

Nepotism in the Story of Prophet Musa and Harun in the Qur'an: A Thematic Study

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Abstract

This study analyzes the practice of nepotism in the relationship between Musa and Harun in the Qur'an from an Islamic kinship perspective supported by divine legitimacy. The main focus of this study is to analyze key verses in the Qur'an related to nepotism (the granting of power in kinship) in the story of Musa and Harun. Through qualitative methods and maudhu'i (thematic) interpretation with a content analysis approach to explore the thoughts of exegetes (mufasssirr) regarding the relationship between Musa and Harun both in lineage, religion, da'wah and leadership. The results chapter of this study discusses in depth three main indicators of nepotism in the story of Musa and Harun in the Qur'an. First, the intention or purpose underlying Musa' request to give Aaron a position. Second, Harun's superiority or capability as a candidate proposed by Musa to Allah SWT. Third, divine legitimacy or conformity with sharia values (justice). The results of this study indicate that the granting of power in kinship (nepotism) found in the story of Musa and Harun is positive because it is based on the goal of the welfare of the people and the excellence of Aaron which Allah recorded in the Qur'an especially in the field of fashahah and the granting of this position is not only in accordance with the value of justice but also received direct approval from Allah SWT. This study is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic leadership and become a reference for further studies in the field of politics or Islamic leadership..

Nepotism; Story; Musa and Harun; Al-Qur'an

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis praktik nepotisme dalam relasi Musa-Harun di dalam Al-Qur'an dengan perspektif kekerabatan Islami yang didukung legitimasi ilahi. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah menganalisis ayat-ayat kunci dalam Al-Qur'an yang berkaitan dengan Nepotisme (pemberian kekuasaan dalam kekerabatan) pada kisah Musa dan Harun. Melalui metode kualitatif dan tafsir maudhu'i (tematik) dengan pendekatan analisis isi untuk menjelajahi pemikiran ahli tafsir (mufasssirr) terkait hubungan Musa dan Harun baik dalam nasab, agama, dakwah dan kepemimpinan. Bab hasil penelitian ini membahas secara mendalam tiga indikator utama nepotisme pada kisah Musa dan Harun dalam Al-Qur'an. pertama niat atau tujuan yang melandasi permintaan Musa untuk memberikan kedudukan kepada Harun. Kedua keunggulan atau kapabilitas Harun sebagai kandidat yang diajukan Musa kepada Allah SWT. Ketiga legistimasi ilahiyah atau kesesuaian dengan nilai syari'at (keadilan). Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemberian kekuasaan dalam kekerabatan (Nepotisme) yang terdapat pada kisah Musa dan Harun adalah bersifat positif karena dilandasi tujuan kemaslahatan umat serta keunggulan Harun yang Allah catat dalam Al-Qur'an terutama dalam bidang fashahah dan pemberian kedudukan ini bukan hanya sesuai dengan nilai keadilan bahkan mendapat persetujuan langsung dari Allah SWT. Penelitian ini diharapkan memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan kepemimpinan Islam dan menjadi rujukan bagi studi lanjutan dalam bidang politik atau kepemimpinan Islam

Kata Kunci: Nepotisme; Kisah; Musa dan Harun; Al-Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is a guide for human life and the Qur'an emphasizes the need to be kind (devoted) to relatives, in fact Allah places this commandment after the command to only worship Allah and not associate anything with Him and the command to be devoted to both parents (Mujahid & Haeriyah, 2020). Allah says in the Qur'an:

﴿وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجُنُبِ وَإِنَّ السَّبِيلَ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا﴾

And worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him. And be kind to parents, close relatives, orphans, the poor, near and far neighbors, colleagues, Ibn Sabil and any servants you have. Indeed, Allah does not like people who are arrogant and proud of themselves (QS. An-Nisa verse 36).

Regarding this verse, Thanthawi (1999) explains that in this verse the command to be filial to parents and relatives comes after the command to unite Allah SWT, because humans who have the greatest right to be respected and obeyed after Allah are parents who are the direct cause of human existence and likewise to be filial to relatives whom Allah has united among human beings with ties of kinship and lineage. In addition to the concept of kinship regulated in the Qur'an, Allah also juxtaposes the command to be filial to relatives with the command to act fairly as which is the oldest in the Qur'an (Suhaili, 2021). Allah SWT says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

Assuredly Allah will do justice, do good deeds, and give good deeds to relatives. He (also) forbids vile deeds, evil deeds, evil deeds, evil deeds. He gives teach you so that you will always remember.” (An-Nahl verse 90)

Justice is giving rights to those who are entitled without reducing or increasing them, while ihsan is within the context of justice, such as forgiving those who have done wrong, renewing ties of kinship with those who have severed them, and so on (Fachri, 2018). This shows that the ihsan (prioritizing relatives) which is prescribed in the Qur'an is a form of ihsan which is within the circle of justice (Hidayat & Najah, 2020). However, in this research, we will examine nepotism which is the practice of giving priority to (menguuntungkan) family or relatives based on blood relations rather than meritocracy, especially in government (Adiyanti, et.al., 2024). Nepotism has become a critical issue in human history and is claimed to have become a culture in every decision-making or policy-making process by the bureaucracy, both at the international elite level and at the national level. In the modern era, nepotism has become a critical issue in various fields, especially politics and bureaucracy (Rahman & Ghozali, 2018).

