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## The Representation of Sakinah's Meaning in the Qur'an Perspective

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### Abstract

*The concept of sakinah is one of the fundamental values in the Qur'an, closely related to family life and marital relationships. Qur'an Surah Ar-Rum (30): 21 explicitly mentions sakinah as the purpose of the creation of spouses, along with mawaddah and rahmah. This study aims to examine the meaning of sakinah in this verse using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which emphasizes three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth as a form of cultural meaning construction. This research employs a qualitative method with a library research design, using the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary Qur'anic commentaries as primary sources, supported by relevant secondary literature. The findings reveal that at the denotative level, sakinah refers to tranquility and inner peace within marital life. At the connotative level, sakinah represents a harmonious and balanced relationship grounded in spiritual values. At the level of myth, sakinah is understood as an ideal construction of the Islamic family that emphasizes emotional stability, moral commitment, and social responsibility. Thus, sakinah is not merely interpreted as psychological calmness but also reflects a value system that shapes the Islamic family paradigm..*

**Keywords:** *Sakinah, Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum (30): 21, Roland Barthes' Semiotics, Islamic Family*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the central source of guidance for Muslims, encompassing spiritual doctrines, moral principles, and comprehensive guidance for social life. Beyond its role as a theological text, the Qur'an

functions as a normative framework that regulates human relationships, including family, society, and civilization. Among the most emphasized social institutions in the Qur'an is the family, which is regarded as the fundamental unit of society. A strong and harmonious family is viewed as the cornerstone of social stability, moral development, and the continuity of religious values across generations.<sup>1</sup>

Marriage, as the foundation of family life, occupies a significant position in Islamic teachings. The Qur'an presents marriage not merely as a legal contract or biological necessity, but as a sacred bond (*mīthāqan ghalīẓan*) designed to cultivate emotional balance, spiritual fulfillment, and mutual responsibility between spouses. Within this framework, the Qur'an introduces several key concepts that define the ideal objectives of marriage, among which *sakinah*, *marwaddah*, and *rahmah* hold central importance. These concepts are repeatedly referenced in Islamic discourse as the pillars of a harmonious marital relationship.

Among these three concepts, *sakinah* occupies a particularly distinctive position. Linguistically, *sakinah* derives from the Arabic root *sakana*, which conveys meanings such as calmness, stillness, and tranquility.<sup>2</sup> In Qur'anic usage, the term appears in various contexts, including divine assistance, inner peace, and emotional reassurance granted by God. However, in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21, *sakinah* is specifically associated with marital life, indicating that tranquility and emotional

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<sup>1</sup> Md Ishaque and Mahmudhassan, "Islamic Family Ethics: A Pathway to Strengthening Social Harmony in The Modern Era," *Solo International Collaboration and Publication of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 02 (April 23, 2025): 247–58, doi:10.61455/sicopus.v3i02.296.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Nur Khalim and Mirwan Akhmad Taufiq, "Study of Munasabah on Words of Sakinah Mawaddah Rahmah and Its Stylistics," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan al-Hadits* 17, no. 2 (December 29, 2023): 221–46, doi:10.24042/002023171908300.

stability are among the divine purposes of creating spouses for one another. This verse has become one of the most frequently cited Qur'anic foundations in discussions of Islamic marriage and family ethics.

Despite its frequent usage, the concept of *sakinah* is often interpreted in a simplified or idealized manner, primarily understood as emotional calmness or household harmony.<sup>3</sup> Such interpretations, while not incorrect, tend to overlook the deeper layers of meaning embedded within the Qur'anic text. As a result, *sakinah* is frequently treated as a normative ideal without sufficient analytical inquiry into how its meaning is constructed, represented, and communicated through language, symbolism, and cultural discourse. This gap highlights the need for a more critical and interdisciplinary approach to understanding *sakinah* within its textual and socio-cultural dimensions.

