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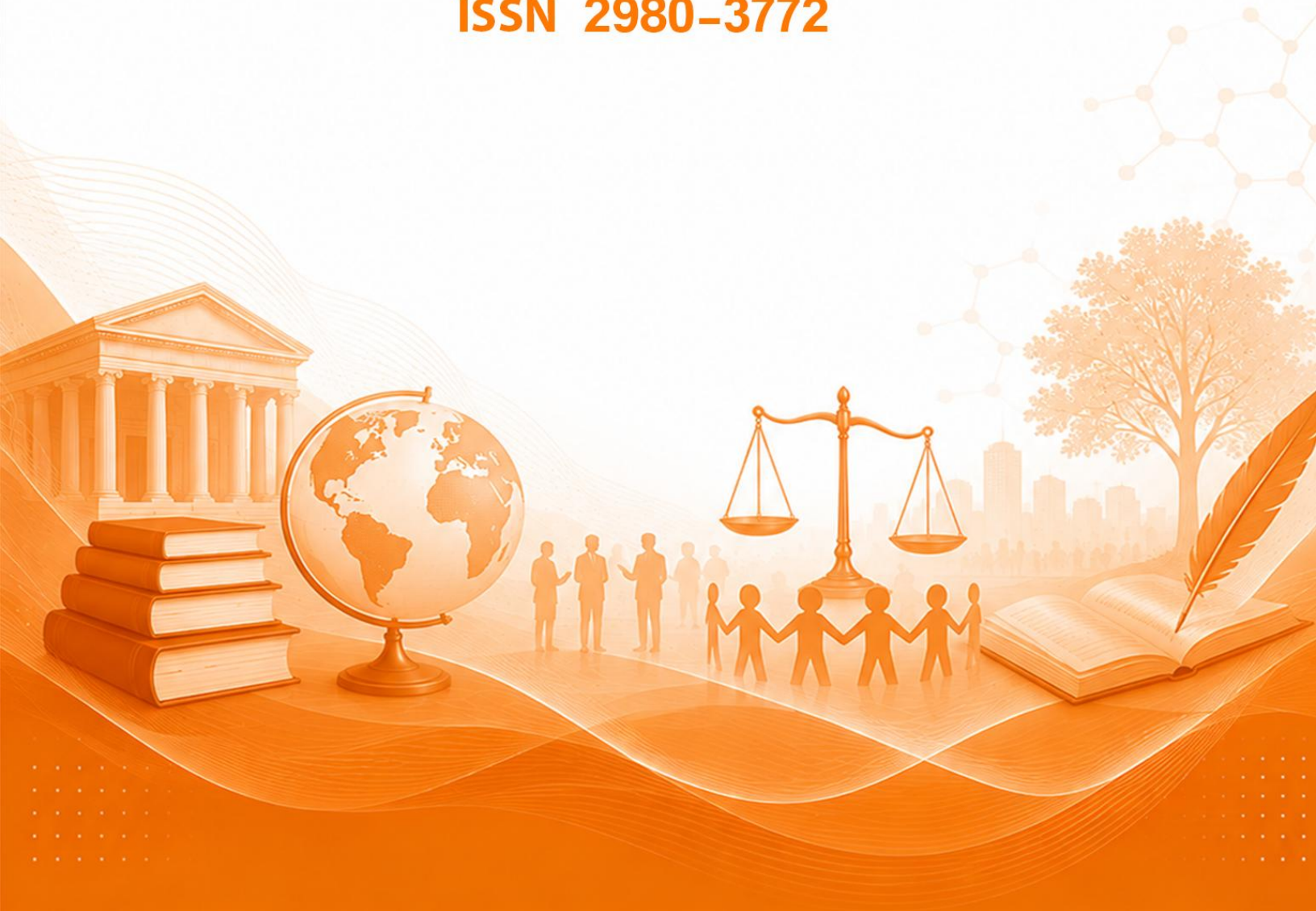


Stardom Scientific Journal of Humanities and Social Studies

**– Stardom Scientific Journal of Humanities and Social Studies –
Issued quarterly by Stardom University**

3rd issue- 4th Volume 2026

ISSN 2980-3772



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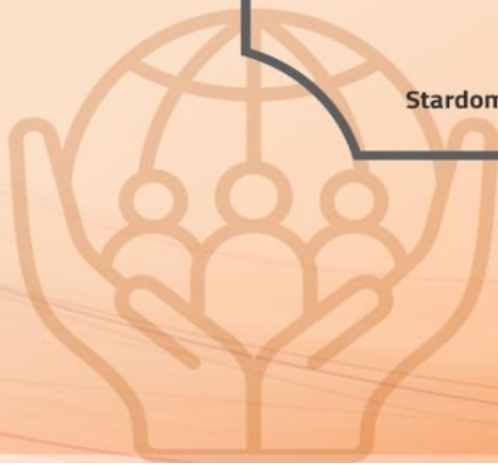
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Stardom Scientific Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences



The Qur'anic Narrative Structure of “Surah Yusuf”: A Literary, Narrative and Critical Discourse Analysis

By

Muhammad Alsayed Alsawey

Lecturer of English Literature

College of Arts, Jouf University, Saudi Arabia

Dr. Majde Mahmoud Albataineh

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5281-2369>

Faculty of Education, the University of Jordan

Abstract

Developed from the first author's doctoral research, this article examines the literary organization of Surah Yusuf through a coordinated use of Aristotle's Poetics, modern narratology, and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Scholarship has established the surah's theological, rhetorical, linguistic, and narrative richness, yet these dimensions are often studied separately. The article therefore asks how structural poetics and discourse analysis can illuminate the surah without obscuring the distinctive status and purposes of Qur'anic revelation.

The study adopts qualitative close reading, comparative analysis, and selective consultation of classical and modern Arabic tafsīr. It traces causal sequence, characterization, dialogue, thematic development, reversal, recognition, authority, identity, and ethical communication. Aristotle, narratology, and CDA serve as limited analytical resources rather than standards against which the Qur'anic text is measured. Readings from al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āshūr, and Sayyid Quṭb provide linguistic, rhetorical, exegetical, and ethical guidance for the verse-level analysis.

The findings show that the surah develops a sustained narrative movement from Yusuf's dream and his brothers' jealousy through separation, temptation, imprisonment, public responsibility, recognition, and reconciliation. Its unified action and reversals invite comparison with Aristotelian poetics, but their narrative purposes are different. Conflict is directed toward ethical testing, disclosure, restoration, and divine providence rather than tragic catastrophe. Yusuf emerges as a prophetic protagonist whose patience, chastity, judgment, and forgiveness shape both the course of events and their resolution. Dialogue operates simultaneously at textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and revelatory levels.

The article consequently argues for a qualified comparison between Qur'anic narrative and classical poetics: formal comparison is illuminating, but theoretical equivalence is not. The proposed Qur'anic Narrative Theory brings narrative coherence, ethical purpose, prophetic characterization, and revelatory discourse into a single interpretive hierarchy. It is presented as a provisional contribution to comparative poetics and the literary study of sacred narrative, whose wider value must be tested through further textual and comparative research.

