



Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutics: Comparing Verses with and without Asbab al-Nuzul

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Abstract

The growing emphasis on historical context in contemporary Quranic studies has stimulated the development of various interpretive approaches, including Fazlur Rahman's *double movement* hermeneutics. This article aims to compare the interpretation of Quranic verses with and without *Asbab al-Nuzul* through the lens of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical framework. The article is written using a qualitative approach with *content analysis* as its primary method. The data are drawn from Fazlur Rahman's major works, classical and contemporary tafsir literature, and relevant academic publications. The analysis employs a descriptive-comparative approach by examining the historical context of revelation, identifying universal moral principles, and exploring their relevance to contemporary issues. The analytical findings reveal that both categories of verses are interpreted through the same methodological process, namely moving from the socio-historical context of revelation to the extraction of universal Quranic values and their application to present-day realities. However, verses accompanied by *Asbab al-Nuzul* provide a clearer historical foundation for interpretation, whereas verses without *Asbab al-Nuzul* require a more comprehensive and critical socio-historical reconstruction. This study demonstrates that Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics offers a systematic and contextual framework for bridging the normative teachings of the Quran with the challenges of contemporary society.

INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the primary source of Islamic teachings and is believed by Muslims to serve as a guide for life, governing human relationships with Allah, fellow human beings, and the surrounding environment. As a revelation delivered in Arabic, the Quran possesses rich linguistic features, profound meanings, and complex messages that require a comprehensive process of interpretation (Yundianto et al., 2023). Consequently, various disciplines have been developed to understand the content of the Quran, one of which is Quranic exegesis. Over time, the study of Quranic exegesis has incorporated not only linguistic and traditional approaches but also interdisciplinary perspectives, including history, sociology, semiotics, and hermeneutics, to explain the relationship between the text, its context, and the surrounding social realities (Mustafa et al., 2026).

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Developments over time and social changes have encouraged the emergence of new approaches to understanding the Quran so that its universal messages remain relevant to contemporary society. In this context, Fazlur Rahman is recognized as one of the modern Muslim thinkers who proposed a systematic hermeneutical approach through the theory of *double movement*. According to Rahman, Quranic interpretation cannot be separated from the historical context of revelation and the moral objectives embedded in the text. The first movement, known as *movement from the present situation to the time of revelation*, directs interpreters to examine the social and historical circumstances underlying the revelation of a verse. The second movement, known as *movement from the time of revelation to the present situation*, involves contextualizing the universal moral principles derived from this historical understanding to address contemporary issues (Sholihah & Maulida, 2020).

Nevertheless, Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics remains a subject of debate in contemporary Quranic studies. Some Muslim scholars regard hermeneutics as an effective method for contextualizing the messages of the Quran to ensure their continued relevance amid social change (Engkizar et al., 2026; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025; Putri et al., 2025). Others, however, argue that hermeneutics originated in the Western intellectual tradition and was initially used to interpret the Bible. Consequently, they maintain that its application to Quranic studies requires critical consideration. This debate indicates that the position of hermeneutics in Quranic exegesis requires further in-depth examination, particularly regarding its effectiveness in explaining the diverse characteristics of Quranic verses (Akem et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025; Rosyadi & Athari, 2025).

The significance of this study lies in its effort to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics can be applied to Quranic verses with different historical characteristics. To date, the theory of *double movement* has frequently been used to explain the contextualization of Quranic messages in contemporary legal, social, political, and religious issues. However, relatively few studies have specifically compared the application of this theory to verses with *asbab al-nuzul* and those for which no explicit account of *asbab al-nuzul* is available. Information concerning *asbab al-nuzul* can help interpreters reconstruct the historical context of revelation, which constitutes an important foundation for applying the theory of *double movement*. Therefore, this study examines how Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical method can be applied to both categories of verses and explains its implications for contextualizing Quranic messages in response to the challenges of modern society (Engkizar et al., 2025; Saminu et al., 2025; Thuwaiba & Salaeh, 2025).

