

Foolhardiness (*Safah*) in the Qur'an and the Thought of Imam Ali (as): A Semantic, Jurisprudential, and Social Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The term *Safah* (foolishness) in Islamic texts—particularly in the Holy Qur'an and the narrations of Imam Ali (as)—represents a multilayered and interdisciplinary concept that acquires diverse meanings across linguistic, jurisprudential, and social contexts. This study adopts a semantic-comparative analytical approach to elucidate the semantic evolution and functional dimensions of *safah* in the Qur'an and *Nahj al-Balaghah*, as well as to examine its reflection in Imami jurisprudence and contemporary legal systems. The research employs a descriptive-analytical and comparative method, drawing data from library sources categorized into three domains: Qur'anic, narrative, and jurisprudential. Findings indicate that *safah* in the Qur'an is variously used to denote ignorance and frivolity, legal incapacity (*hajr*), or intellectual and moral imprudence. In the thought of Imam Ali (as), the concept transcends linguistic boundaries and extends into the realms of social behavior and rational action—portraying *safah* in *Nahj al-Balaghah* as a manifestation of deviation in reasoning and a lack of social responsibility. Within Imami jurisprudence, *safah* is defined as “incapacity in financial and legal dispositions,” a concept reflected in Article 1207 of the Iranian Civil Code. The innovation of this research lies in its integration of linguistic, jurisprudential, and sociological analyses of *safah*, which together illuminate its position within the Islamic epistemological framework and contribute to a reinterpretation of the relationship between religious rationality and social order. The results of this analysis can inform the formulation of social and legal policies concerning irrational behaviors and the lack of individual legal capacity in Islamic societies.

Keywords: *Safah*, Imam Ali (as), Holy Qur'an, Imami Jurisprudence, Qur'anic Semantics, Social Analysis, Legal Capacity.

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Introduction

In Islamic texts, the term *safah* (foolhardiness) is among the concepts that hold a significant presence across various domains of religious thought—from the Qur'an and Hadith to jurisprudence and ethics. In several Qur'anic verses, such as those in Surat al-Baqarah, al-Nisá, and al-Jinn, references are made to *al-sufahā* (the foolish). Likewise, in the narrations of Imam Ali(as) and other infallible Imams (as), the manner of interacting with the foolish (mindless) and the social consequences of their behavior are addressed. The diversity of its usage in linguistic, jurisprudential, ethical, and social contexts indicates that the concept of *safah* is not merely a linguistic or moral issue, but rather a multidimensional social phenomenon directly related to rationality, legal capacity, and social order (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.; Makarem Shirazi, n.d.).

Despite this conceptual breadth, previous studies have generally remained confined to thematic or exegetical analyses. Few have examined *safah* comparatively across the Qur'an, Nahj al-Balaghah, and Imami jurisprudence from semantic, jurisprudential, and social perspectives (Asharieh & Beyranvand, 2020). This limitation has led to an underexploration of the functional and social dimensions of *safah* in the Islamic intellectual system, leaving its connection to rationality, social ethics, and legal competence largely overlooked.

In essence, *safah* in the Qur'an represents a form of disruption in human rational conduct, while in jurisprudence, it manifests as legal incapacity in exercising property rights. However, in Nahj al-Balaghah and the thought of Imam Ali (as), the concept transcends the individual level, elevating to the social sphere as a moral and intellectual critique of irrational behavior within society. Imam Ali (as), in various contexts—including his maxims and letters.

In the letters of Nahj al-Balaghah, *safah* is introduced as a disease of collective reason and an obstacle to social development (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 178; Maxim 40). The present analysis draws inspiration from modern semantic methodologies in linguistics and the foundational principles of *Fiqh al-Ijtimā'* (the jurisprudence of social relations) within Imami thought. Accordingly, the necessity of this research lies in addressing the interdisciplinary gap among the three domains of the Qur'an, narration, and jurisprudence. This study aims, through a semantic and comparative analytical approach, to examine the semantic evolution of the term *safah* in Islamic texts while simultaneously analyzing its jurisprudential and social dimensions. The main research questions are as follows:



1. What are the similarities and differences in the concept of *safah* within the Qur'an, Nahj al-Balaghah, and Imami jurisprudence?
2. How can a semantic analysis establish a link between the linguistic, jurisprudential, and social layers of *safah*?
3. What role does the concept of *safah* play in shaping the criteria of rationality and legal competence within Islamic society?