Keywords: Surah Yusuf; Qur'anic Narrative Theory; Aristotle's Poetics; Comparative Poetics; Narratology; Critical Discourse Analysis; Fairclough; Prophetic Hero; Sacred Narrative; Literary Criticism.

الملخص

تمثل هذه الدراسة بحثاً مستقلاً من رسالة الدكتوراه للباحث الأول، وعنوانها: «السرد القرآني والبنية الدرامية الأرسطية: دراسة مقارنة وتحليلية لسورة يوسف والمأساة الكلاسيكية».

تبحث الدراسة في البناء الأدبي لسورة يوسف من خلال إطار تكاملي يجمع بين الشعرية الأرسطية والسرديات الحديثة وتحليل الخطاب النقدي، مع إبقاء التفسير القرآني واللسان العربي مرجعين ضابطين للتأويل. وتستعين بتقاسير الطبري والقرطبي وابن كثير وابن عاشور وسيد قطب لتوضيح الدلالة اللغوية والسياق التفسيري والبناء البلاغي والحركة المشهدية، من غير إخضاع الخطاب القرآني لمقولات نظرية نشأت في سياقات مغايرة.

وتعتمد الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا تحليليًا مقارنةً يقوم على القراءة النصية الدقيقة وتحليل الحبكة والشخصيات والحوار والوحدة الموضوعية والعلاقات السببية. كما تفحص الاختيارات المعجمية وأفعال الكلام وبناء السلطة والهوية والمسؤولية الأخلاقية. وتُطبّق أبعاد فيركلوف النصية والتفاعلية والاجتماعية على أقوال الشخصيات البشرية داخل القصة، مع تخصيص مستوى تفسيري مستقل لبيان التأطير الوحيي وتقويم الأقوال والأفعال.

وتبين النتائج أن سورة يوسف تنتظم في حركة سردية متصلة تبدأ بالرؤيا وتنتهي بتحققها، وأن الحوار فيها لا يكتفي بنقل الحدث، بل يعيد تشكيل المعرفة والمصادقية والسلطة. وتوضح قراءة عبارات محورية، مثل «إني رأيت»، و«هيت لك»، و«معاذ الله»، و«أرباب متفرقون»، و«لا تثريب عليكم اليوم»، أن الدقة اللغوية ترتبط ارتباطاً مباشراً بالتطور السردى والتقويم الأخلاقي. ولا تنتهي المحنة بكارثة تراجيدية، وإنما تقود إلى الاعتراف والمغفرة وتوظيف السلطة في المصالحة.

وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن المقارنة مع أرسطو مفيدة في وصف بعض السمات الشكلية، لكنها لا تبرر المساواة بين المرجعيتين. وتقرّر نظرية السرد القرآني بوصفها تركيباً نقدياً أولياً ينسق بين البنية السردية ونموذج البطل النبوي وتحليل الحوار في مستوياته النصية والسردية والاجتماعية والوحيية. وتظل القيمة الأوسع لهذا الاقتراح مرتبطة باختباره في سور أخرى وبمواصلته الحوار مع التفسير والبلاغة والنظم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سورة يوسف؛ نظرية السرد القرآني؛ كتاب فن الشعر لأرسطو؛ الشعرية المقارنة؛ السرديات؛ تحليل الخطاب النقدي؛ نورمان فيركلوف؛ البطل النبوي؛ السرد المقدس؛ النقد الأدبي.

1. Introduction

The *Holy Qur'an* has long been approached as the sacred scripture of Islam and as a text of exceptional linguistic, rhetorical, and narrative power. Its literary qualities cannot be separated from its revelatory character, yet they remain open to disciplined analysis. Qur'anic narratives display precision of expression, coherence of design, psychological insight, and sustained ethical purpose. They do not recount earlier events merely to preserve historical memory; rather, they shape those events into meaningful patterns through which questions of faith, knowledge, responsibility, suffering, justice, and human conduct are explored. Among these narratives, the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) in *Surah Yusuf* (*Qur'an* 12) occupies a particularly significant position.

Surah Yusuf presents the principal stages of Yusuf's life within one sustained chapter. The narrative moves from the childhood dream to the brothers' conspiracy, separation from the family, enslavement, temptation, imprisonment, dream interpretation, political responsibility, recognition, forgiveness, and reunion. Although these episodes take place across different times and locations, they remain closely connected through recurring images, objects, dialogues, and changes in knowledge. The opening dream anticipates the conclusion; the shirt moves through several scenes as an instrument of deception, evidence, and restoration; and moments of concealment are gradually answered by recognition and disclosure. This visible continuity has encouraged scholars to examine the surah in relation to plot, characterization, dialogue, symbolism, repetition, irony, suspense, and thematic design (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Mir, 1986; Neuwirth, 2014).

The literary study of *Surah Yusuf* is grounded in a much older exegetical tradition. Classical and modern Arabic commentators have examined its vocabulary, syntax, variant readings, transmitted interpretations, ethical implications, and theological meanings. Al-Ṭabarī draws attention to linguistic and interpretive details, including the repetition of the verb of seeing in the dream report. Al-Qurṭubī discusses lexical possibilities, readings, testimony, responsibility, and forgiveness. Ibn Kathīr connects individual episodes with the wider fulfilment of the dream and the operation of divine providence. Ibn 'Āshūr offers particularly valuable observations on syntax, rhetorical sequence, dialogue, and communicative purpose, while Sayyid Quṭb emphasizes scene construction, psychological movement, social pressure, and the artistic unity of the surah (al-Ṭabarī, 2001; al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021; Quṭb, 2003). These commentaries provide an essential interpretive context for literary analysis and prevent modern critical categories from being imposed without attention to the Arabic text and its reception.

Modern narratology nevertheless offers a useful descriptive vocabulary for features that the surah organizes with remarkable economy. Concepts developed by Genette (1980), Chatman (1978), Bal (2017), and Herman (2009) help clarify narrative sequence, duration, focalization, characterization, narrative perspective, and the relation between story and discourse. These concepts make it possible to describe how information is delayed, how characters are revealed through speech and action, and how earlier events acquire new meanings when they are recalled or fulfilled. Their usefulness, however, has clear limits. Narratological theories developed from human-authored narratives cannot determine the theological status, truth claims, or revelatory purpose of the *Qur'an*. They are therefore employed in this study as analytical resources rather than as standards to which the Qur'anic narrative must conform.