Previous studies have examined Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics from various perspectives. Nugroho et al (2023) explored the concept and application of the theory of *double movement* in Quranic studies. Yusuf et al (2021) highlighted the significance of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics for contextual Quranic interpretation. Yusuf et al (2024) applied the theory of *double movement* to discussions concerning the permissibility of electing non-Muslim leaders. Ridwan et al (2022) explained the historical dimension of Fazlur Rahman's interpretive method. Rahmah (2025) examined the contribution of Rahman's hermeneutics to the renewal of modern Islamic thought. Wahid et al (2025) analyzed the relevance of the theory of *double movement* to the development of contemporary exegetical methodology. Janah & Nugroho (2022) investigated the application of Rahman's hermeneutics in addressing contemporary Islamic legal issues. Usman et al (2022) discussed the construction of universal moral values in Fazlur Rahman's thought. Nurhuda et al (2025) examined the relationship between historical context and the universality of Quranic messages within the theory of *double movement*. Meanwhile, Gustianda & Dalil (2025) investigated the application of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics to contemporary social

and religious issues. Overall, these studies indicate that research on Fazlur Rahman tends to focus on conceptual aspects or the application of his theory to specific themes. Comparative analyses of the theory's application to categories of verses with different historical characteristics, however, remain relatively limited.

Based on a review of previous studies, research on Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics has generally focused on theoretical explanations of *double movement* or its application to particular issues. However, few studies have specifically compared the interpretation of verses with *asbab al-nuzul* and those for which no explicit account of *asbab al-nuzul* is available. Differences in the historical characteristics of these two categories of verses may influence the process of contextual reconstruction, which is an important foundation for applying Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics. This research gap highlights the need for a more focused investigation into how the theory of *double movement* can be applied to both categories of verses.

In response to this research gap, the novelty of this study lies in its comparative analysis of the application of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics to verses with *asbab al-nuzul* and those for which no explicit account of *asbab al-nuzul* is available. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on specific themes, this study places both categories of verses at the center of its analysis. Through this comparison, the study seeks to identify similarities and differences in the interpretive process and explain their methodological implications for applying the theory of *double movement* in contemporary Quranic exegesis.

This study is expected to enrich the methodological foundations of contemporary Quranic exegesis, particularly the development of Quranic hermeneutics. Theoretically, it is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the flexibility and limitations of Fazlur Rahman's theory of *double movement* in interpreting verses with different historical characteristics. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for academics, researchers, and Quranic scholars seeking to develop interpretive approaches that are contextual, systematic, and relevant to the dynamics of modern society.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze and compare the application of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics in interpreting verses with *asbab al-nuzul* and those for which no explicit account of *asbab al-nuzul* is available. It also seeks to identify similarities and differences in the interpretive process and analyze the methodological implications arising from the application of the theory of *double movement* to these two categories of verses.

METHODS

This article employs a qualitative approach to examine, interpret, and explain in depth the application of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics to the interpretation of Quranic verses. This approach was selected because the object of study consists of ideas, concepts, and arguments contained in various textual sources, which require interpretive understanding rather than statistical measurement. In the study of Quranic exegesis and Islamic thought, a qualitative approach enables the researcher to explore the construction of meaning, conceptual relationships, and methodological reasoning underlying a thinker's ideas more comprehensively (Engkizar et al., 2025; Gorichanaz, 2018; Hashimov, 2015).

Method and Design

This article employs content analysis as its research method. This method is used to systematically identify, classify, and interpret documentary content to develop an in-depth understanding of a particular concept or body of thought. Content analysis was selected because the study focuses on Fazlur Rahman's writings and Quranic exegetical literature, making it suitable for identifying the patterns, principles, and operational mechanisms of the *double movement* theory. Furthermore,

this method enables a systematic comparison between the interpretations of verses with *asbab al-nuzul* and those for which no explicit account of *asbab al-nuzul* is available (Engkizar et al., 2019; Hamuddin et al., 2020).