This research seeks to highlight the connection between religious semantics and social analysis, striving to transform *safah* from a purely ethical term into a practical concept applicable in Islamic socio-legal policymaking.

Research Background and Theoretical Framework

A) Research Background

The term *safah* has a long-standing presence in Islamic sources; however, in contemporary academic studies, it has rarely been examined in a systematic and comparative manner. A review of previous works indicates that existing research can be categorized into three main groups.

Semantic and Lexical Studies

Works such as *Ma'āyīs al-Lughah* by Ibn Fāris (1404 AH) and *Al-Furūq al-Lughawiyah* by 'Askari (1412 AH) primarily focus on the etymology and semantic distinctions between the term *safah* and related notions such as Jahl (ignorance) and Hamaqah (stupidity). Although these studies establish the linguistic and semantic foundations of the concept, they lack applied analysis within Qur'anic or narrational contexts.

Exegetical and Qur'anic Studies

In classical commentaries such as *Al-Tibyān* by Shaykh Ṭūsī (1409 AH), *Majma' al-Bayān* by Ṭabarsī (1418 AH), and *Al-Mizān* by Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (n.d.), the concept of *safah* is discussed in relation to verses such as Al-Baqarah 2:142 and Al-Nisā 4:5, with greater emphasis placed on its epistemological and ethical dimensions. However, these exegeses seldom engage in a comparative analysis between Qur'anic *safah* and its jurisprudential or social manifestations.

Jurisprudential and Legal Studies

In Imami jurisprudence, discussions of *safah* generally appear under the rulings concerning legally incapacitated individuals (*mahjūrīn*), alongside minors and the insane. Sources such as *Tahrir al-Wasilah* (Khomeini, 1390 AH), *Jawāhir al-Kalām* (Najafī, 1394 AH), and *Miftāh al-Karāmah* ('Āmili, 1426 AH) extensively describe the conditions, implications, and legal rulings pertaining to the *safīh* (unsound or legally incompetent person). Nevertheless, these works show little attempt to connect the jurisprudential discourse of *safah* with its social and ethical dimensions.



Contemporary Interdisciplinary Studies

In recent years, studies such as “The Semantic Field of *safah* and *sifāhah* in the Qur’an and Hadith” (Asharieh & Beyranvand, 2020) have sought to combine lexical and exegetical analysis with ethical discussions. However, a comprehensive study that simultaneously explores the Qur’anic, narrational, jurisprudential, and social dimensions of *safah* is still lacking.

Accordingly, the present research aims to fill this gap by adopting a comparative approach among the Qur’an, the narrations of Imam Ali (as), and Imami jurisprudence. It seeks to explore the semantic and functional layers of *safah* and to propose an integrative model linking religious rationality with social behavior.

B) Theoretical Framework of the Research

The theoretical framework of this study is founded upon three main pillars:

Semantic Field Theory

According to linguists such as Trier (1931) and Lyons (1995), every word derives its meaning within a network of semantic relations with other words. In this research, *safah* is examined within the semantic field of related concepts such as *Hilm* (forbearance), *‘Aql* (reason), *Jahl* (ignorance), and *Hajr* (legal incapacity), to reveal its semantic dimensions in Qur’anic and narrational contexts. Jurisprudential and Legal Foundations of *Hajr* in Imami Fiqh From a jurisprudential perspective, *safah* is one of the causes of legal incapacity (*hajr*), rendering the *safih* incapable of independently conducting financial transactions. These foundations are rooted in juristic works such as *Tahrir al-Wasilah* and *Jawāhir al-Kalām*, and they are also reflected in Article 1207 of the Iranian Civil Code. Within this framework, *safah* is conceptualized as a deficiency in legal capacity and as an indicator of a lack of rational prudence.