In this context, semiotics offers a valuable analytical framework for examining Qur'anic concepts beyond their literal meanings. Semiotics, as the study of signs and meaning-making processes, enables scholars to explore how language functions as a system of representation.<sup>4</sup> Roland Barthes, a prominent figure in semiotic theory, expands classical semiotics by introducing a multi-layered model of meaning, consisting of denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal or surface meaning of a sign, while connotation involves associative, emotional, and cultural meanings. Myth, in Barthes' framework, represents a broader ideological

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<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Arif Furqon and Nabilah Kamiliyah Zain, "Exploring Marital Satisfaction Through the Lens of Psychology and Islamic Perspectives," *Proceedings Conference Psychology and Flourishing Humanity* 1, no. 1 (February 3, 2025): 91–98, <https://conferences.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/pfh/article/view/3284>.

<sup>4</sup> Richard C. Martin, "Understanding the Qur'an in Text and Context," *History of Religions* 21, no. 4 (May 1982): 361–84, doi:10.1086/462906.

narrative that naturalizes certain values and worldviews within a culture.

Applying Barthes' semiotic theory to Qur'anic studies allows for a deeper exploration of how Qur'anic concepts operate as symbolic constructs that shape ethical norms and social ideals. In the case of *sakinah*, a semiotic analysis can reveal how the term functions not only as a lexical sign denoting tranquility, but also as a symbolic representation of an ideal marital relationship grounded in spirituality, mutual respect, and moral responsibility. Furthermore, at the level of myth, *sakinah* may be understood as part of a broader Islamic narrative that constructs the ideal image of family life as a space of emotional stability, spiritual growth, and social harmony.

This study focuses specifically on QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21, as this verse explicitly articulates the relationship between divine creation, marital companionship, and the emergence of *sakinah*. By analyzing this verse through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotics, the research seeks to uncover the layered meanings of *sakinah* and to examine how the concept contributes to the Qur'anic vision of family life. The verse is particularly significant because it integrates theological, emotional, and social dimensions within a single textual expression, making it a rich subject for semiotic inquiry.

Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative library-based approach. Primary sources include the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary Qur'anic commentaries, while secondary sources consist of scholarly works on semiotics, Roland Barthes' theory, and Islamic family studies. Through textual analysis and theoretical interpretation, this study aims to bridge Qur'anic exegesis and modern semiotic theory, offering an

interdisciplinary perspective on the construction of meaning in the Qur'an.

Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute to two major fields of study. First, it contributes to Qur'anic studies by demonstrating how semiotic analysis can be applied to deepen the understanding of key Qur'anic concepts. Second, it contributes to Islamic family discourse by providing a more nuanced and comprehensive interpretation of *sakinah* as a multidimensional concept that encompasses psychological tranquility, spiritual depth, ethical commitment, and social responsibility. By doing so, this study seeks to reaffirm the relevance of the Qur'an as a dynamic source of meaning that continues to inform and shape Muslim family life in contemporary contexts.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library-based research design, focusing on the analysis of QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 as the primary object of study. The research aims to examine the meaning of *sakinah* using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which emphasizes three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The primary data sources consist of the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary Qur'anic commentaries, while secondary sources include scholarly works on semiotics, particularly Barthes' theory, and studies related to Islamic family and marriage.

Data are collected through documentation and textual analysis of relevant sources and are analyzed systematically according to Barthes' semiotic model. The analysis begins with identifying the denotative meaning of *sakinah*, followed by an exploration of its connotative meanings

based on exegetical interpretations, and concludes with an examination of *sakinah* as a broader cultural and ideological construct within Islamic family discourse. To ensure the credibility of the findings, source triangulation is applied by comparing various interpretations, and all sources are cited in accordance with academic and ethical standards.

## RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

This section presents an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings of the study based on Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which consists of three interrelated levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The discussion focuses on the concept of *sakinah* as articulated in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 and explores how this concept operates linguistically, symbolically, and ideologically within the Qur'anic discourse on marriage and family life. By integrating semiotic analysis with Qur'anic exegesis, this section demonstrates that *sakinah* is a multidimensional concept that reflects psychological, spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions of Islamic teachings.