Data Sources

The data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from Fazlur Rahman's works, particularly *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1982) and *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (2009), which serve as the principal references for understanding his hermeneutical approach and the theory of *double movement*. Secondary data were drawn from classical and contemporary Quranic commentaries, journal articles, academic books, and relevant previous studies. These two types of data sources were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding and facilitate the verification of concepts proposed by Fazlur Rahman through various academic perspectives (Engkizar et al., 2025).

Instruments

The primary research instrument is the researcher, who serves as the *human instrument* responsible for data collection, selection, classification, interpretation, and analysis. The researcher was designated as the primary instrument because qualitative research places the researcher's interpretive ability at the center of the process of understanding meaning within the data. To support this process, a documentation sheet, analytic notes, and a comparative matrix were also employed to map the similarities and differences in the application of the *double movement* theory to the two categories of verses under investigation. These supporting instruments were intended to enhance the systematic organization and consistency of the analytical process.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through documentary analysis of written sources relevant to the research focus. This process involved tracing, identifying, and cataloguing literature related to Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics, the theory of *double movement*, *asbab al-nuzul*, and Quranic exegesis. Documentary analysis was selected because all the required data were available in written form, allowing for an in-depth and systematic collection process consistent with the nature of an article examining a thinker's ideas (Bahishti, 2022; Guillen, 2019; Haleem & Shah, 2020).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive comparative analysis. The analytical stages comprised data reduction, data categorization, data presentation, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Descriptive analysis was used to explain Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical concepts systematically, while the comparative approach was employed to identify similarities and differences in the application of the *double movement* theory to verses with and without *asbab al-nuzul*. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the interpretive process while facilitating the identification of the methodological implications associated with both categories of verses (Kara, 2023).

Data Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation, which involved comparing information obtained from Fazlur Rahman's works with relevant Quranic commentaries, scholarly articles, and previous studies. This technique was selected to minimize interpretive subjectivity and ensure the consistency of the information used in the analysis. In addition, the validity of the findings was strengthened through persistent observation and referential adequacy, ensuring that the resulting interpretations were grounded in a sound academic foundation. Through these procedures, the analysis was expected to meet the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability, which are key indicators of qualitative research quality (Bryniarska, 2024; Sangrá et al., 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fazlur Rahman as the Proponent of the *Double Movement* Theory

Fazlur Rahman was one of the leading reformist thinkers in Islamic thought who developed a hermeneutical approach to understanding the Quran. One of his most well-known contributions is the *double movement* theory. Through this theory, Rahman sought to develop an interpretive method that goes beyond textual understanding by taking into account the historical context of revelation and the relevance of the Quran's moral messages to contemporary life.

Fazlur Rahman was born on September 21, 1919, in Hazara, a region in northwestern Pakistan. The region is known as the birthplace of several prominent intellectuals in the history of Islamic thought, including Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Amir Ali, and Muhammad Iqbal. As a thinker associated with Islamic neomodernism, Rahman developed a critical approach shaped by the Islamic intellectual tradition and engagement with modern thought (Masyhuda, 2020).

Rahman came from a devout Muslim family that followed the Hanafi school of law, which is known for its strong tradition of legal reasoning. This family background contributed to the formation of his intellectual orientation, although his thought remained grounded in the Quran and Sunnah. He received his basic religious education from his father, a traditional Islamic scholar, and had memorized the Quran by the age of ten. Although he was raised in a traditional family environment, Rahman did not entirely reject modern thought. Instead, his father viewed modernity as both a challenge and an opportunity for the further development of Islamic thought (Romli & Sofa, 2025).

This background helps explain Rahman's intellectual orientation, which sought to connect the Islamic intellectual heritage with the needs of modern society. In Quranic interpretation, this orientation was reflected in his attention to the relationship between the text, its historical context, and its underlying moral principles. The *double movement* theory became one of the approaches he developed to bridge the understanding of the Quran's message at the time of revelation with issues arising in contemporary life.