Max Weber’s theory of rational action within the field of religious sociology, human behavior can be analyzed from the perspectives of instrumental and value-oriented rationality (Weber, 1978). In this study, *safah* is interpreted as a form of irrational and unregulated behavior within the social system, and its relationship with rational action in Islamic society is examined. In this way, a connection is established between the Qur’anic understanding of the absence of rationality and the social consequences of *safah*. These three approaches collectively form the theoretical foundation of the article, enabling a comparative analysis of *safah* across the three domains of language, jurisprudence, and society. Accordingly, the semantic field (linguistics), the foundations of *hajr* (jurisprudence), and the theory of



rational action (sociology) constitute three complementary axes that explain *safah* at the lexical, normative, and functional levels.

Research Methodology

The present study is a fundamental and interdisciplinary research project situated at the intersection of semantic linguistics, Imami jurisprudence, and religious sociology. In terms of nature, it is qualitative, analytical, and comparative, conducted through library-based research utilizing primary Islamic sources.

Data Collection Method

The data for this research were collected through library-based methods. The primary sources include:

- The *Holy Qur'an* and authoritative Shi'a and Sunni commentaries;
- The *Nahj al-Balaghah* and its exegetical and analytical commentaries;
- Hadith collections such as *Al-Kāfi*, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, and *Bihār al-Anwār*;
- Jurisprudential texts such as *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, *Jawāhir al-Kalām*, and *Miftāh al-Karāmah*;
- And classical and modern sources in sociology and semantic linguistics (Weber, 1978; Lyons, 1995).

In the first stage, linguistic and conceptual data related to the term *safah* were extracted from these texts. In the second stage, propositions semantically associated with *'Aql* (reason), *Hilm* (forbearance), *Jahl* (ignorance), and *Hajr* (legal incapacity) were identified using a purposeful sampling method.

Data Analysis Method

The analysis process was conducted in three stages: Semantic Analysis: Using the Semantic Field Theory, the usages of the term *safah* in the Qur'an and narrations were examined based on lexical collocations and oppositions—for instance, the contrast between *safah* and *Hilm* or *'Aql* in various textual contexts (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.; Fayz Kashani, n.d.).

Jurisprudential–Legal Analysis: The views of Imami jurists on the rulings and implications of *safah* within the framework of *Fiqh al-Hajr* were analyzed and then compared with the Iranian legal system to demonstrate the theoretical correspondence between Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary law (Khomeini, 1390 AH; Najafi, 1394 AH; Iranian Civil Code, Article 1207).

Social–Functional Analysis: Drawing on Max Weber's Theory of Rational Action, *safah* was examined as a form of irrational behavior within



the social system, exploring its effects on collective rationality, ethical order, and social development in Islamic society.

Semantic Analysis: Using the Semantic Field Theory, the occurrences of the term *safah* in the Qur'an and narrations were examined based on lexical collocations and oppositions—for instance, the contrast between *safah* and *Hilm* (forbearance) or *'Aql* (reason) in various textual contexts (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.; Fayz Kāshānī, n.d.).

Jurisprudential–Legal Analysis: The opinions of Imami jurists regarding the rulings and implications of *safah* within the framework of *Fiqh al-Ḥajr* were analyzed and then compared with the Iranian legal system to clarify the theoretical correspondence between Islamic jurisprudence and modern law (Khomeini, 1390 AH; Najafī, 1394 AH; Iranian Civil Code, Article 1207). **Social–Functional Analysis:** Drawing on Max Weber's Theory of Rational Action, *safah* was analyzed as a form of irrational behavior within Islamic society. At this stage, both individual and collective effects of *safah* on social and moral interactions were examined based on the teachings of Imam Ali (A) and Nahj al-Balaghah. From a socio-religious perspective, *safah* represents a type of irrational conduct that disrupts the moral and functional order of society; hence, its analysis can serve as an indicator for assessing the growth of collective rationality in an Islamic community.

