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The Semantics of Ihsan in Quranic Discourse on Caring for Parents

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Abstract

This study examines the Quranic concept of ihsan in the discourse on caring for parents, focusing on its lexical meaning, semantic relations, and conceptual associations with other Quranic terms. Rather than treating ihsan as a direct equivalent of “kindness” or “compassion”, the study investigates its broader semantic field and its relationship with concepts relevant to caring for parents, including birr al-walidayn, rahmah, ma‘ruf, sabr, shukr, amanah, and ‘adl. The study adopts a qualitative lexical-semantic and contextual analysis of selected Quranic verses concerning parents, supported by classical and contemporary Quranic scholarship. Particular attention is given to the contextual meanings, semantic associations, and relational patterns of ihsan within Quranic discourse. The analysis seeks to determine how these interconnected lexical concepts collectively construct the meaning of ethical care towards parents. The findings indicate that ihsan extends beyond a general notion of kindness and functions as an overarching ethical concept encompassing multiple dimensions of care, including compassion, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, patience, gratitude, and fairness. This linguistic perspective is particularly relevant in the context of population ageing, where caring for older parents has become an increasingly important social and familial concern. The study contributes to Quranic linguistics by demonstrating how lexical-semantic analysis can illuminate the relationship between language, values, and culturally embedded understandings of family responsibility.

Keywords: Lexical; Ageing Society; Compassion; Family Responsibility; Values