The *Double Movement* Theory

According to Fazlur Rahman, the historical context of revelation plays an important role in understanding the Quran because its verses were revealed within particular social, moral, and religious circumstances. Understanding these circumstances provides one of the foundations for applying the *double movement* theory (Qudsia & Haq, 2021).

Rahman's emphasis on the universality of the Quran's message encouraged the development of an interpretive method that connects the historical meaning of verses with the needs of contemporary society. Understanding the Quran cannot be achieved adequately by reading its text in isolation from the context of revelation. Interpreters need to examine the circumstances surrounding the revelation of a verse, identify its underlying moral principles, and relate those principles to contemporary issues. Therefore, understanding the Quran requires a comprehensive reading rather than an interpretation based solely on linguistic aspects. Rahman criticized text-oriented approaches because they risk overlooking the historical context and moral objectives underlying the Quran's message (Muslim et al., 2026).

Rahman's hermeneutical approach also needs to be distinguished from the systematic interpretive method discussed by (Rahmah, 2025). In Ahmadi (2017), the discussion includes historical inquiry to determine the meaning of the Quranic text, distinguishing legal rulings from the objectives underlying their formulation while remaining attentive to the risk of subjectivity, and applying Rahman's hermeneutical approach. This distinction is important to prevent the *double movement* theory from

being conflated with other interpretive approaches that have different stages and methodological orientations.

In the development of Islamic legal thought, the *double movement* theory can be explained through two main movements. The first movement proceeds from contemporary issues toward the historical context of revelation to understand the meaning of a verse and identify its underlying moral principles. The second movement proceeds from this historical understanding toward contemporary circumstances by applying the identified moral principles in accordance with the needs of modern society. This process enables the renewal of Islamic legal thought by considering the relationship between historical context and the moral objectives of Islamic teachings (Rohman, 2018).

The first movement: from contemporary circumstances to the context of revelation.

At this stage, interpreters begin by examining issues faced by contemporary society and then investigate the social, historical, and moral circumstances of the society at the time of revelation. This inquiry aims to understand the issues addressed by a verse and identify its general principles and moral values. The findings of the historical analysis are used to develop an understanding of the relationship between the Quran's message, the circumstances of the society at the time of revelation, and the moral objectives underlying its provisions. In this process, information about *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation), the chronology of revelation, and discussions of *naskh* (abrogation) may be considered where relevant to the verses under examination.

The second movement: from the context of revelation to contemporary circumstances.

At this stage, the moral principles and values identified through historical inquiry are applied to address contemporary issues. This application does not involve mechanically transferring historical rulings into the present. Instead, it requires consideration of the moral objectives of the verses and the characteristics of contemporary circumstances. Interpreters must carefully analyze social changes and current conditions to ensure that the application of Quranic principles remains consistent with the underlying moral message (Irawan, 2020).

The second movement also serves as a means of evaluating the findings of the first movement. If the identified principles cannot adequately explain or address contemporary issues, interpreters need to reassess both the reconstruction of the historical context and their understanding of present circumstances. Thus, the two movements form an interconnected interpretive process in which each can be used to reassess the other, and neither can be separated from the other (Irawan, 2020).

In this study, the *double movement* theory is used to compare the application of historical and contextual approaches to two categories of Quranic verses: verses for which relevant reports of *asbab al-nuzul* are available and verses for which no explicit information about *asbab al-nuzul* is provided. The comparison examines how the availability of historical information influences the interpretive process, the identification of moral principles, and the application of the Quran's message to contemporary life.

Applying the *Double Movement* Theory to Verses with *Asbab al-Nuzul*

The application of the *double movement* theory to verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul* involves examining the relationship between the text, the context of revelation, and the moral principles embedded in it. Information about the events surrounding the revelation of a verse can help interpreters understand the issues addressed by the Quran. However, such reports must still be examined alongside the textual meaning and relevant interpretations. This section discusses the application of the theory to the issues of electing non-Muslim leaders and consuming intoxicants, as examined by

(Firmansyah, 2020; Syarbini, 2019). These examples illustrate the relationship between reconstructing historical context and applying moral principles to contemporary circumstances (Umair & Said, 2023).