### Denotative Meaning of *Sakinah* in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21

At the denotative level, *sakinah* in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 signifies tranquility, calmness, and inner peace.<sup>5</sup> The term originates from the Arabic root *sakana*, which literally means "to become still," "to settle," or "to dwell." In the verse *litaskunū ilayhā* ("that you may find tranquility in them"), the Qur'an linguistically associates *sakinah* with the marital relationship, indicating that marriage is intended to provide emotional rest

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<sup>5</sup> Baiq Latifah Hasanah, "The Concept of Keluarga Sakinah (Tranquil Family) in the Perspective of the Qur'an (A Literature Review)," *Journal of Islamic Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (November 28, 2024): 67–74, <http://www.journal.formadenglishfoundation.org/index.php/Jirs/article/view/40>.

and psychological stability. This literal meaning highlights the human need for companionship as a source of comfort and serenity.

Classical Qur'anic commentators generally emphasize that the denotative meaning of *sakinah* refers to the cessation of emotional unrest and the fulfillment of natural human inclinations through lawful companionship. Marriage, therefore, is presented as a divinely ordained means of achieving balance between physical, emotional, and psychological needs.<sup>6</sup> At this level, *sakinah* functions as a descriptive term that explains one of the immediate and observable outcomes of marital union, namely the experience of peace and emotional security between spouses.

### **Connotative Meaning of *Sakinah*: Relational and Spiritual Dimensions**

Beyond its literal meaning, *sakinah* carries rich connotative associations that reflect deeper relational and spiritual dimensions of marriage. Connotatively, *sakinah* represents a state of harmonious interaction characterized by mutual trust, emotional safety, and spiritual alignment between spouses. In this sense, *sakinah* is not merely an internal feeling but a relational condition produced through continuous ethical behavior, effective communication, and shared spiritual values.

Qur'anic commentaries often link *sakinah* with *mawaddah* (love) and *rahmah* (compassion), suggesting that tranquility in marriage emerges from a combination of affection and mercy.<sup>7</sup> While *mawaddah* connotes passionate and emotional love, and *rahmah* emphasizes compassion and

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<sup>6</sup> Fahime İsrailoğlu, "The Qur'ān and Value Conflicts in Marriage in the Modern Era," *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 61, no. 4 (December 26, 2025): 1341–76, doi:10.61304/did.1723044.

<sup>7</sup> Fatimah Karim, Sayyed Mohamed Muhsin, and Nur Elyliana Abd Hadi, "Mohd. Kamal Hassan's Perspectives on Family Relationships: Strategies for Strengthening Malaysian Muslim Families," *Intellectual Discourse* 33, no. 3 (October 30, 2025), doi:10.31436/id.v33i3.2350.

forgiveness, *sakinah* represents the stabilizing outcome of these two elements. Connotatively, therefore, *sakinah* reflects a mature form of marital harmony that transcends momentary emotions and is sustained by moral responsibility and spiritual consciousness.

This connotative meaning also implies that *sakinah* is dynamic rather than static.<sup>8</sup> Tranquility is not automatically guaranteed by marriage itself but is cultivated through mutual effort, patience, and commitment. From this perspective, *sakinah* serves as both a goal and a process within marital life, emphasizing the ethical labor required to maintain harmony and balance over time.

### **Mythical Meaning of *Sakinah*: Ideological Construction of the Islamic Family**

At the level of myth, as theorized by Roland Barthes, *sakinah* functions as an ideological construct that naturalizes certain values and norms related to marriage and family life in Islam.<sup>9</sup> In this context, *sakinah* becomes a cultural symbol that represents the ideal Islamic family, characterized by emotional stability, moral integrity, and spiritual devotion. Through repeated articulation in religious texts, sermons, and educational discourse, *sakinah* is elevated from a textual term to a normative standard by which marital success is measured.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Fahmi Basyar, "Perspective Of Islamic Family Law And Traditional Law Regarding Migrant Husbands In Creating A Sakinah Family," *Review of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 15, 2024): 37–45, doi:10.35316/ris.v3i1.545.

<sup>9</sup> Alya Hamzah Panggabean and Irma Yusriani Simamora, "We Will Tell You The Representation Of Family Communication In Today's Film: Analysis Of Semiotics Roland Barthes," *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)* 7, no. 2 (June 11, 2025): 898–915, doi:10.47006/ijierm.v7i2.482.

<sup>10</sup> Muhamad Hanif Fuadi et al., "Representation of Islamic Culture in the Islamic Documentary Empire of Faith: A Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes," *Journal of Social Sciences and Cultural*

As a myth, *sakinah* contributes to the construction of an Islamic worldview in which marriage is portrayed as the primary locus of personal fulfillment and social order. The tranquil family is idealized as a space where individuals find not only emotional comfort but also moral guidance and spiritual growth. This mythic dimension reinforces the belief that social harmony originates from stable family units, positioning *sakinah* as a foundational value for both private and public life.