Critical Discourse Analysis offers a second, complementary perspective. Dialogue in *Surah Yusuf* does more than convey information: it establishes or challenges authority, assigns responsibility, conceals intention, constructs identity, and changes relationships. The brothers use collective speech to justify their resentment and later to conceal their actions. The wife of al-‘Azīz attempts to exercise social and spatial power, while Yusuf answers her command with a brief counter-discourse grounded in moral accountability. In prison, Yusuf possesses no institutional authority, yet his conduct and knowledge give him ethical and epistemic credibility. Now of recognition, his political superiority could enable retaliation, but his declaration of forgiveness transforms authority into reconciliation. Fairclough’s (1995) textual, discursive, and social dimensions are valuable for examining these represented interactions, while the work of van Dijk (1998, 2008) and Wodak and Meyer (2016) further clarifies relations among discourse, cognition, ideology, identity, and social context.

The application of **CDA** to the *Qur’an* nevertheless requires methodological caution. A framework developed to analyse human discourse cannot provide a complete account of revelation or adjudicate theological truth. The present study therefore distinguishes between the speech of human characters represented within the narrative and the Qur’anic discourse that frames, confirms, corrects, or evaluates their claims. CDA is applied to wording, interaction, authority, identity, and social positioning, whereas Qur’anic hermeneutics addresses revelatory guidance and theological meaning. This distinction allows the two approaches to contribute to the analysis without treating them as methodologically identical.

The central problem addressed by the study is not the absence of scholarship on *Surah Yusuf*. The surah has already been examined through tafsir, rhetoric, linguistics, psychology, narratology, stylistics, theology, and comparative literature. The difficulty lies instead in the tendency to discuss these dimensions separately. Structural readings may describe plot without fully examining discourse; ideological readings may discuss power without sufficient attention to narrative placement; and theological interpretations may identify ethical lessons without demonstrating how they emerge through dialogue, repetition, characterization, and recognition. References to the surah’s dramatic qualities also frequently remain analogical, identifying conflict, reversal, or climax without explaining how their functions change within a narrative governed by prophecy, revelation, and restorative resolution.

This study responds to that problem through a coordinated analytical framework. Qur’anic narrative remains the primary object and governing context of interpretation. Narratology describes the arrangement of events and perspectives; stylistics examines lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, and cohesive features; **CDA** investigates represented discourse and social relations; Arabic tafsir supplies linguistic and hermeneutic controls; and comparison with Aristotle clarifies both formal affinities and fundamental differences of purpose. The objective is not to subordinate the Qur’an to an external literary theory, nor to present modern theory as unnecessary. It is to assign each method a defined analytical task and to examine where their findings genuinely intersect.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach based on close textual reading and controlled comparison. The Arabic text is the primary source, while English quotations follow Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation as issued by the King Fahd Holy Qur’an Printing Complex (Ali, 1991). The analysis follows the narrative sequence, identifies major scenes and turning points, and examines selected dialogues in relation to lexical choice, speech acts, pronouns, modality, rhetorical questions, testimony, power, identity, and narrative consequences. Particular attention is given to the dream and paternal warning (12:4–6), the temptation and investigation (12:23–29), the prison discourse (12:36–42), and the recognition and forgiveness scene (12:89–92). These passages provide concentrated evidence of the relationship among language, narrative action, social position, and ethical evaluation.

The study argues that *Surah Yusuf* joins narrative coherence to ethical and theological direction. Its conflicts produce neither meaningless suffering nor tragic closure. Trial becomes the context in which character is disclosed, knowledge becomes responsibility, and authority is eventually exercised as service. The narrative moves through separation and injustice, but it culminates in recognition, confession, forgiveness, and restored relationships. This pattern permits comparison with Aristotelian concepts such as unified action, reversal, and recognition, while also exposing the limits of equivalence. In classical tragedy, recognition frequently arrives too late to prevent irreversible catastrophes; in *Surah Yusuf*, recognition opens the way to repentance, mercy, and reconciliation.

The study consequently proposes a hierarchy of related concepts. *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* names the general interpretive proposal; *Qur'anic Narrative Structure* describes the organization of events, dialogue, characterization, and purpose; the *Prophetic Hero* identifies Yusuf's characterological function as a morally constant protagonist whose trials prepare him for responsible authority; and the *Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model* distinguishes textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and revelatory levels of analysis. These concepts are presented as provisional and testable critical categories, not as completed universal laws. Their scholarly value depends on the precision with which they explain the text, their engagement with the Arabic exegetical tradition, and their capacity to clarify other Qur'anic narratives without erasing their individual structures.

The contribution of the study therefore lies less in claiming an entirely unprecedented theory than in arranging existing and proposed concepts within a coherent analytical framework. By bringing Qur'anic exegesis, close reading, narratology, stylistics, CDA, and comparative poetics into a disciplined relationship, the research offers a fuller account of how *Surah Yusuf* transforms narrative form into ethical action. It also suggests that the surah should be regarded not merely as an object to which literary theory is applied, but as a narrative capable of contributing its own categories to contemporary discussions of character, conflict, authority, recognition, and restorative resolution.

1.1. Research Problem

Scholarship has established the theological, rhetorical, linguistic, and literary importance of *Surah Yusuf*. What remains less settled is how its narrative organization, discourse, ethical movement, and revelatory purpose can be discussed within one method without collapsing their differences.

Comparative studies also face a recurring problem. Identifying a climax, reversal, or recognition may show resemblance to classical poetics, but resemblance alone does not establish that the device carries the same function. A comparison must explain how revelation, prophecy, moral testing, and reconciliation alter the direction of the action.

The research problem is therefore methodological and theoretical: *"How can the surah be examined through poetics, narratology, and discourse analysis while preserving the distinct epistemological status of Qur'anic revelation?"*

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Aristotle's *Poetics* supplies a powerful account of unified action, probability, reversal, recognition, and characterization, but it was developed from Greek tragedy. Its categories may clarify aspects of *Surah Yusuf*, only when their historical and generic limits are acknowledged.

This study addresses the need for a coordinated literary reading that relates narrative structure to discourse and ethical purpose. It does not assume that a single framework can exhaust the surah, nor does it allow formal comparison to erase the difference between human poetics and revelation. Its central task is to determine how literary, narrative, discursive, and ethical evidence can be integrated within a method appropriate to Qur'anic narrative.

1.3. Aim of the Study

The study aims to formulate and test an integrated approach to *Surah Yusuf* by relating narrative structure, Aristotelian comparison, discourse analysis, and Qur'anic hermeneutics. Its purpose is to explain how form, ethical development, and revelatory guidance interact across the narrative.

1.4. Research Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the narrative structure of *Surah Yusuf* considering Aristotle's *Poetics*.
2. To investigate the similarities and differences between the Qur'anic narrative structure and Aristotelian dramatic principles.
3. To analyze characterization in *Surah Yusuf* through both the *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* and Aristotelian concepts of the tragic hero.
4. To examine dialogue using Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis*.
5. To investigate how discourse constructs authority, identity, ideology, and ethical meaning within the narrative.
6. To formulate a comprehensive *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* integrating classical poetics, narratology, discourse analysis, and Qur'anic hermeneutics.
7. To demonstrate the contribution of Qur'anic narrative to contemporary comparative literary criticism.
8. To provide a transferable analytical framework for future studies of sacred narratives.