Interpreting Verses on the Election of Non-Muslim Leaders

The first example refers to an article by Beta Firmansyah entitled “Aplikasi Teori *Double Movement* Fazlur Rahman Terhadap Hukum Memilih Pemimpin Non-Muslim” (Applying Fazlur Rahman’s *Double Movement* Theory to the Legal Question of Electing Non-Muslim Leaders). The discussion concerns Quranic verses on relations between Muslims and other religious communities, particularly in matters of leadership. One relevant verse for analysis is Surah al-Ma’idah [5]:51.

Surah al-Ma’idah [5]:51

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Meaning: O you who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as *awliya*’. They are allies of one another. Whoever among you takes them as allies is indeed one of them. Surely, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”

In the first movement, this verse is analyzed by examining the meaning of the term *awliya*’, the social and political relations at the time of revelation, and the challenges faced by the Muslim community during that period. The term *awliya*’ encompasses a range of meanings that must be examined in relation to its context. Therefore, it cannot automatically be equated with every form of social relationship or every leadership position in a modern context. Interpreters also need to examine relevant reports of *asbab al-nuzul* and Quranic interpretations to establish which historical circumstances are actually supported by the sources.

According to Firmansyah (2020), one aspect that needs to be considered when interpreting verses on leadership is the relationship between the message of the verse and the social and political context in which it was revealed. This analysis seeks to understand issues of loyalty, conflict, and potential threats to the Muslim community under particular circumstances. Thus, the first movement does not stop at a literal reading of the prohibition but also seeks to explain the context and underlying moral principles.

In the second movement, the principles identified through historical analysis are examined in relation to contemporary political life. Today, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims extend across various areas, including economic activities, neighborhood interactions, citizenship, and political participation. In this context, integrity, justice, trustworthiness, public protection, and respect for the law are important considerations when evaluating leadership.

Through the *double movement* approach, the interpretation of this verse can examine the relationship between historical circumstances and moral principles relevant to modern political life. Firmansyah (2020) discusses the possibility that electing a non-Muslim leader does not necessarily contradict Islamic moral principles when there is no hostility or threat directed toward Muslims. Nevertheless, legal conclusions regarding the election of leaders must take into account all relevant verses, scholarly interpretations, and the supporting legal arguments. This example therefore illustrates how the *double movement* theory can connect a historical understanding of the verse with contemporary leadership issues without disregarding its textual meaning or relevant legal foundations.

Interpreting Verses on Intoxicants

The second example refers to an article by Imam Syarbini entitled “Teori *Double Movement* Fazlur Rahman Sebuah Tawaran Metodologis dalam Hukum Islam” (Fazlur Rahman’s *Double Movement* Theory: A Methodological Proposal in Islamic Law). The article discusses the application of the *double movement* theory to Quranic

verses concerning intoxicants, or *khamr*. Several relevant verses are Surah al-Nahl [16]:67, Surah al-Baqarah [2]:219, Surah al-Nisa' [4]:43, and Surah al-Ma'idah [5]:90–91.

Surah al-Nahl [16]:67

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Meaning: *From the fruits of date palms and grapevines, you derive an intoxicating drink and wholesome provision. Surely, in this there is a sign for people who reason.*"

Surah al-Baqarah [2]:219

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْغَفْوُ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Meaning: *They ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say, 'In both there is great sin and some benefit for people, but their sin is greater than their benefit.' They also ask you what they should spend. Say, 'What is beyond your needs.' Thus, Allah makes His revelations clear to you so that you may reflect.*

Surah al-Nisa' [4]:43

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا

Meaning: *O you who believe, do not approach prayer while intoxicated until you understand what you are saying, nor while in a state of major ritual impurity unless you are merely passing through until you have bathed. If you are ill, traveling, have relieved yourselves, or have had intimate contact with women and cannot find water, then perform tayammum with clean earth and wipe your faces and hands. Surely, Allah is Most Pardoning, Most Forgiving.*"

