence of *ihsan* provides a timeless ethical compass. By integrating character education within schools, strengthening the moral role of the family, and utilizing technology wisely, the practice of *birrul walidain* can be preserved and adapted to modern contexts. This adaptive implementation ensures that core Islamic values remain relevant and actionable, even amidst shifting cultural landscapes. Ultimately, *birrul walidain* stands not only as an individual duty but also as a cornerstone for building cohesive families and morally resilient societies. Upholding this principle reinforces compassion, respect, and responsibility across generations, thereby contributing to social stability and communal harmony. In essence, recognizing *ihsan* as the foundation of filial piety provides a pathway to nurturing human relationships that reflect divine guidance—relationships marked by sincerity, love, and enduring devotion.

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Author Contribution

Sabilatul Jannah conducted the primary research, textual analysis, and manuscript drafting. Ahmad Nurrohim and Sondos Jehad Shnewra provided academic supervision, conceptual framework guidance, and critical revisions. Both authors collaboratively reviewed and finalized the manuscript for publication, contributing equally to the intellectual depth and comparative analysis of the thematic interpretations discussed.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of the article “*Ihsan as a Core Principle of Filial Piety: A Comparative Thematic Exegesis of Al-Misbah and Al-Munir*” All affiliations did not influence research outcomes.

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