1.5. Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent does the narrative structure of *Surah Yusuf* correspond to the principles of Aristotle's *Poetics*?
2. How does the Qur'anic narrative preserve, modify, or transcend Aristotelian dramatic theory?
3. How does characterization in *Surah Yusuf* differ from Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero?
4. How does dialogue function in constructing authority, identity, ideology, and ethical meaning within the Qur'anic narrative?
5. How can Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis* contribute to understanding Qur'anic dialogue?
6. What theoretical principles distinguish the proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* from existing literary models?
7. How does the proposed theory contribute to comparative poetics and contemporary literary criticism?
8. Can the proposed analytical framework be applied to other Qur'anic narratives and sacred texts?

1.6. Research Hypotheses

Although the study is qualitative, the following propositions guide the investigation:

- **H1:** *Surah Yusuf* exhibits a highly coherent narrative structure that corresponds to many of Aristotle's principles of dramatic unity and causality.
- **H2:** The Qur'anic narrative significantly expands Aristotelian dramatic theory through its ethical and revelatory dimensions.
- **H3:** Dialogue in *Surah Yusuf* operates simultaneously on textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and divine levels of discourse.

- **H4:** Reading narrative structure, discourse, and Qur'anic hermeneutics together will explain more features of the surah than any one of these approaches used alone.
- **H5:** The proposed concepts in ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory*** may offer a useful contribution to comparative poetics, subject to further application and critical testing.

1.7. Significance of Study

This study is significant for several reasons.

a. Theoretical Significance

The study formulates the ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory***, an interdisciplinary framework integrating Aristotelian poetics, narratology, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Qur'anic hermeneutics. In doing so, it contributes to comparative poetics by demonstrating that Qur'anic narratives constitute an autonomous literary paradigm capable of enriching contemporary literary theory.

b. Methodological Significance

The research develops a systematic analytical procedure that combines structural analysis, discourse analysis, characterization, ethical criticism, and theological interpretation. This framework provides a replicable methodology for future literary investigations of sacred narratives.

c. Literary Significance

The study expands the scope of comparative literature by establishing a dialogue between classical Greek poetics and Qur'anic narrative. It demonstrates that Surah Yusuf simultaneously preserves structural coherence comparable to classical drama while introducing distinctive narrative principles rooted in revelation.

d. Interdisciplinary Significance

By integrating literary criticism, discourse analysis, narratology, and Islamic studies, the research encourages interdisciplinary collaboration among scholars working in literature, linguistics, theology, communication, and comparative religion.

e. Practical Significance

The proposed framework may assist researchers, educators, and graduate students in analyzing Qur'anic narratives, developing comparative literature courses, and promoting the literary study of sacred texts within higher education.

1.8. Scope of the Study

The corpus is Surah Yusuf (Qur'an 12), comprising 111 verses. The article examines its narrative sequence, characters, selected dialogues, recurring motifs, and ethical progression. Where lexical or quantitative observations are made, they are tied to the Arabic text and to an explicitly identified counting procedure.

Although comparisons are drawn with Aristotelian dramatic theory, the study does not attempt a comprehensive comparison with all classical or modern literary traditions. Instead, Surah Yusuf serves as a representative case study for developing and illustrating the proposed ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory***, whose broader applicability is suggested as a direction for future research.

1.9. Delimitations of the Study

This research is delimited in the following ways:

- It is confined to the analysis of *Surah Yusuf*.
- It employs a qualitative, descriptive, comparative, and interpretative methodology.
- It focuses on literary and discourse analysis rather than theological exegesis or jurisprudential interpretation.
- It draws primarily on Aristotle's *Poetics*, modern narratology, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, and selected works in Qur'anic literary studies.
- The conclusions are intended to establish a theoretical framework rather than provide exhaustive interpretations of all Qur'anic narratives.

2. Literature Review

Literary scholarship on the *Holy Qur'an* now draws on a wide range of approaches, including rhetoric, narratology, stylistics, linguistics, discourse analysis, and comparative literature. Surah Yusuf has been especially important to this development because its principal episodes unfold within one surah and are connected by recurring dreams, objects, dialogues, and acts of recognition. Its continuity makes it particularly suitable for examining how narrative form carries theological and ethical meaning.

Research on the surah is substantial but methodologically diverse. Exegetes attend language, transmitted interpretation, doctrine, and moral guidance; literary critics examine plot, characterization, imagery, and dialogue; and discourse analysts focus on authority, identity, persuasion, and social relations. These bodies of scholarship are complementary, although they do not always ask the same questions or work from the same assumptions.

The unresolved issue is therefore not a simple absence of interdisciplinary research. It is the lack of agreement about how different approaches should be coordinated. Structural analysis can describe sequence without explaining represented power, while discourse analysis can identify social positioning without showing how it is shaped by narrative placement. Theological interpretation may establish ethical significance without always demonstrating how that significance is produced through wording, repetition, characterization, and recognition.

The review follows the structure of the present study. It first considers scholarship on Qur'anic narrative and the interpretive role of Arabic tafsīr, then turns to studies devoted to Surah Yusuf, narratology, CDA, and Qur'anic stylistics. It concludes by defining the precise gap addressed by the proposed framework.

2.1. Studies on Qur'anic Narrative

The study of Qur'anic narrative has deep roots in the Arabic exegetical and rhetorical tradition. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr connect transmitted interpretation with lexical and narrative context, while al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī give sustained attention to syntax, rhetoric, and semantic precision. Al-Rāzī often develops theological and psychological implications; al-Baghawī preserves early interpretive materials; and al-Biqā'ī relates local passages to wider patterns of coherence and correspondence. Their methods differ, but together they show that narrative form, linguistic choice, and ethical guidance have long been treated as interdependent dimensions of Qur'anic interpretation (al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; al-Zamakhsharī, 1987; al-Bayḍāwī, 1998; al-Rāzī, 1999; al-Baghawī, 1997; al-Biqā'ī, n.d.).

Modern Arabic interpretation extends this conversation in different directions. Ibn 'Āshūr (2021) frequently relates word order, address, repetition, and contextual sequence to communicative purpose. Sayyid Quṭb (2003) foregrounds scene construction, psychological movement, dialogue, and artistic unity, whereas al-Sa'dī (2000) emphasizes the ethical clarity and practical guidance of the narrative. Al-Sha'rāwī (1997) often develops the communicative and

reflective possibilities of individual expressions. These works do not constitute a single literary method, but they offer interpretive controls that modern theory cannot replace.

Modern Qur'anic literary criticism has provided a more explicit vocabulary for structure and coherence. Mir (1986, 1988) examines plot, economy, characterization, and the relation between literary form and moral purpose. Boullata (2000) brings together studies of the literary structures through which religious meaning is produced, while Neuwirth (2014) situates Qur'anic composition within a wider literary and historical environment. Abdel Haleem (2004) similarly demonstrates how concision, thematic connection, and rhetorical movement contribute to the intelligibility of Qur'anic discourse.