In many countries, this practice is reflected in the appointment of public officials based on family ties or personal ties, rather than meritocracy. For example, a political leader might appoint a sibling or child to a government position despite their lack of qualifications. As a result, nepotism not only undermines transparent governance but also undermines public trust in institutions (Tory & Hanum, 2015). Additionally, in the corporate world, modern nepotism often takes the form of “inner networks” or family recommendations (Fitriadi, et.al., 2015).

In the Qur'an, there are stories that are no less unique that highlight the dynamics of power and family relations in the stories of the prophets, and unique ones include Musa and Harun (Romziana & Rahmaniyyah, 2021). At least two points are textually indicated that the Prophet Musa

committed Nepotism, including when Musa was appointed by Allah as a prophet and apostle and entrusted with the mandate to preach to the children of Israel and save them from the cruelty of Pharaoh, then he immediately asked Allah to give him support from among his relatives, namely his brother Harun. He was also the vizier (helper) and Allah granted that request but not only that but all the things that Musa asked Allah for, these are recorded in the Koran. Allah Subhāshwah wa Ta'ala says:

نُسَبِّحُكَ كَثِيرًا ۝ ٣٣ وَنَذْكُرُكَ كَثِيرًا ۝ ٣٤ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ۝ ٣٥ Home وَأَجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ۝ ٢٩ هَٰؤُلَاءِ أَخِي ۝ ٣٠

And make for me a servant from my family, (29) namely Harun, my brother, (30) strengthen my strength with (his presence), (31) and make him a friend in my affairs, (32) so that we praise You much, (33) and remember You much, (34) verily You are All-Seeing (of our condition). (35)” [QS Taha (20): 29-35]

The word *wazir* which is found in verse 29, if read by modern humans, will give the impression that it has a strong meaning and is very closely related to government, because the use of this word is often heard only in the realm of government, which can be interpreted as Minister (Rochim, et.al., 2023). Musa was also ordered by Allah to save the children of Israel from the shackles and pressure of the tyrannical Pharaoh, so automatically after the rescue mission was completed, the situation would require the formation of a government system led by someone with authority to protect its citizens (Mauluddin, 2021). When observed further, those who had the most right to occupy the position of leader at that time were Musa and Harun as his ministers.

Another question also arises that the words “*Ahliy*” and “*Akhiy*” in the verse refer to close kinship, namely my family and my brothers, so that it raises a big question in the eyes of every reader whether the Prophet Musa refers to his brother Harun because of the kinship ties between them or because of Harun’s proper competence. Because there was a moment when Musa commented on the performance of his brother Aaron, namely when Musa was about to leave the Children of Israel for forty nights to go to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, Musa asked his brother Aaron to replace his position as leader of the children of Israel and advised him to always do Islāh and never follow the path of those who do corruption.

Based on previous research conducted Sirait, et.al (2023), whose research gap is to study nepotism in an Islamic perspective that the results of the research Nepotism is the attitude of placing something in the wrong place This occurs because of the relationship between the determinants of wisdom and authority contained within a person and a person’s attitude of using unprofessional and disproportionate authority and power. If according to the research (Fitriadi, et.al., 2024), the gap is the same as what you want Looking at nepotism from an Islamic perspective, it was found that nepotism is an act of cheating, favoring close relatives over ability, thus indicating injustice. This is because fairness in all circumstances, including fairness in treating relatives and others, must be considered. Placing relatives in certain positions or positions according to their competence or ability is not considered cheating. In comparison, this study analyzes key verses in the Qur’an related to nepotism (the granting of power in kinship) in the story of Musa and Harun. Through qualitative methods and thematic (*maudhu’i*) interpretation with a content analysis approach, it explores the thoughts of exegetes (*mufasssir*) regarding the relationship between Musa and Harun, both in lineage, religion, preaching, and leadership.

This is in accordance with the understanding of modern humans who are used to hearing the word nepotism after reading and knowing the story will wonder, whether the attitude of prioritizing family or relatives in the Qur'an's perception can be categorized as modern nepotism, or even Islam actually has its own perception of prioritizing family and relatives, so that later it will be divided into prioritizing good relatives and there are also bad sides?, or maybe nepotism is all bad without exception? Then the story of Musa and Harun can be categorized as good Nepotism. This is the background to this research.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a library research type, which is a study obtained from searching literature or by summarizing the research of the text of the verses of the Qur'an related to Nepotism and the text of the verses of the Qur'an related to Nepotism in the story of Musa and Harun by using Tafsir Al-Baghawi; Tafsir Al-Kabir; Tafsir Al-Qurthubi; Tafsir Al-Tabari; Tafsir Ibn Katsir. The research method used in this research is the thematic tafsir (*maḍū'i*) method, because this research is a thematic study of the holy book of the Qur'an and its tafsir. An interpretation is not only created but also involves one of the sub-compositions.