Research Validity and Reliability: To enhance precision and academic credibility, all analyses were cross-checked with multiple authoritative sources, and interpretations were verified by consulting recognized commentaries on Nahj al-Balaghah and major Qur'anic exegeses. Additionally, narrations were cited exclusively from primary sources and critical editions to ensure textual accuracy and reliability.

Research Limitations

The primary limitation of this study lies in the dispersion of narrational and exegetical sources concerning *safah*, as well as the scarcity of direct comparative studies integrating the Qur'an, Nahj al-Balaghah, and Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, through the analytical–comparative method, this research seeks to address and partially overcome this scholarly gap.

Main Body of Analysis

Lexical Conceptualization of *safah*: In Arabic linguistics, the root *s-f-h* (هفـس) denotes frivolity, instability of opinion, and deficiency in intellect and judgment. According to Ibn Fāris, this root signifies “lightness and lack of firmness,” implying a form of mental or moral weakness that prevents sound decision-making. (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH, Vol. 3, p. 79) defines *safah* as the opposite of *hilm* (forbearance) and considers it a sign of frivolity in thought and action. Al-Farāhīdī (1410 AH, Vol. 4, p. 9) similarly defines



safah as “instability or disturbance in intellect.” Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī (1412 AH, p. 199) explicitly states that *safah* derives from the semantic root of speed and rashness in behavior and stands in direct opposition to ḥilm, which implies patience and composure. In contemporary linguistics, *safah* occupies the semantic field of the words ḥilm, ‘*aql* (reason), and *jahl* (ignorance). From the perspective of descriptive semantics (Lyons, 1995), it is associated with notions such as frivolity, immaturity, and lack of wisdom. Therefore, in linguistic analysis, *safah* represents a disruption in the process of rational thinking and decision-making, which consequently has moral and social implications.

Qur’anic Analysis of *Safah*

Safah as Ignorance and Frivolity: In verse 142 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is stated: “The foolish among the people will say, ‘What has turned them away from their former qiblah?’” (Q 2:142)

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī (n.d., vol. 1, p. 318) interprets *al-sufahā’* in this verse as ignorant and shallow-minded individuals who lack a proper understanding of the divine command. Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (1409 AH, Vol. 2, p. 3) and al-Ṭabrisī (1418 AH, Vol. 1, p. 158) likewise describe the *sufahā’* as those who, due to instability of opinion and ignorance, fail to perceive the truth. In this usage, *safah* refers to intellectual ignorance and the absence of rationality in matters of faith and religious decision-making. It signifies a deficiency in the epistemic dimension of belief, in which the intellect fails to grasp divine wisdom. From a sociological standpoint, this form of *safah* may also be seen as a manifestation of irrational resistance to divine transformation and the new identity structure of the early Muslim community following the change of the *qiblah*.

***Safah* as Legal Incapacity (*ḥajr*) and Lack of Competence**

In verse 282 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, the Qur’an declares: “If the one who owes the debt is foolish or weak... then let his guardian dictate in justice.” (Q 2:282) Shi‘i exegetes such as Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1376 Sh., Vol. 1, p. 132) and al-Baḥrānī (n.d., Vol. 1, p. 562) interpret *safih* in this verse as equivalent to maḥjūr—a person legally restrained from financial dealings due to an inability to manage property responsibly. This interpretation was later formalized in Imāmī jurisprudence and became the basis for the legal doctrine of *ḥajr* (Najafī, 1394 AH, Vol. 26, p. 94). Accordingly, within the Qur’anic framework, *safah* also assumes a juridical and legal dimension, directly related to issues of social and economic responsibility. It demarcates the boundary between intellectual maturity (*rushd*) and incapacity (*ḥajr*), signifying that rational competence is a prerequisite for legitimate social participation. This Qur’anic conceptualization links *safah* with both the ethical and functional dimensions of human action—



intellectual deficiency leading to social disorder. Thus, *safah* serves as a bridge between epistemology, ethics, and law in the Qur'an, illustrating how irrational conduct can undermine the moral and legal equilibrium of society.