Narratology adds descriptive precision to this discussion. Genette's categories of order, duration, frequency, voice, and focalization; Chatman's distinction between story and discourse; Bal's account of text, story, and fabula; and Herman's cognitive approach help explain how narrative information is arranged and interpreted (Genette, 1980; Chatman, 1978; Bal, 2017; Herman, 2009). These concepts are useful when they remain accountable to the Arabic text and do not become substitutes for interpretation.

The scholarship nevertheless supports more than one conclusion. Some studies emphasize structural symmetry, others rhetorical sequence, historical setting, ethical address, or readerly response. It would therefore be inaccurate to claim that previous research has ignored Qur'anic narrative structure. The more defensible gap concerns the coordination of these insights and the need to explain how structure, discourse, characterization, and revelatory purpose interact within a sustained reading of one surah.

The proposed model builds on this scholarship rather than displacing it. Its contribution lies in assigning distinct tasks to narratology, stylistics, **CDA**, and Qur'anic hermeneutics, then testing whether their findings can be related without collapsing their methodological differences. Surah Yusuf provides the case through which that claim is examined.

Classical and Modern Arabic Tafsīr as an Interpretive Control

Tafsīr functions in this study as an interpretive discipline, not as a decorative list of authorities or an early version of **CDA**. It clarifies lexical possibilities, syntax, variant readings, inter-verse relations, theological evaluation, and the reception of difficult expressions. **CDA** has a narrower task: it examines represented interaction, social positioning, authority, and identity within the narrated world.

The opening dream illustrates the value of this distinction. Al-Ṭabarī comments on the repeated verb of seeing in 12:4, while Ibn Kathīr relates the celestial symbols to the family relationships disclosed at the end of the surah. Al-Qurṭubī records lexical and recitational discussion surrounding expressions such as *hayta laka* and *lā tathrība*. Such observations support analysis of emphasis, anticipation, and recognition without recasting the exegetes as modern narratologists (al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; al-Qurṭubī, 2006).

The commentaries also provide productive differences of emphasis. Ibn 'Āshūr relates syntax and sequence to communicative purpose; Quṭb attends to dramatic movement and psychological pressure; al-Rāzī develops theological and psychological questions; and al-Sa'dī and al-Sha'rāwī foreground ethical reflection and guidance. Read together, these sources establish a disciplined dialogue between inherited exegesis and modern literary criticism while preserving the distinctive aims of each (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021; Quṭb, 2003; al-Rāzī, 1999; al-Sa'dī, 2000; al-Sha'rāwī, 1997).

2.2. Studies on *Surah Yusuf*

Within Qur'anic literary studies, *Surah Yusuf* has received sustained attention because its principal sequence extends from Yusuf's childhood dream to recognition and reunion. The episodes remain selective rather than biographically exhaustive, yet they form an unusually visible arc of anticipation, trial, reversal, and fulfilment. This organization has made the surah a central text for research on plot, dialogue, characterization, rhetoric, and comparative narrative.

Mustansir Mir's '*The Qur'anic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, and Characters*' remain a foundational literary study of the surah. Mir (1986) shows that the plot is not a loose series of exemplary incidents: its episodes are linked by causal development, recurring themes, and changes in character and knowledge. His analysis is especially valuable because it relates structural economy to moral purpose rather than treating form and guidance as separate achievements.

Mir's later work on Qur'anic dialogue broadens that insight. Dialogue, in his account, does not simply reproduce conversation; it concentrates conflict, reveals character, controls information, and advances the action (Mir, 1992). This is directly relevant to *Surah Yusuf*, where dreams, accusations, testimony, interpretation, confession, and pardon all change the relationships among speakers.

Other studies develop complementary aspects of the surah. Johns (1981) examines dramatic dialogue, human emotion, and prophetic wisdom, drawing attention to the intensity of the represented exchanges. Matswah (2018) evaluates Mir's literary approach and emphasizes its connection among plot, scenes, dialogue, and moral meaning. Together, these studies support dramatic and structural reading while also showing that the surah's artistry cannot be separated from its ethical direction.

Angelika Neuwirth approaches *Surah Yusuf* from the perspective of Qur'anic literary composition and late antique literary culture. She argues that the surah possesses exceptional structural unity and should be interpreted as an integrated literary discourse rather than a collection of isolated narrative episodes. Neuwirth also emphasizes the rhetorical relationship between the opening and concluding verses, demonstrating that the narrative functions within a carefully balanced literary architecture. Her work highlights the importance of coherence, ring composition, and thematic symmetry in understanding the artistic organization of the surah. (Neuwirth, 2014)

Abdel Haleem (2004) and Neuwirth (2014) place the surah within broader accounts of Qur'anic rhetoric, composition, and literary communication. Robinson (2003) likewise offers a framework for reading coherence and rhetorical development across the *Qur'an*. These studies establish the legitimacy of literary analysis, although they differ in historical assumptions, scale, and interpretive emphasis.

Work on symmetry and rhetorical composition further clarifies the relation between local scenes and larger design. Farrin (2014) and Cuypers (2015) demonstrate how correspondence, recurrence, and balanced arrangement can contribute to Qur'anic coherence. Their methods are useful for identifying structural relations, but formal symmetry alone cannot explain characterization, ethical choice, or the social work performed by dialogue.

Comparative research introduces another valuable but potentially reductive perspective. Kaltner (2003) reads the Qur'anic Joseph in conversation with the biblical figure, making differences in selection, emphasis, and characterization more visible. Such comparison is most productive when it preserves the literary and theological integrity of each account rather than treating one as a derivative version of the other.

Discourse-oriented approaches help explain how the surah represents authority, credibility, coercion, testimony, and forgiveness. Fairclough's model and van Dijk's socio-cognitive account were not designed specifically for Qur'anic narrative, but their categories clarify the social consequences of represented speech (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Their use must remain limited to questions they can answer and must be supplemented by narratology and Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Existing scholarship therefore provides strong accounts of plot, rhetoric, dialogue, coherence, and theological purpose. What remains to be demonstrated is how these features work together across specific scenes. The present study addresses that task by assigning narratology, stylistics, CDA, and tafsīr distinct but related analytical roles.

2.3. Studies on Narrative Theory

Narrative theory offers a precise vocabulary for examining how stories organize events, distribute knowledge, represent characters, and guide interpretation. Emerging from structuralist inquiry and later developing across several disciplines, narratology asks not only what a narrative communicates but how sequence, perspective, temporal arrangement, and discourse shape that communication (Genette, 1980; Chatman, 1978; Bal, 2017). These questions are relevant to Surah Yusuf because the surah regulates anticipation, concealment, recognition, and fulfilment with exceptional care. Their relevance, however, depends on close engagement with the text rather than on the unqualified transfer of categories developed for other literary traditions.