The steps taken by the researcher in the thematic tafsir (*maḍū'i*) method are, first, determining the research theme studied from the Qur'an. Then the researcher collects verses. Next, the researcher arranges the verses. Then the researcher understands *munasabah*, namely the relationship and correlation between verses in the context of their respective surahs, as well as the relationship between verses with other related verses. Next, create a framework and analyze the verses. Finally, make a comprehensive and relevant conclusion to the theme discussed. The sub-composition is intended, namely the method of interpretation including *tablili*, *ijmali*, *kemenia*, choosing for interpretation based on *ma'tsur* (history) or *ra'y* (thought).

At the same time, there are also other methods used in this study, namely interpretation with hermeneutics. Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, namely "inclusive hermeneutics", the basic problem studied by hermeneutics is the problem of interpreting texts in general, both historical texts and religious texts. The data analysis method that will be used in this research is content analysis which is aimed at analyzing the text of the Qur'an related to the formulation of the problem raised, namely nepotism in the Qur'an and nepotism in the story of Musa and Harut in the Qur'an.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation Review of the Verses of the Story of Musa and Harun

This section will outline the interpretations of both classical and contemporary scholars of tafsir (Islamic exegesis) on the verses that form the central focus of the Prophet Musa' request to involve his brother, Harun, in the prophetic mission. This analysis aims to explore the linguistic, theological, and psychological dimensions of this request in order to understand the concept of *al-qarabah al-Islamiyah* (praiseworthy kinship), which distinguishes it from nepotism. An in-depth understanding of the issue of nepotism in the story of Musa and Harun requires a review of the interpretations of Al-Qur'an commentators on the relevant key verses. This interpretation provides a rich perspective on how scholars understand the justification for Harun's appointment and the limits of the command to do good to relatives.

There are two incidents narrated in the Qur'an regarding Musa's prioritization of his brother Harun, the first was when he asked Allah to appoint Harun as a helper who would complement his shortcomings in his missionary journey (Al-Qur'an Surah. Thaha: 29-32 and Al-Qur'an Surah. Al-Qashash: 34), and the second was the granting of a temporary mandate by Musa to Harun (Al-Qur'an Surah. Al-A'raf [7]: 142), the following is an explanation from the interpreters of the verse.

The commentators have paid special attention to the verses which narrate the prayers of the Prophet Musa AS regarding Prophet Harun AS (Al-Qur'an Surah. Thaha: 29-32 Al-Qur'an Surah. Al-Qashash: 34). Classical commentators focused their analysis on the narrations from the Salaf generations, the authenticity of the meaning of the words (linguistics), and the theological implications contained in each verse.

1. Verse about Musa's prayer for the appointment of Harun

After receiving a direct order from Allah SWT to confront Pharaoh, the oppressive and overbearing ruler of Egypt, Prophet Musa AS realized the weight of the task he was carrying out (At-Tabari, n.d.). In this critical situation, he prayed to Allah SWT, one part of which was a request for support from his own family. Here, the request was more specific. Musa (peace be upon him) not only asked for a servant, but explicitly requested that the servant be from among his own family and directly appointed Harun, his brother. This is evident in the following verse:

a. Surah Thaha: 29-32

وَأَجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي (٢٩) هَارُونَ أَخِي (٣٠) اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي (٣١) وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي (32)

“And make for me a servant from my family, (namely) Harun, my brother. Strengthen my strength with him, and include him in my affairs.”

Al-Alusi, in *Rub al-Ma'ani*, it is explained that the word “wazir” (وزير) comes from the word al-wizr (الوزر), which means a heavy burden. Thus, a wazir is someone who helps carry the burden of his leader. Some also believe that it comes from the word al-azr (الأزر), which means “back” or “strength,” so a wazir is someone who is relied upon for strength. Both meanings are relevant; Musa (as) asked for a helper who could lighten the burden of his da'wah and be a source of strength for him. The request “min ahli” (من أهلي), meaning “from my family,” indicates a specification based on Musa's deep knowledge of Harun's capabilities and loyalty (Al-Alusi, 1994).

Al-Qurtubi, in *Al-Jami' li Abkam*, the Qur'an explains that Musa asked Allah Ta'ala to be given a vizier (helper), but he did not want the help to be limited to just ordinary help, but he wanted the person to be his partner in nubuwah (prophecy), if it is not certain, it is actually permissible to ask for support without asking Allah SWT, so Musa also determined his supporter, namely Harun, who was one or three years older than Musa and Harun was fatter than Musa, and taller, and whiter, and more fluent in speaking (Al-Qurtubi, 1964).

Fakhruddin ar-Razi, in *Mafatihul Ghaib*, he analyzes in depth the rational aspects behind this request. According to him, Musa as was aware of the task of facing Pharaoh, he submitted eight requests to Allah SWT, among which was to ask for a supporter (wazir) from among his family (Musa), Fakhruddin ar-Razi explained the reason someone asked for

help with a wazir, sometimes because he was afraid that he would not be able to carry out the order so he asked for a helper or because he saw that in helping and supporting each other on the basis of religion accompanied by the purity of love and the absence of suspicion (accusation) is an extraordinary virtue (Ar-Razi, 1420 AH).