Surah al-Ma'idah [5]:90

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Meaning: *O you who believe, intoxicants, gambling, idolatrous sacrifices, and divining arrows are abominations of Satan's handiwork. So avoid them so that you may prosper.*

5. Surah al-Ma'idah [5]:91

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۚ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُوْنَ

Meaning: *Satan only seeks to stir up hostility and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from remembering Allah and performing prayer. Will you not then desist?*

In the first movement, these verses are analyzed in light of the social context of Arab society, where intoxicants were known and consumed. Surah al-Nahl [16]:67 refers to drinks derived from dates and grapes, while Surah al-Baqarah [2]:219 explains that intoxicants and gambling offer certain benefits but entail greater sin. Surah al-Nisa' [4]:43 prohibits approaching prayer while intoxicated, whereas Surah al-Ma'idah [5]:90–91 commands believers to avoid *khamr* and explains its harmful effects on social relations and religious observance.

These verses illustrate the development of the Quran's message concerning intoxicants. However, historical analysis requires more than simply arranging the verses in sequence. Interpreters also need to examine the chronology of revelation, relevant reports, and scholarly interpretations to establish the relationship between the verses accurately. Within the *double movement* framework, attention is directed toward the moral principles that can be identified across the sequence, including the protection of reason, the prevention of harm, behavioral self-restraint, and the preservation of social relationships and religious practice.

In the second movement, these moral principles are examined in a contemporary context. Modern society faces various types of intoxicating beverages and substances that can impair consciousness and cause harm. Consequently, applying the Quran's message is not limited to the forms of intoxicants known to Arab society at the time of revelation; it also requires consideration of the characteristics and effects of products or substances that have emerged in modern times.

As discussed by Syarbini (2019), the prohibition of *khamr* can be understood in light of the moral objective of preventing harm and protecting human well-being. Nevertheless, applying this principle to particular substances or products requires consideration of relevant Islamic legal scholarship. The *double movement* theory thus helps connect the historical understanding of Quranic verses with contemporary issues without disregarding textual meaning, legal foundations, or interpretations that can be justified through scholarly argument.

Applying the *Double Movement* Theory to Verses without Explicit *Asbab al-Nuzul* Reports

In discussions of the context of revelation, *asbab al-nuzul* generally refers to information about specific events or circumstances associated with the revelation of a verse. A contextual approach to understanding the Quran also requires attention to the social, cultural, and customary conditions of society at the time of revelation. Examining these broader circumstances can help interpreters understand the historical background of a verse, even when no specific report explicitly identifies the occasion of its revelation (Masyhuda, 2020).

In this study, Surah al-An'am is selected as an example for examining the application of the *double movement* theory to verses that are not specifically associated with micro-level *asbab al-nuzul* reports in the sources consulted. This selection does not imply that all verses in the surah lack a historical context. Rather, the analysis examines how the social and cultural circumstances of Arab society at the time of revelation can be reconstructed through historical sources, Quranic exegesis, and relationships between verses.

The first movement: reconstructing the historical context and identifying moral principles

Surah al-An'am is generally classified as a Meccan surah and addresses issues of monotheism, the rejection of polytheism, and criticism of religious practices that are not grounded in divine guidance. This context helps explain the surah's emphasis on the oneness of Allah and its rejection of religious practices considered inconsistent with monotheistic teachings. Discussions of Arab practices concerning livestock and dietary regulations should also be situated within an interpretation of the relevant verses, rather than relying solely on general descriptions of Arab society at the time.

One relevant verse is Surah al-An'am [6]:38.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

Meaning: *There is no creature on earth, nor bird that flies with its wings, but they are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book. Then they will all be gathered before their Lord.*

This verse explains that animals and birds are communities within Allah's knowledge and decree. In the first movement, the verse can be examined through its textual meaning and its relationship to the Quran's broader understanding of creation. Recognizing the place of living beings within Allah's creation constitutes one principle that can be developed through textual analysis. However, relating this verse to contemporary environmental ethics is an interpretive development that

requires explicit argumentation; it should not be treated as the verse's sole or explicit meaning.