***Safah* as Opposition to Reason and Innate Nature**

In verse 4 of Sūrat al-Jinn, the Qur'an declares: "And that the foolish among us used to speak against Allah with excessive transgression." (Q 72:4) 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (n.d., vol. 20, p. 41) interprets *safah* here as "the baseness of the soul and deviation from innate rationality." According to Makārim Shīrāzī (n.d., Vol. 25, p. 106), this verse indicates that a *safih* may even possess knowledge, but his intellect has deviated from divine rationality. Therefore, in this Qur'anic context, *safah* signifies a rupture between knowledge and moral commitment.

Qur'anic Conclusion

An analysis of the Qur'anic verses reveals that *safah* carries three principal semantic layers: Theoretical ignorance and frivolity in faith (al-Baqarah 2:142), Lack of legal competence and inability for financial management (al-Baqarah 2:282; al-Nisā' 4:5), Deviation of intellect from the path of innate reason and piety (al-Jinn 72:4). Across these three levels, *safah* stands in opposition to 'aql (reason) as the principal measure of intellectual and social maturity. In other words, the Qur'an portrays *safah* not merely as cognitive deficiency but as a social and ethical malfunction that disrupts both personal responsibility and communal order.

Narrative Analysis and the Perspective of Imām 'Alī (as)

In the corpus of Islamic ḥadīth, the term *safah* encompasses a wide semantic and moral range. Within the sayings of Imām 'Alī (as) and other Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), it is discussed through ethical, behavioral, and sociological dimensions. Imām 'Alī (as), in response to Imām Ḥasan's (as) inquiry regarding the meaning of *safah*, said: "*Al-safah ittibā' al-danāh wa muṣāḥabat al-ghuwāh.*" "*Safah* is following the base and associating with the misguided." (Shaykh Ṣadūq, 1338 Sh., p. 247)

This statement highlights the social dimension of *safah*, framing it as a form of moral and social degeneration manifested through the corruption of companionship and choice of association. In *Nahj al-Balāghah*, *safah* appears closely associated with concepts such as *jahl* (ignorance), *ghaflah* (heedlessness), and *nifāq* (hypocrisy). In Sermon 32, Imām 'Alī (as) declares: "*Al-sufahā' ittaba'ū al-hawā fa-aḍallahum 'an al-ḥaqq.*" "The foolish follow their passions, and thus they are led away from the truth." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 32) This statement frames *safah* as an ethical deviation rooted in uncontrolled desire, leading to the corruption of



rational and moral discernment. In Maxim 40 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Imām ‘Alī (as) states: “*Man ghāzaka bi-qubḥ al-safah ‘alayk fa-ghizhu bi-ḥusn al-ḥilm minhu.*”

“If someone angers you with the ugliness of his foolishness, disarm him through the beauty of your forbearance.” This maxim emphasizes that *safah* is not merely an individual weakness but a socially disruptive behavior that threatens communal ethics. The appropriate antidote to *safah*, according to Imām ‘Alī (as), is *ḥilm* (forbearance) — the embodiment of social rationality and moral composure (Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī, 1362 Sh., vol. 5, p. 350). Further narrations from Imām al-Ṣādiq (as) reinforce this interpretation by linking *safah* to unbalanced and morally degrading conduct: “*Inna al-safah khuluq la’im yastaṭīlu ‘alā man dūnahu wa yakhḍa ‘u liman fawqahu.*” “Foolishness is a vile trait by which a person behaves arrogantly toward those beneath him and servilely toward those above him.” (al-Kulaynī, 1365 Sh., Vol. 2, p. 322)

Thus, from a narrative and ethical perspective, *safah* represents a profound disturbance in human moral equilibrium. It manifests as irrational, inconsistent, and socially harmful behavior, undermining both ethical integrity and social harmony. Imām ‘Alī’s teachings, therefore, elevate the discussion of *safah* from an individual moral flaw to a socio-ethical phenomenon, wherein irrationality becomes a threat to communal coherence and moral order. The cure, as he proposes, lies not only in intellectual correction but in cultivating virtues of patience, discipline, and socially conscious rationality.