Classical commentators often quote the famous words of Abdullah bin Abbas ra which show how noble Musa's request was:

“ مَا شَفَعَ أَحَدٌ فِي أَحَدٍ شَفَاعَةً فِي الدُّنْيَا أَعْظَمَ مِنْ شَفَاعَةِ مُوسَى فِي هَارُونَ أَنْ يَكُونَ نَبِيًّا ”

“There is no one who gives intercession (recommendation) to other people in the world that is greater than Musa's intercession (recommendation) for Harun so that he would be appointed a prophet.”

These words emphasize that Musa's “intervention” was not for worldly gain, but rather to elevate his brother's status in the supreme service of God. Their interpretation generally leads to the conclusion that Musa's request was based on the objective necessity of the prophetic mission and Aaron's qualifications.

b. Surah Al-Qasas: 34

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْتُهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي

“And my brother Harun, he is more eloquent in his tongue than me, so sent him with me as my helper to confirm my (words).”

Fakhruddin Ar-Razi explains the munasabah of this verse with the previous verse that when Musa was ordered to go to Pharaoh and his people with two miracles that supported him, he asked Allah to strengthen his heart and remove his fear, so he admitted that he had killed someone from Pharaoh's family and he was afraid that he would be killed, so he asked Allah to send Harun who was more eloquent than Musa (Ar-Razi, 1420 AH).

Fakhruddin Ar-Razi explains that “afshahu minni lisanan” (أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا) is Musa's honest admission of his weakness (because there was a blockage in Musa's tongue which might have been congenital or caused by the burning coals when Musa held Pharaoh's beard), and an acknowledgement of his brother's superiority in a specific aspect: eloquence or rhetoric (Ar-Razi, 1420 AH). This is the basis of meritocracy. He didn't ask Harun because he was a relative, but because Harun possessed qualifications (eloquence) that he himself lacked.

The word “rid'an” (رِدْءًا), according to the language experts quoted Al-Qurthubi, (1964) and Ibn Kathir, (1998). means ‘aunan (عَوْنًا) which means help or waziran which means helper or supporter. Its purpose is very clear and functional: “yushaddiquni” (يُصَدِّقُنِي), namely to justify, confirm, and strengthen Musa's argument before Pharaoh and his people. This is a strategy of da'wah communication.

It can be understood that Harun's aim in the verse “yushaddiquni” (justifying me) is not just Harun's words to Musa (you are right, O Musa), or Harun saying to the people that Musa is a truthful or honest person, but what is meant is that with his fluent speech he can conclude various arguments, and answer doubts and debate the infidels, so this is the tashdiq (justification) that is meant.

2. Paragraph Granting Temporary Leadership Mandate to Harun

In addition to requesting that Aaron be a companion in his mission to Pharaoh, the Quran also records a moment when the Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) directly gave Aaron the mandate of temporary leadership. This incident occurred when Musa was about to go to Mount Sinai to receive revelations from Allah for forty nights. Before leaving, Musa advised Aaron, in accordance with the words of Allah Almighty in the Quran, Surah Al-A'raf: 142:

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And Musa said to his brother Aaron: “Replace me in (lead) my people, and make amends, and do not follow the path of those who cause mischief.”

As for the interpretation of the Al-Qur'an Surah Al-A'raf [7]: 142 which concerns the provision of temporary leadership mandates in his work Tafsir Al-Kasyaf, Az-Zamakhsyari explains that the context of this verse is that when he was still in Egypt, Musa promised the Children of Israel, if Allah destroyed their enemy (Pharaoh) then a book of guidance would come from Allah. So when Pharaoh was destroyed, Musa asked Allah to send down a book of guidance, so Allah ordered him to fasting for thirty days and that was the month of dzul qa'dahi, when he had completed thirty Musa felt rishi with the smell of his mouth so he became siwak, then the angel said to him “we smelled the aroma of al-misk (misk) from your mouth, then the aroma was removed by siwat so Allah ordered him to add ten days to the month of dzul hijjah because of that (Az-Zamakhsyari, 1987).

Al-Alusi (1994), Ar-Razi (1420 AH) and Al-Qurthubi (1964) interpreting “ukhlufni fi qawmi” (اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي) O Harun, be my caliph in leading my people and monitor them in what they do and what they leave behind. As a temporary leadership mandate. The word caliph (successor) comes from the same root. This was a clear delegation of authority and was limited to the period of Musa's departure to Thur Hill.

Al-Alusi adds an explanation in his book of commentary, Ruh al-Ma'ani, that although Harun was his partner in prophecy and treatises, the leadership of the Children of Israel was entirely in the hands of Musa, because the prophethood and treatises did not have leadership as understood from the story of the prophets of the Children of Israel, as noted by Ibn 'Arabi in his book al-Futuh al-Makkiyah that Harun is said to be basically a prophet and apostle with the law as a follower (the treatise of Musa), then the possibility of being appointed caliph is because basically Harun's treatise follows the treatise of Musa (Al-Alusi, 1994).