Surah al-An'am [6]:145 also addresses dietary prohibitions.

Surah al-An'am [6]:145

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خَنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ
أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهْلًا لِعَذِّبِ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۚ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Meaning: *Say, 'In what has been revealed to me, I find nothing forbidden to eat except carrion, flowing blood, the flesh of swine, for it is impure, or an animal slaughtered in the name of anyone other than Allah.' But whoever is compelled by necessity, neither desiring it nor exceeding the limit, then surely your Lord is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

The following verse also discusses specific dietary restrictions imposed on the Jewish people.

Surah al-An'am [6]:146

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَزَمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ ۖ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَزَمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُرُهُمَا أَوْ الْحَوَايَا
أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۚ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ

Meaning: *To the Jews, We forbade every animal with claws. Of cattle and sheep, We forbade them their fat, except that which is carried on their backs, in their entrails, or attached to their bones. This was a punishment for their transgression. We are surely truthful.*

Surah al-An'am [6]:145–146 demonstrates that dietary regulations must be understood by considering the specific provisions stated in the text and the context of each verse. Verse 145 identifies several categories of prohibited food and addresses circumstances of necessity, whereas verse 146 discusses specific restrictions imposed on the Jewish people. These verses should therefore not be combined into a single ruling without considering their different contexts and intended subjects.

This analysis allows several moral principles to be examined, including recognition of Allah's sovereignty, human responsibility toward living beings, obedience to divine guidance, and understanding the regulations governing lawful and prohibited food. These principles provide a basis for relating the historical message of the verses to contemporary issues. However, their identification must remain attentive to textual meaning, relevant interpretations, and the relationships between verses to avoid overgeneralization.

The second movement: contextualizing moral principles in contemporary life

The second movement connects the moral principles identified through historical analysis with present-day circumstances. In the context of Surah al-An'am [6]:38, recognizing the place of living beings within creation can provide a basis for reflecting on human responsibility toward animals and environmental protection. The verse's message can be developed in discussions of environmental ethics, provided that the interpretation clearly explains how the Quranic principle is being related to contemporary concerns.

Meanwhile, Surah al-An'am [6]:145–146 can be examined in relation to modern consumption practices. Advances in food science, production processes, and food safety can help clarify contemporary issues concerning consumption. However, scientific considerations do not automatically replace legal provisions derived from the text and the Islamic interpretive tradition. Their application must distinguish between rulings explicitly stated in the verses, moral principles identified through interpretation, and new issues that require further legal reasoning.

Thus, applying the *double movement* theory to Surah al-An'am demonstrates that the absence of a specific micro-level *asbab al-nuzul* report in the sources examined does not prevent the historical context from being reconstructed. Interpreters can

still draw on the context of the surah, textual meaning, relationships between verses, and relevant exegetical sources. The second movement then connects the moral principles identified through this analysis with contemporary issues through reasoned argument while respecting the limits of interpretation.

Comparing the Application of the *Double Movement* Theory to Both Categories of Verses

Based on the examples of applying the *double movement* theory to verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul* and verses without explicit *asbab al-nuzul* information, several aspects can be compared. The comparison focuses on the availability of historical information, the interpretive process, the application of moral principles to contemporary circumstances, and the scope for intellectual renewal.

First, the availability of historical information. Verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul* provide information about specific events associated with revelation. Such information can help interpreters understand the issues addressed by a verse and identify relevant social circumstances. Conversely, when no specific *asbab al-nuzul* report is available in the sources examined, interpreters need to draw on other sources, including the context of the surah, the social and cultural conditions of Arab society, historical accounts, and relationships between verses. The difference therefore concerns the type and availability of historical evidence, rather than the presence or absence of a historical context underlying revelation.