Genette's distinction among story (*histoire*), narrative (*récit*), and narration remains especially useful for separating events from their textual arrangement and from the act of telling. His categories of order, duration, frequency, focalization, and voice clarify how narratives delay information, revisit earlier events, and control perspective (Genette, 1980). In Surah Yusuf, the opening dream anticipates the ending, while later recognition scenes disclose meanings that neither the characters nor the reader can fully grasp at the beginning. Genette's model helps describe this management of knowledge, although it does not explain the surah's theological purpose.

Chatman (1978) approaches the same problem through the distinction between story and discourse. Story includes events, characters, and settings; discourse concerns the way this material is presented. This distinction is valuable for Surah Yusuf because its meaning depends not only on what happens to Yusuf but also on the placement of dialogue, the withholding of identity, and the recurrence of dreams and symbolic objects. Narrative content and presentation therefore work together, and neither can provide an adequate account of the surah in isolation.

Bal (2017) develops a related account through the interaction of fabula, story, and text. Her treatment of focalization is particularly helpful because it directs attention to who perceives what each character knows, and how that knowledge changes. Yusuf's brothers, Ya'qūb, the prisoners, and the Egyptian court interpret events from different and sometimes conflicting positions. Reading these perspectives comparatively makes characterization more precise and shows how misunderstanding, concealment, and disclosure contribute to the narrative's coherence.

Herman's cognitive narratology shifts attention toward the processes by which readers connect events and construct meaningful patterns (Herman, 2009). This perspective helps explain how readers retain the opening dream, recognize the significance of recurring images, and reinterpret earlier episodes considering the conclusion. In a Qur'anic context, such participation is not merely a matter of narrative comprehension; it is also related to ethical reflection. Cognitive narratology can describe aspects of that response, but it cannot define the religious significance attributed to it.

Rimmon-Kenan (2002) further clarifies the relationship among characterization, focalization, narrative time, and textual perspective, whereas Prince (1982) emphasizes sequence, causality, and the conditions of narrative coherence. Together, these approaches help distinguish the surah's chronological events from the order in which their significance becomes visible. They also support analysis of how character is disclosed through action and speech rather than through extended authorial description.

The limits of these theories are as important as their analytical value. Modern narratology was developed largely through the study of human-authored narratives and cannot determine the status of the Holy Qur'an as revelation, the truth claims of its narrative, or its reception as divine guidance. Mir (1986) and Abdel Haleem (2004) are therefore important interlocutors because they relate literary form to the Qur'an's ethical and communicative purposes without reducing those purposes to aesthetic effect alone.

Narratology is consequently used here as a supporting method. It supplies terms for sequence, focalization, characterization, temporal arrangement, and the distribution of knowledge, while Qur'anic hermeneutics remains responsible for revelation, guidance, and theological evaluation. Interpreted within the broader Qur'anic Narrative Structure, these concepts sharpen the analysis of Surah Yusuf without becoming the governing measure of its literary identity.

2.4. Studies on Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis examines how linguistic choices participate in the construction of power, identity, ideology, and social relations (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Its relevance to Surah Yusuf lies primarily in the speech of the represented characters: the brothers justify resentment, accusations compete for credibility, institutional authority restricts action, and pardon redefines a relationship of power. CDA can illuminate these interactions, but it must not treat Qur'anic revelation as though it were simply another instance of human social discourse.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model relates textual features to discursive practice and to the wider social practices within which communication occurs (Fairclough, 1995). At the textual level, the present study considers vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, modality, rhetorical questions, and speech acts. At the interactional level, it asks who may speak, whose account is believed, and how claims are challenged or circulated.

The social dimension then connects these exchanges to represented relations of family, gender, class, imprisonment, political authority, and religious knowledge. This movement from wording to interaction and social position gives the analysis a clear procedure.

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach adds attention to the knowledge, assumptions, and mental models through which discourse is produced and interpreted (van Dijk, 1998, 2008). This perspective is useful when examining the brothers' collective account of Yusuf, the competing interpretations of evidence in the temptation episode, and the changes in knowledge that accompany recognition. Discourse in these scenes does not merely reflect power; it attempts to organize what others accept as true. Van Dijk's model helps explain this process, while the narrative analysis shows its consequences for plot and characterization.

Wodak and Meyer (2016) emphasize that discourse should be read in relation to historical, cultural, and institutional contexts rather than as an isolated linguistic object. Their interdisciplinary orientation is relevant to the different social settings represented in the surah, including the household, the prison, the royal court, and the administration of famine. Contextual analysis makes these relations visible, but it does not exhaust the surah's ethical or theological meaning.

Systemic Functional Linguistics provides a complementary linguistic foundation. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) distinguish ideational, interpersonal, and textual meta functions: language represent experience, negotiates relationships, and organizes coherent communication. These functions support analysis of how the dialogues in Surah Yusuf recount events, position speakers, and connect individual exchanges to the wider narrative. Their value is greatest when a grammatical observation is linked to a specific change in knowledge, authority, or action.

Studies of Qur'anic discourse also demonstrate the need to relate linguistic form to rhetoric, context, translation, and exegesis. Abdul-Raof (2001) examines the texture of Qur'anic discourse and the interpretive difficulties involved in translation, while Abdel Haleem (2004) shows how rhetorical and contextual relations contribute to meaning. Their work supports close analysis of authority, persuasion, justice, and moral responsibility in Surah Yusuf, but it also cautions against treating an English rendering as a substitute for the Arabic text.

Applying CDA to sacred discourse nevertheless raises a methodological problem. A model designed to study human communication, and social institutions cannot, by itself, explain divine authorship or adjudicate theological truth. The analysis must therefore distinguish among the speech of human characters, the social relations represented within the narrative, and the Qur'anic discourse that frames, confirms, corrects, or evaluates what those characters say.

The present study adapts CDA within these limits. Fairclough's textual, interactional, and social dimensions guide the examination of represented speech, while a separate revelatory dimension identifies the Qur'anic framing through which human claims and actions receive ethical and theological evaluation. This fourth dimension is an interpretive addition for the purposes of the study, not a revision attributed to Fairclough. Used in this way, CDA contributes to literary analysis by showing how dialogue functions simultaneously as language, narrative action, and social interaction.

2.5. Studies on Qur'anic Stylistics

Qur'anic stylistics investigates how lexical choice, syntax, imagery, repetition, sound, cohesion, and rhetorical patterning contribute to meaning. Leech and Short (2007) provide general vocabulary for stylistic analysis, while Simpson (1993) links linguistic form to ideology and point of view. These frameworks are useful only when adapted to the linguistic and generic particularities of Qur'anic discourse.

Abdul-Raof (2001) and Abdel Haleem (2004) show that translation, texture, rhetoric, and exegesis are closely related. Mir (1986) demonstrates how dialogue, symbolism, economy, and progression shape Surah Yusuf, while Robinson (2003), Farrin (2014), and Cuypers (2015) offer different accounts of coherence, correspondence, and rhetorical composition.