The classical commentators include Ibn Kathir (1998) and (Al-Qurthubi (1964) interpret this verse very specifically and limited to its context. Harun's mandate has two main pillars: “wa ashlih” (وَأَصْلِحْ), which is to make amends, namely the command to be gentle with them, correct them and yourselves and be those who correct (muslih), and some also say that including amends is to provide a deterrent effect to the destroyers and violators of the rules. And “wa la tattabi' sabila al-mufsidin” (وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ), which is a strict prohibition to compromise with the destroyers who commit wrongdoing. These commands and prohibitions are merely appeals and reminders, and if they are not appealed to and reminded, Harun is a Noble Prophet.

The Profound Implications of the Instruction Lā Tattabi' The fact that an instruction as important as “do not follow the path of the corrupt” was given by one Prophet (Musa) to another Prophet (Harun) reveals a crucial lesson about leadership. It underscores the potential danger of negative influences (*mufsidīn*) in a community, even for the most pious leaders. The context of the Israelites at that time, newly liberated from slavery and prone to deviation (as later evidenced by the incident of worshipping the golden calf), makes this warning particularly relevant.

This instruction implies that effective and correct leadership requires not only the leader's personal integrity, but also active vigilance against corrupt or destructive forces around him. A leader has a responsibility to firmly refuse to ally with, compromise with, or facilitate the path of corruptors (*mufsidīn*) (Ngadin, 2022). This is a lesson about the importance of maintaining systemic integrity and socio-political vigilance, beyond just the individual integrity of the leader himself.

Collectively, the interpretations of the scholars point to the conclusion that the appointment of Harun (AS) was a temporary *khalīfah* (successor or deputy), equipped with a very clear ethical mandate to preserve good (*iṣlāḥ*) and prevent harm (*fasād*). The focus of the interpretation lies on the crucial function of this appointment in preserving the community of the Children of Israel during the critical period of Musa (AS)'s absence, not solely on Harun's identity as Musa's brother. Kinship, in this context, seems to serve as a background that strengthens trust, but is not the primary justification highlighted by the commentators. The primary justification lies in Harun's prophetic qualifications and the urgent need for trustworthy leadership.

Classical commentators interpreted it as a functional and temporary appointment. They did not see it as a legitimate basis for permanent or dynastic leadership succession. Aaron's authority was bound by the mandate from Musa and limited to the duration of Musa's absence. The failure of the Children of Israel (by worshipping the calf) and Aaron's subsequent response demonstrate the complexity of this mandate, not that the mandate itself was flawed. Their focus was on the lesson of the importance of maintaining trust and the boundaries of leadership.

Nepotism in the Story of Musa and Harun in the Qur'an

To understand how Islam navigates the potential tension between the encouragement of prioritizing relatives and the prohibition of unfair favoritism, it is necessary to examine the fundamental ethical principles of the Quran, particularly justice ('adl) and amanah (competence, trustworthiness). These principles serve as the distinguishing criteria between praiseworthy preference for relatives (as in maintaining kinship and social assistance) and reprehensible nepotism. The primary foundation is the command to uphold absolute justice, as enshrined in the Quranic Surah An-Nisa, verse 135:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ...

“O you who believe! Be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah, even against yourselves or against your parents and relatives...”

This verse, as interpreted by Imam al-Qurthubi, is a very firm command to act fairly in all situations, regardless of personal relationships, including kinship relationships (Fitriadi, et.al, 2024).

Justice is a universal value that must be upheld, even if it means being fair to relatives who may be guilty or undeserving. Based on this principle of justice, Islam strictly forbids granting public positions or offices to relatives or close associates if such actions disregard qualifications, competence, or applicable regulations (Fitriadi, et.al, 2024). Placement of a person in a position should be based on potential, performance, and relevant skills.

Appointing a competent and qualified relative is not wrong. However, what is considered wrong and falls under the category of reprehensible nepotism is when the decision is based solely on kinship, ignoring expertise, or when there are other candidates who are clearly more qualified and deserving (Sirait, et.al., 2024). Actions like this are seen as a form of injustice because they deprive others of the rights of those who are more deserving.

The second relevant principle is mandate, which includes the meaning of trust, responsibility and competence. Public office in Islam is seen as a trust that must be carried out by the most capable and trustworthy person. The Qur'an in the Qur'an Surah. Al-Anfal verses 27-28 remind believers not to betray Allah, the Messenger, and the trust entrusted to them (Sirait, et.al., 2024). Placing an incompetent person in a position, even if he is a relative, can be considered a form of betrayal of that trust.

The Prophet's hadiths also emphasize the importance of trustworthiness in leadership and prohibit cheating. The story of the Prophet's refusal to give Abu Dharr a position because he was considered weak, even though Abu Dharr was a noble companion, shows that suitability and ability are primary considerations (Yulizar, 2024). Thus, the fundamental difference between the prioritization of relatives recommended by Islam (as in maintaining ties of kinship and providing social assistance) and the reprehensible nepotism lies in whether or not there is a violation of the principles of justice and trust (competence). Preference for relatives in the context of personal assistance, social support, or the fulfillment of basic rights is highly encouraged. However, in the context of public office or matters concerning the rights and welfare of the public, the principles of justice and competence must be the top priority (Yunus, 2016).