Importantly, in Barthes' sense, myth does not imply falsification but rather the process by which meanings become culturally naturalized and ideologically charged.<sup>11</sup> The myth of *sakinah* legitimizes specific ethical expectations regarding marital roles, responsibilities, and conduct, framing them as divinely sanctioned and socially desirable. As such, *sakinah* operates as a powerful symbolic resource that shapes Muslim perceptions of marriage, family success, and moral identity.<sup>12</sup>

### **Discussion: Integrating Semiotics and Qur'anic Interpretation**

The semiotic analysis of *sakinah* in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 demonstrates that the Qur'anic concept operates simultaneously at multiple levels of meaning.<sup>13</sup> At the denotative level, it addresses basic human needs for tranquility and companionship. At the connotative level, it articulates a relational ethic grounded in love, compassion, and spiritual commitment.

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*Study 2*, no. 2 (March 29, 2025): 45–53,  
<https://www.swastikajournal.com/index.php/jsscs/article/view/119>.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Asa Berger, "Semiotics and Society," *Society* 51, no. 1 (February 2014): 22–26, doi:10.1007/s12115-013-9731-4.

<sup>12</sup> Hasanah, "The Concept of Keluarga Sakinah (Tranquil Family) in the Perspective of the Qur'an (A Literature Review)."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

At the mythic level, it constructs an ideological narrative that defines the ideal Islamic family as a source of emotional stability and moral order.

This layered understanding challenges reductionist interpretations that limit *sakinah* to psychological calmness alone. Instead, *sakinah* emerges as a comprehensive value system that integrates emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions of human life. The application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory thus proves effective in uncovering the symbolic richness of Qur'anic language and highlighting how religious texts communicate complex ethical ideals through concise expressions.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the findings underscore the relevance of interdisciplinary approaches in contemporary Qur'anic studies. By combining semiotic analysis with classical exegesis, this study bridges textual interpretation and cultural meaning, offering a deeper understanding of how Qur'anic concepts continue to shape lived religious experiences. In the context of modern challenges faced by Muslim families—such as emotional stress, social change, and shifting gender roles—the concept of *sakinah* remains highly relevant as a guiding framework for achieving balance, resilience, and spiritual tranquility in marital life.<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, the concept of *sakinah* in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 functions not merely as a descriptive term but as a multidimensional sign that conveys profound insights into the Qur'anic vision of marriage and family.

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<sup>14</sup> Achmad Mubarak, *Psikologi keluarga: dari keluarga sakinah hingga keluarga bangsa* (Malang, 2005), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Eko Nani Fitriono, "Kontribusi Tafsir Maqashidi Dalam Pengembangan Makna Teks Al-Quran: Telaah Ayat-Ayat Relasi Keluarga Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka," *AL-MIKRAJ Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* (E-ISSN 2745-4584) 4, no. 02 (2024): 1844–61, <https://ejournal.insuriponorogo.ac.id/index.php/almikraj/article/view/5459>.

Through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotics, *sakinah* can be understood as a dynamic and value-laden construct that continues to inform Islamic ethical thought and social ideals across time and cultural contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the concept of *sakinah* in QS. Ar-Rum (30): 21 is a multidimensional notion that encompasses more than mere emotional tranquility. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, *sakinah* is revealed to operate at three levels of meaning: denotatively as inner calm and stability within marriage, connotatively as relational harmony grounded in love, compassion, and spiritual values, and mythically as an ideological construct that represents the ideal model of the Islamic family. This layered meaning demonstrates that *sakinah* is not a passive condition but an active value system that shapes ethical behavior and social responsibility within marital life.

By integrating semiotic theory with Qur'anic interpretation, this research highlights the richness of Qur'anic language and its capacity to convey complex moral and social ideals through concise expressions. The findings affirm the relevance of *sakinah* as a guiding principle for contemporary Muslim families, offering a framework for understanding marriage as a space of spiritual fulfillment, emotional resilience, and moral commitment.

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