Jurisprudential and Legal Analysis of *Safah*

In Imāmī jurisprudence, *safah* (foolishness or imprudence) is classified among the legal causes of *ḥajr*—the restriction of legal capacity (ahliyyah). Jurists generally define the *safīh* as follows: “*Huwa man lā yuḥsin al-taşarruf fī mālihi wa yatlifahu fī ghayr aghrād ṣaḥīḥah.*” “A *safīh* is one who does not manage his property appropriately and squanders it on irrational or illegitimate purposes.” (Khomeini, 1390 AH, Vol. 2, p. 15) According to the majority opinion of Imāmī jurists, the financial transactions of a *safīh* are not valid without the permission of a legal guardian (*walī*) or a legitimate authority (*ḥākim shar’ī*) (Najafī, 1394 AH, Vol. 26, p. 94). His contracts are considered void except in cases of necessity, such as fulfilling obligatory maintenance (*nafaqah*) or essential livelihood expenses. From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, *ḥajr* in relation to the *safīh* encompasses three principal dimensions: Economic dimension – Restriction on independent financial transactions and contractual authority. Legal dimension – Ineligibility to testify, hold guardianship, or exercise legal authority over others. Moral–social



dimension – The necessity of supervision, education, and ethical guidance by a legitimate guardian or authority. Similarly, Article 1207 of the Iranian Civil Code stipulates: “The following persons are legally incapacitated (*mahjūr*) and are prohibited from disposing of their property or financial rights: minors, the insane, and the foolish (*sufahā*).” Thus, *safah* in the modern Iranian legal framework is a direct continuation of its classical jurisprudential meaning, demonstrating how Qur’anic and Imāmī teachings have profoundly influenced the structure of legal capacity (ahliyyah) in contemporary Islamic law (Iranian Civil Code, 1928, Art. 1207). Social Analysis and Correlation with the Theory of Rational Action From the perspective of religious sociology, *safah* represents a form of irrational and anti-social behavior. Max Weber (1978) divides human conduct into two principal types: rational action (zweckrational / wertrational) and irrational action (affectual / traditional). Within this framework, *safah* can be understood as a manifestation of irrational action that violates both social order and religious values. In the thought of Imām ‘Alī (as), *safah* is a key factor in the disintegration of collective morality. The *safīh*, through his disregard for the consequences of his behavior, undermines communal norms and weakens social cohesion. In his famous letter to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imām ‘Alī (as) emphasizes reason, prudence, and deliberation as the essential foundations of governance and justice, warning that foolish behavior leads to instability and disorder within the social system (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letter 53).

A sociological reading of *safah* thus reveals that it is not merely an individual moral defect but a measure of the integrity of collective reason (*‘aql jam‘ī*) and social responsibility in the Islamic community. Within the religious worldview, *‘aql* (reason) functions not only as a tool for knowing the truth but also as the criterion for ethical and social behavior. Any deviation from this rational norm constitutes *safah*, a form of moral and functional disorder that threatens the social fabric (Rīshahrī, 1375 Sh.).

In conclusion, a comparative study of *safah* across *the Qur’an*, *the Nahj al-Balāghah*, and Imāmī jurisprudence demonstrates that this term has evolved from a linguistic concept into a comprehensive socio-legal framework. Its semantic transformation—from describing cognitive folly to designating legal incapacity and moral irresponsibility—reflects the depth of the Islamic intellectual system. Understanding this evolution can provide valuable insights for developing educational, judicial, and social policies in contemporary Islamic societies, ensuring that rationality and ethical responsibility remain the cornerstones of communal order and human dignity.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations



Discussion and Synthesis of Findings: The present study aimed to provide a semantic, jurisprudential, and sociological analysis of the term *safah* (foolishness, imprudence) in the Qur'an and the thought of Imām 'Alī (as). The findings reveal that *safah* is a multilayered concept that originates from its lexical meaning—“frivolity and deficiency of intellect”—and expands across Qur'anic, hadith, and legal contexts, acquiring diverse functional implications. At the Qur'anic level, *safah* presents three principal meanings: A sign of intellectual ignorance and lack of decisiveness (al-Baqarah, 2:142); Equivalent to legal incapacity and lack of competence (al-Baqarah, 2:282; al-Nisā', 4:5); A symbol of deviation from innate reason and divine truth (al-Jinn, 72:4).

In the hadith tradition and *Nahj al-Balāghah*, *safah* transcends the epistemic domain and enters the ethical and social sphere. Imām 'Alī (as) characterizes *safah* not merely as a weakness of intellect but as a moral and behavioral disorder that disrupts human relationships and leads to the decay of collective reason. According to him, forbearance (*hilm*) is the cure for *safah*, for *hilm* represents a form of moral and social rationality that safeguards communal equilibrium (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 40; Letter 53). In Imāmī jurisprudence, *safah* is defined as one of the causes of legal restriction (*ḥajr*), rendering a person unable to manage their property without the guardian's authorization (Khomeini, 1390 AH; Najafī, 1394 AH). This legal understanding has been transferred into Iranian civil law, particularly in Article 1207 of the Civil Code, illustrating the continuity between religious teachings and the legal structures of rationality and capacity in the Islamic legal tradition. Finally, from the viewpoint of religious sociology and Weber's theory of rational action (1978), *safah* represents a form of irrational behavior that contradicts goal-oriented and value-based human conduct. Thus, in both Islamic tradition and modern sociological theory, *safah* signifies a departure from rationality and social responsibility.

Conclusion

The originality of this research lies in three key dimensions: A comparative analysis across the Qur'an, hadith, and jurisprudence, which has not been previously attempted in similar studies. The integration of linguistic semantics, jurisprudence, and religious sociology to reconstruct the meaning of *safah* through an interdisciplinary framework. The conceptual reformulation of *safah* as a socio-legal and ethical indicator within the paradigm of religious rationality and social order. This study demonstrates that *safah* is not merely a linguistic or legal term, but a diagnostic concept for assessing the collective rational health of an Islamic society.



Social and Legal Implications: The results of this study have significant implications for three major academic and practical domains:

Qur'anic and Hadith Studies: The semantic analysis of *safah* enhances understanding of its conceptual counterparts—such as *'aql* (reason), *ḥilm* (forbearance), and *rushd* (maturity)—and opens new avenues for comparative research between *the Qur'an* and *Nahj al-Balāghah*. **Jurisprudence and Law:** Reinterpreting the philosophy of ḥajr based on the religious semantics of *safah* can inform revisions in fiqh rulings and legal provisions concerning capacity and competence. It is recommended that the Iranian legal system incorporate jurisprudential and hadith-based criteria into expert regulations concerning *safah* assessment.

Social Sciences and Islamic Ethics: Reexamining *safah* as a pattern of irrational behavior enables new sociological analyses of moral deviance, high-risk actions, and irrational decision-making within social contexts. This perspective can contribute to formulating strategies for ethical education, social policy, and behavioral correction in Islamic societies.

Suggestions for Future Research

Comparative Religious Studies: Conduct a comparative analysis between the concept of *safah* in the Qur'an and analogous notions such as foolishness in the Hebrew Bible and other Abrahamic scriptures, to identify shared theological and moral underpinnings. **Philosophical and Ethical Rationality:** Examine the relationship between *safah* and moral rationality in the works of prominent Islamic philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, in order to trace the evolution of the concept within classical Islamic thought.

Sociological Applications: Analyze the sociological manifestations of foolish or irrational behavior (*safah*) in digital and virtual environments, exploring its connection with religious morality, ethical discipline, and the erosion of social rationality in contemporary contexts.

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