The recommendation to be kind to relatives is not absolute and is limited by these higher principles of public ethics. However, this can become reprehensible nepotism when kinship preferences override considerations of justice and competence. It can be concluded that Islam clearly distinguishes between the obligation to maintain good relations and help relatives in the social-personal sphere, with a strict prohibition against kinship-based favoritism that sacrifices justice and competence in the public sphere (Yulizar, 2024).

The story of the Prophets Musa (peace be upon him) and Aaron (peace be upon him) is a crucial narrative in the Quran, often referenced in discussions of leadership, partnership, and kinship. An analysis of the verses that specifically describe Aaron's appointment as Musa's companion is key to understanding whether this act can be categorized as nepotism or whether it has other justification within the framework of Quranic values (Nursyirwan, et.al., 2021). One starting point for analysis is the explicit recognition of the element of kinship in the process of appointing Harun. The Qur'an clearly records how the Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) consciously mentioned Harun's status as his brother when submitting a request to Allah SWT.

Regarding Musa's prayer for Harun's partnership and qualifications, as found in Surah Thaha, verses 29-32 of the Qur'an, Musa's request to appoint Harun was based on clear qualifications relevant to the mission's needs. Harun's eloquence was a specific competency that addressed Musa's weaknesses and the communication challenges of his da'wah. This suggests a meritocratic element in Musa's proposal, where the selection was based on required abilities, even though the candidate was his own brother. This strengthens the argument that Musa's action was not blind favoritism, but rather a strategic move that considered merit.

Although Musa's request contained an element of personal preference based on kinship, the crucial element that distinguishes this case from ordinary nepotism is the presence of divine intervention and legitimacy. The Qur'an records Allah SWT's direct response to Musa's prayer in Surah Tāhā [20]:36, Allah says:

قَالَ فَذُو أُوتَيْتَ سؤُوكَ يُؤسَى

(Allah) said, "Indeed, your request has been granted, O Musa."

The acceptance of this prayer "فَذُو أُوتَيْتَ" (truly granted/granted) is a form of explicit approval and divine legitimacy for all of Musa's requests, including the request to appoint Harun as his vizier and partner in prophethood. This confirms that Harun's appointment was not merely Musa's decision or desire, but rather a decree approved, validated, and granted by Allah SWT. Quoting from At-Thabari's interpretation, Allah supported Musa with the prophethood of his brother Harun at Musa's request (At-Tabari, 1981). This was the ultimate validation of Aaron's worthiness. This divine recognition went beyond mere technical competence (such as eloquence) to encompass spiritual worthiness and prophetic integrity. This further bolstered the "benevolent nepotism" argument in this case to its most fundamental level of justification, where the decision was based on an absolute divine judgment regarding the capabilities and needs of the mission.

Related in connection with the granting of a temporary mandate to Harun in the Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf: 142, indicates that this verse indicates the delegation of leadership authority from Musa to Aaron during his absence. The choice fell on Aaron, his brother. However, what is important to note is the instruction that accompanied this delegation. Musa not only asked Aaron to replace him, but also gave clear direction: to "improve" (make amends, maintain order and goodness) and strictly forbid following the path of those who cause corruption (Al-Baghawi, 1997)

This instruction indicates that Aaron's appointment was not merely a formality or based on blood ties. Musa entrusted him with a leadership mandate with clear performance expectations and ethical standards. This demonstrates that Musa viewed Aaron as a trustworthy figure (amanah) and considered capable of safeguarding and improving the condition of the children of Israel during his absence.

Upon Prophet Musa's return from the Miqat (ascension) on Mount Sinai, he found his people had fallen into the worship of the golden calf made by Samiri. Musa's first reaction, after venting his anger on his people, was to demand an immediate accountability from Harun (as), who had been entrusted with leading them (Ibn Kathir, 1998). The dialogue that took place, as recorded in Surah Taha, is very significant:

قَالَ يَا هَارُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا (٩٢) أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي (٩٣)

“He (Musa) said, “O Harun! What hindered you when you saw that they had gone astray, (92) (so that) you did not follow me? Have you disobeyed my orders?” [Surah Taha verses 92-93].

Musa’ (peace be upon him) question highlights several important points: 1) Although Aaron was his brother and partner in prophethood appointed by God’s permission, he was still held accountable for the task he was entrusted with. Appointment based on “positive nepotism” does not eliminate the obligation to uphold trust and does not provide immunity from performance evaluation. Musa (peace be upon him) demanded an explanation as to why Aaron (peace be upon him) did not act more decisively or follow him (in terms of decisiveness or principle), since he knew that Aaron could not possibly have joined in idol worship (Assyria, 1984). 2) Failure to prevent a major deviation is seen as potential disobedience to Musa’ command, which is essentially a representation of God’s command. This indicates that the standards applied to Aaron (as) were very high, in accordance with the weight of the mandate of prophethood and leadership of the community.

This episode of Musa’ (pbuh) criticism of Harun (pbuh) and its resolution through communal prayer actually enriches our understanding of “positive nepotism.” It demonstrates that this model is not naive; it acknowledges challenges, demands accountability, yet remains grounded in a fundamental bond of trust and resolved within the framework of God’s gracious teachings.