Second, the interpretive process. Interpreting verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul* can be facilitated by information about events directly associated with revelation. However, the existence of such reports does not mean that interpretation can remain descriptive and literal without further analysis. Interpreters must still examine textual meaning, the reliability and relevance of the reports, and the moral principles embedded in the verses. For verses without explicit *asbab al-nuzul* information, reconstructing the context may require broader analysis of history, surah structure, and relationships between verses. Both categories require critical reasoning and a systematic interpretive approach.

Third, the relationship between historical context and contemporary application. In both categories, the *double movement* theory requires interpreters to move from historical understanding toward identifying moral principles relevant to present-day life. The difference lies in how the historical context is reconstructed and what evidence supports the interpretation. Verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul* can be analyzed using information about the events surrounding revelation, whereas verses without specific reports require broader consideration of the macro-context. Nevertheless, both categories must maintain a clear relationship between textual meaning, historical context, moral principles, and their application to contemporary issues.

Fourth, interpretive scope and intellectual renewal. The availability of *asbab al-nuzul* reports can help limit interpretations that are inconsistent with the context of revelation. However, this does not mean that interpretations of verses with such reports are necessarily more literal or must follow a single interpretation from earlier scholars. Conversely, limited information about a specific occasion of revelation does not automatically grant greater freedom to propose new interpretations. In both categories, intellectual renewal must be grounded in defensible arguments, an understanding of the Quran's moral principles, and careful analysis of contemporary circumstances.

This comparison indicates that applying the *double movement* theory to verses with and without explicit *asbab al-nuzul* information requires both historical reconstruction and the identification of moral principles. The main difference lies in the availability of sources for reconstructing the context. Reports of *asbab al-nuzul* can provide specific information about the circumstances of revelation, while the broader

social context, historical accounts, and relationships between verses become important sources when specific reports are unavailable. Therefore, the effectiveness of the *double movement* theory is determined not merely by whether reports of *asbab al-nuzul* exist, but also by the accuracy of historical reconstruction, the strength of interpretive arguments, and the consistency with which Quranic moral principles are applied to contemporary issues (Engkizar et al., 2026; Saidi et al., 2025).

Overall, this comparison demonstrates that the *double movement* theory provides a framework for connecting the Quranic text, historical context, and present-day concerns. For verses with reports of *asbab al-nuzul*, those reports serve as one source for reconstructing the context of revelation. For verses without specific information in the sources examined, interpreters can draw on social and cultural contexts, exegetical studies, and relationships between verses. In both categories, the application of the theory must maintain a clear connection between textual meaning and historical argumentation while distinguishing the explicit message of a verse from the moral principles developed through interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that Fazlur Rahman's double movement hermeneutics employs a fundamentally similar interpretive procedure for Quranic verses both with and without *Asbab al-Nuzul*. The method begins with an examination of the historical context of revelation to identify the moral and universal principles embedded within the text, followed by their contextualization in contemporary social realities. However, the analytical findings reveal a significant difference in the process of historical reconstruction. Verses accompanied by *Asbab al-Nuzul* provide a clearer historical framework that facilitates the identification of the circumstances surrounding revelation, whereas verses without *Asbab al-Nuzul* require a more rigorous socio-historical analysis of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabian society. Consequently, the effectiveness of the double movement approach depends largely on the interpreter's ability to reconstruct historical contexts and derive universal Quranic values from them.

The novelty of this article lies in its comparative examination of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical application to verses with and without *Asbab al-Nuzul*, an aspect that has received limited attention in previous scholarship. The findings contribute to the development of contemporary Quranic interpretation by demonstrating that the absence of explicit occasions of revelation does not prevent contextual interpretation, provided that a comprehensive socio-historical reconstruction is undertaken. These findings further affirm the relevance of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics as a flexible and systematic interpretive framework capable of bridging the historical context of revelation with contemporary challenges, thereby enriching scholarly discussions on contextual Quranic exegesis and its application in modern Muslim societies.

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Author contribution

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