Distinguishing the Musa-Harun Case from the Practice of Nepotism

1. Harun’s appointment was based on Musa’ request

Based on an analysis of qualifications, missionary needs, and divine legitimacy, the case of Aaron’s appointment can be fundamentally distinguished from the despicable practice of nepotism using the main criteria previously established. As for the story of Musa and Harun, the goal was for the benefit of the people, given Musa’ shortcomings, which led him to fear that they would hinder his preaching (Ridwan, 2023). In addition, the Competency criteria are met, Harun has specific qualifications (eloquence) that are recognized by Musa and are very relevant to the needs of the missionary task. His appointment is based on merit, not ignoring it (At-Tabari, 1981). In the story of Musa and Harun, the criteria of justice were not violated. There is no indication in the text of the Qur’an that there were other candidates from the Children of Israel at that time who were more worthy than Aaron but were ignored by Musa (Ibn Kathir, 1998). Musa’ request was driven by the objective need of the mission to confront Pharaoh, not to provide personal gain to Aaron at the expense of the interests of da’wah or the rights of others.

The story of Musa and Harun also contains divine legitimacy. Harun’s appointment was explicitly approved and even legitimized by Allah SWT through the granting of prophetic status. This is a very significant differentiating factor from ordinary cases of nepotism in human governments. Furthermore, in this story, the specific context of prophethood is important to consider. The context of the prophetic mission is unique (Al-Qurthubi 1964). The primary focus is the delivery of the divine message and the salvation of the people, which may require strategic considerations (including kinship-based team cohesion) that differ from modern state administration.

The fundamental difference between the case of Harun's appointment, which had strong justification in its context and the importance of divine legitimacy, is starkly different from the destructive practice of nepotism, which is forbidden in Islamic teachings. It is crucial to avoid false generalizations and understand clear ethical boundaries. The case of Musa and Harun is more accurately categorized as "prioritizing qualified and divinely legitimized relatives" (Al-Baghawi, 1997). This term is more neutral and descriptively accurate than "benevolent nepotism," although its essence aligns with the intent of the term's users in this study. This act differs substantially from reprehensible nepotism, defined as blind favoritism that violates justice and disregards competence for personal or family gain. This story, in fact, exemplifies how preference for relatives can be justified when aligned with considerations of competence, objective needs, and, in this case, obtaining the direct approval of Allah SWT.

The second incident which is the focus of the discussion in this paper is the granting of the temporary leadership mandate by Musa to Aaron. This argument aims to show that the second incident, namely the granting of the temporary leadership mandate by Musa to Aaron, can also be understood as a form of "prioritizing commendable relatives" or what is called "commendable nepotism" (*al-mahsubiyyah al-mahmudah*) in the framework of this research, which is fundamentally different from the practice of reprehensible nepotism.

2. Justification for Granting Temporary Mandate to Harun

Harun's qualifications as a successor leader were not merely adequate, but exceptional and unique, meeting and even exceeding the criteria for ideal leadership in Islam. This is because Harun had fulfilled the requirements of competence (*kafa'ah*) and integrity (*amanah*). As a prophet of God, Harun (peace be upon him) inherently possessed the highest level of spiritual, moral, and leadership competence. Prophethood is a guarantee of integrity and capacity to guide the people according to divine revelation (At-Tabari, 1981). The basic principles of Fiqh Siyasah emphasize the importance of competence (*ahl or kafa'ah*) and trustworthiness in leadership. Handing over affairs to those who are not experts is a sign of destruction. Harun (peace be upon him) was clearly the "expert" in this context. Furthermore, the Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) himself acknowledged Harun's specific competence, particularly in eloquence, when he asked Allah to make him his assistant in carrying out the message. This recognition from Musa (peace be upon him) further strengthens the evidence of Harun's competence.

Supporting Prophetic Status as a Distinguishing Factor: Harun's qualifications were not merely worldly (such as technical expertise or administrative experience), but also divine. His status as a prophet granted him legitimacy, wisdom, and direct guidance from Allah SWT that no other candidate could have (Al-Qurthubi 1964). This is a crucial factor that distinguishes this case from ordinary nepotism, where qualifications are often overlooked in favor of kinship. Some commentators even discuss the status of Prophet Harun (peace be upon him) as *ma'sūm* (protected from sin), further emphasizing his absolute integrity.

The departure of Musa (peace be upon him) to Mount Sinai for 40 nights would create a significant leadership vacuum (*khalafah*) among the Children of Israel. The newly independent community, still in its formative stages, could not be left without a clear leader. As hinted at in several commentaries, including the commentary on *ruh al-Ma'ani*, the Children of Israel at that time still had weak faith and were vulnerable to temptation and deviation after living for years

under the influence of ancient Egyptian culture. They needed a successor who was not only administratively competent but also spiritually and morally strong to keep them on the straight path and prevent potential fitnah (slander) or corruption (*fasād*). The urgency of this situation demanded the selection of the most effective, safe, and trustworthy leadership solution, and Harun (peace be upon him) was the choice that best met these criteria (Al-Alusi, 1994).

When compared to practices characterized by prioritizing relatives, friends, or cronies who are inadequately qualified, untrustworthy, or less worthy than other, more competent candidates. The primary motivation is often personal, family, or group gain, at the expense of the principles of justice, meritocracy, and the public good. In Islam, this is considered a form of injustice (*ẓulm*), betrayal (*khiyānah*) of trust, and an act that can damage (*fasād*) the social order and hinder the rights of others (Andika, et.al., 2020).

This case stands as an anti-nepotism study. Harun (peace be upon him) was not only competent but also highly qualified (a prophet). His appointment was driven by urgent need and aimed at the welfare of the people, not personal gain. His mandate was temporary, not permanent. Kinship served as a supporting factor (especially in matters of trust), not a determining factor that overrode other criteria. The accompanying instructions (*aṣliḥ, lā tattabi'*) emphasized high ethical and performance standards.

Analysis of Findings

A thorough analysis of the Qur’anic narrative, a review of interpretations, and academic studies of the stories of Musa and Harun in relation to the issue of nepotism yields several key conclusions. The appointment of Aaron as Musa’ assistant, spokesman, and temporary successor, which occurred at Musa’ request and with the approval of Allah SWT, cannot be categorized as reprehensible nepotism as understood in the modern context or in Islamic ethics.

The differences between good and bad nepotism are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Write a description of the table

Positive Nepotism	Negative Nepotism
bonds of fundamental trust and resolved within the framework of divine teachings	Do not have fundamental beliefs and resolved within the framework of Divine teachings
responsible for the tasks assigned to him.	Noresponsible for the tasks assigned to him.
Ready to be criticized and correct his mistakes	Anti-criticism and arrogance do not fix the problem.

The main argument emphasized by this story is that the Musa-Harun case represents a form (*al-mahsubiyyah al-mahmudah*) of “good nepotism” or positive nepotism that can be justified theologically and ethically, because it cumulatively fulfills specific criteria, and this event is more appropriately understood as a strategic action in order to succeed in the very difficult prophetic mission.

Thus, Harun’s appointment is a specific example of “preferring qualified and divinely legitimized relatives.” This action aligns with the principles of competence (*kafa’ah*) and

trustworthiness, and is supported by God's will. Thus, it is substantially different from the despicable nepotism driven by blind favoritism and at the expense of justice and the public good.

The Relevance of the Story of Musa and Harun to Understanding the Ethics of Appointment in Islam: Although a specific case within the context of prophecy, the story of Musa and Harun still provides valuable lessons for understanding the ethics of appointment from a broader Islamic perspective. This story highlights the importance of considering qualifications (*kafa'ah*) and trustworthiness in appointing someone to carry out important tasks, even within the closest circle. Musa did not choose Aaron simply because he was a relative, but because he possessed the necessary capacity.

On the other hand, an analysis of the verses concerning kinship and the rights of *dzul qurba* confirms that although Islam places great emphasis on maintaining kinship ties and caring for family in both the social and personal spheres, this obligation does not necessarily translate into legitimacy for granting public office to relatives. The principles of justice (*'adl*) and competence remain the primary standards that must be prioritized in matters concerning the public interest.

In conclusion, the Qur'an, through the story of Musa and Harun and other verses, presents a balanced and comprehensive ethical framework. Islam recognizes the importance of kinship ties, yet places justice, trustworthiness, and competence as the primary pillars in the governance of public affairs. The story of Musa and Harun can be seen as an illustration of how preference for relatives is justified if and only if it is based on proven qualifications, does not violate the principles of justice, and is in line with a greater purpose (in this case, the divine mission). This understanding demands wisdom in its application in the contemporary context, with constant vigilance against the potential abuse of kinship preference that could lead to the destructive and unjust practice of nepotism.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *al-Qarabah* which is very orderly in its ins and outs as well as its rights and obligations in the Qur'an which is close to nepotism has the potential to be divided into two, namely: a) praiseworthy kinship, which aims for the benefit and does not violate the value of justice by oppressing others who are more entitled, and b) reprehensible kinship, which aims only to benefit certain parties by violating the value of justice and oppressing others who are more entitled. The relationship between Musa and Harun was very close, considering that they were half-brothers and half-sisters and experienced the same process of adulthood under the pressure of the tyrannical ruler Pharaoh, making them understand each other and their determination to save the Children of Israel from the pressure of Pharaoh. Their relationship was very close both before their prophethood or after in terms of lineage, religion, leadership of the Children of Israel, *da'wah* to Pharaoh and his followers and the Children of Israel. Moreover, Nepotism in the story of Musa-Harun is good in Musa's request that Allah send Harun with him in delivering the *da'wah* considering Musa's sincere and honest goal in carrying out his God's mandate, he wanted to complete the mandate to the maximum with his brother Harun, and Harun's potential which has been well recorded in Musa's memory both in terms of *fashahah* which helps Musa to provide more detailed arguments about what Musa conveyed, as well as other potentials, so that Allah granted Musa's request with an answer full of love and did not disappoint.

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