Functional and discourse-oriented stylistics further clarify how wording participates in narrative development. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) make it possible to relate grammatical choice to experience, interpersonal position, and textual organization. Such analysis is most persuasive when it identifies a local linguistic feature and then shows its consequence for scene, character, or plot.

Stylistics therefore serves a defined role in the present study. It examines lexical choice, repetition, imagery, cohesion, and foregrounding where these features shape narrative progression, characterization, or thematic emphasis. It is not treated as an independent explanation of the surah's theology.

2.6. Research Gap

The research gap is a need for coordinated and textually demonstrated comparison. Previous scholarships have already established the literary artistry and coherence of *Surah Yusuf*. The present study asks a narrower question: how do structure, discourse, ethical development, and revelatory framing work together, and how does that relationship qualify comparison with Aristotle?

Narratology, stylistics, CDA, and Qur'anic hermeneutics address different kinds of evidence. Their combination is justified only when the analysis identifies a demonstrable relation among narrative placement, linguistic choice, social positioning, and ethical interpretation.

Qur'anic Narrative Theory is therefore presented as a synthesis and an ordered proposal rather than a theory without precedent. It brings established insights into a hierarchy comprising narrative structure, prophetic characterization, discourse, and teleological purpose.

Surah Yusuf provides the first sustained test of that hierarchy. The model's originality depends on its explanatory precision, its dialogue with Arabic tafsīr and modern scholarship, and its capacity to generate responsible comparison with other Qur'anic narratives.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical methodology to investigate the narrative, stylistic, and discursive characteristics of *Surah Yusuf* within the proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory*. Since the objective is to interpret the literary organization of the Qur'anic narrative rather than quantify linguistic features, a qualitative approach provides the most appropriate research design. The methodology integrates close textual analysis, narratology, stylistics, and **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** to examine how narrative structure, discourse, and stylistic choices interact to construct literary, ethical, and theological meaning.

3.1. Research Design

The research employs a qualitative interpretive design that facilitates an in-depth analysis of textual organization, narrative coherence, discourse construction, and literary style (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study combines four complementary analytical perspectives:

- **Qur'anic Narrative Analysis**
- **Narrative Analysis**
- **Critical Discourse Analysis**
- **Stylistic Analysis**

These four approaches are integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the literary architecture of *Surah Yusuf*.

3.2. Research Corpus and Data Sources

The primary corpus is Surah Yusuf (Qur'an 12), a chapter of 111 verses whose principal sequence presents Yusuf's story from the opening dream to recognition and reunion. The Arabic text is treated as primary. English quotations follow Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation as issued by the King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex (Ali, 1991). Because every translation is interpretive, claims about diction are checked against salient Arabic lexemes and grammatical features. Secondary materials include books and peer-reviewed studies in Qur'anic literary criticism, narratology, stylistics, dramatic theory, discourse analysis, and comparative literature. No quantitative lexical claim is made without a separately defined counting protocol.

Use of Arabic Tafsīr and Linguistic Evidence

For each focal passage, the study begins with the Arabic verse, identifies the relevant lexical or grammatical feature, and then consults the King Fahd Complex English rendering for quotation. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr are used principally for transmitted interpretation and inter-verse relation; al-Qurṭubī for lexical, recitational, legal, and ethical discussion; Ibn 'Āshūr for syntax, rhetoric, and contextual organization; and Sayyid Quṭb for scene, movement, psychology, and social implication. Interpretive agreement is reported where it exists, while differences of emphasis are retained rather than harmonized artificially.

The use of tafsīr follows two safeguards. First, a literary claim is not attributed to an exegete unless the cited discussion supplies its linguistic or contextual basis. Second, CDA categories are applied to the represented speech and social relations of the narrative; they are not projected retrospectively onto the intellectual methods of classical commentators. This procedure allows modern analysis to remain textually accountable and hermeneutically disciplined.

3.3. Methods of Data Analysis

The analysis proceeds through three interrelated stages.

Stage One: Narrative Analysis

The narrative is examined in terms of plot structure, characterization, temporal organization, narrative perspective, conflict, climax, resolution, and thematic development. This stage is informed by the narratological frameworks of Genette (1980), Chatman (1978), Bal (2017), and Herman (2009).

Stage Two: Critical Discourse Analysis

Drawing primarily on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, this stage follows a reproducible sequence. First, textual description identifies lexical choices, pronouns, modality, transitivity, cohesion, rhetorical questions, and

speech acts. Second, interactional interpretation asks who may speak, who is heard, how claims are circulated or challenged, and what narrative consequences follow. Third, social explanation examines represented relations of family, gender, class, legal authority, political office, and religious knowledge. A separate revelatory reading then considers how the Qur'anic framing confirms, corrects, or morally evaluates the speakers' claims. This fourth level is an adaptation for the present study, not part of Fairclough's original **CDA** model.

Stage Three: Qur'anic Narrative Analysis

The final stage synthesizes the findings from the preceding analyses within the proposed ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory***. Rather than treating narrative, discourse, and style as separate dimensions, the study examines their interaction in producing the structural coherence, dramatic progression, ethical intentionality, theological integration, and artistic excellence of ***Surah Yusuf***. This integrative stage constitutes the principal methodological contribution of the research by offering a comprehensive model for the literary analysis of Qur'anic narratives.

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework coordinates Qur'anic Narrative Structure, narratology, stylistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis. Each addresses a different aspect of Surah Yusuf. Narratology describes sequence, time, perspective, and characterization; stylistics examines the literary work performed by linguistic and rhetorical choices; and CDA investigates represented discourse, authority, identity, and social relations. Qur'anic Narrative Structure remains the governing literary component because it relates these observations to the surah's ethical direction and revelatory context.

These approaches are complementary, but they are not interchangeable. The narrative may be compared with human-authored literature at the level of form, yet its reception as revelation requires theological and hermeneutic categories that secular literary theories cannot supply. Modern theory is therefore used to clarify particular textual relations, not to determine the meaning or status of the Qur'an in advance.

4.1. The Qur'anic Narrative Structure

The theoretical framework has four related levels. ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory*** names the general interpretive proposal. ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** describes the arrangement of events, characters, dialogue, and purpose. Narratology and stylistics supply descriptive tools, while **CDA** examines represented discourse, authority, identity, and social relations.

These levels are complementary but not interchangeable. Narratology describes how the story is arranged; **CDA** examines what discourse does within represented social relations; and Qur'anic hermeneutics addresses revelation, guidance, and theological meaning. Keeping these functions distinct prevents the framework from becoming a collection of overlapping terms.

The ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** remains the primary literary component of the model. It identifies unity, causal progression, rhetorical economy, characterization, dialogue, and ethical direction while recognizing that these features occur within revelation rather than fictional invention.

The ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** differs fundamentally from conventional narrative models because it is governed by divine intentionality rather than fictional invention. Every episode, dialogue, and narrative transition contributes directly to the theological, ethical, and educational objectives of the revelation. Narrative economy, therefore, becomes one of its defining characteristics. Events unnecessary to the central message are omitted, while those that reinforce the narrative's moral and spiritual purpose receive particular emphasis. This economy produces remarkable textual coherence without sacrificing psychological depth or dramatic effectiveness (Abdel Haleem, 2004).

Qur'anic Narrative Structure refers here to the organization through which prophetic history, dialogue, conflict, and ethical instruction form a coherent sequence. The term does not imply that every Qur'anic narrative follows an identical pattern; it provides categories to be tested against particular surahs.

Surah Yusuf offers a strong case because the dream, separation, temptation, prison, interpretation, authority, and reunion can be followed within one chapter. The episodes remain distinct, but later events repeatedly reinterpret earlier ones, especially through the fulfillment of dreams and the movement from concealment to recognition.

The narrative is governed by revelatory purpose, yet that claim should be demonstrated through textual organization rather than used as a substitute for analysis. Omission, repetition, shifts in dialogue, and the placement of recognition scenes show how the surah directs attention toward patience, divine providence, responsibility, and forgiveness.

Literary artistry and ethical instruction are therefore related without being identical. A formal feature may create suspense or cohesion while also contributing to moral reflection. The analysis must identify both functions instead of assuming that aesthetic form merely decorates with a prior message.

Characterization develops through action, speech, testing, and changed relationships. Yusuf's constancy is set against the changing conduct of his brothers; Ya'qub's grief remains joined to trust; and the brothers move from jealousy and concealment toward acknowledgment and repentance. These trajectories give ethical development a structural role.

Dialogue advances events and exposes competing forms of knowledge and authority. The exchanges surrounding the dream, temptation, prison interpretation, royal inquiry, and recognition do not simply report action; they alter what characters and readers understand.

The movement from dream to fulfillment organizes the whole narrative. Separation, temptation, imprisonment, and famine generate pressure, but the resolution is restorative: authority becomes service, recognition leads to confession, and power creates the possibility of forgiveness rather than revenge.

On this basis, ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** is treated as a provisional literary model with structural, ethical, and revelatory dimensions. Modern theories assist its description, but they do not determine its theological claims. This theoretical perspective constitutes the principal foundation of the present study and guides the subsequent literary, stylistic, narrative, and discourse analyses of ***Surah Yusuf***.

4.2. Narrative Theory

Narrative theory, or narratology, provides a systematic framework for examining how narratives are constructed and interpreted. Emerging from twentieth-century structuralism, it has since developed into an interdisciplinary field concerned with plot, characterization, narration, temporal organization, focalization, discourse, and reader response (Chatman, 1978; Genette, 1980; Bal, 2017; Herman, 2009). Narratology therefore considers not only what a story communicates but also how its events, perspectives, and voices are arranged to produce meaning.

Gérard Genette played a central role in shaping structural narratology. His distinction among **story (histoire)**, **narrative (récit)**, and **narration** separates the events being represented from their textual presentation and the act through which they are narrated. Genette (1980) further demonstrated that narrative meaning depends on the manipulation of temporal order, duration, frequency, mood, voice, and focalization. His model shows that a narrative does not acquire its artistic force from events alone; its effect also arises from how those events are selected, ordered, delayed, repeated, and viewed from perspectives.

Chatman (1978) develops a related distinction between **story** and **discourse**. Story comprises events and existents, including characters and settings, whereas discourse refers to how this material is communicated. Meaning consequently emerges through the interaction between narrative content and its mode of presentation. This distinction is particularly useful in the analysis of *Surah Yusuf*, where dialogue, transitions, symbolic episodes, and the controlled disclosure of information shape the reader's understanding of events. The surah's coherence rests not only on what happens to Yusuf but also on the precise way his story is narrated.

Bal (2017) further expanded narratology by emphasizing the relationship among **fabula**, **story**, and **text**. She argues that narrative should be understood as a dynamic interaction between events, characters, narrators, and readers rather than as a simple chronological sequence. Her theory also highlights the importance of focalization, demonstrating that narrative perspective shapes readers' understanding of characters and events. Likewise, Herman (2009) approaches narrative from a cognitive perspective, arguing that readers actively construct meaning through their engagement with narrative structures and contextual knowledge.

Collectively, these theories provide valuable analytical concepts for examining narrative progression, characterization, dialogue, temporal organization, and thematic development within *Surah Yusuf*. The concepts of exposition, conflict, climax, resolution, focalization, narrative voice, and sequencing help explain the literary organization of the surah while facilitating comparison with other narrative traditions.

Nevertheless, the present study argues that modern narratology alone cannot fully explain the distinctive characteristics of Qur'anic storytelling. Most narrative theories were originally formulated to analyze fictional narratives produced by human authors and therefore emphasize aesthetic representation, textual organization, and reader interpretation. The Qur'an, however, represents divine revelation whose narrative objectives extend beyond artistic representation to include theological instruction, ethical transformation, spiritual guidance, and universal moral education (Abdel Haleem, 2004; Mir, 1986).

Consequently, narrative theory functions in this study as a complementary analytical framework rather than the principal theoretical foundation. The concepts developed by Genette, Chatman, Bal, and Herman provide useful descriptive terminology for analyzing narrative organization, but they are interpreted within the

broader framework of the ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure***, which recognizes the unique literary, theological, and ethical identity of Qur'anic discourse. In this sense, narratology enriches the literary analysis without replacing the independent principles governing Qur'anic narrative composition.

Furthermore, this study extends contemporary narratology by arguing that the ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** constitutes a distinctive narrative paradigm characterized by narrative economy, thematic unity, dramatic progression, ethical intentionality, psychological realism, and divine discourse. These characteristics expand the scope of narrative theory beyond its traditional application to fictional literature and demonstrate that Qur'anic storytelling offers an alternative yet fully coherent model of narrative construction. From within, the present research contributes not only to Qur'anic literary studies but also to contemporary narratology by proposing a broader understanding of narrative capable of accommodating sacred as well as secular literary traditions.

Narratology provides a language for describing story, discourse, sequence, duration, focalization, and character. These concepts are useful when they are attached to specific textual evidence rather than invoked as general signs of theoretical sophistication.

4.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) constitutes the third theoretical pillar of the present study. While the ***Qur'anic Narrative Structure*** explains the organization of the narrative and ***Narrative Theory*** examines its literary architecture, Critical Discourse Analysis investigates how language constructs meaning, authority, ideology, morality, and social relationships throughout the narrative. Rather than viewing discourse as a neutral vehicle for communication, CDA regards language as a form of social practice through which beliefs, values, identities, and power relations are created, negotiated, and transformed (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The present study primarily adopts Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of discourse, which analyzes texts at three interconnected levels: the textual dimension, the discursive practice through which the text is produced and interpreted, and the wider social practice within which discourse operates. At the textual level, attention is given to lexical selection, grammatical organization, rhetorical devices, cohesion, and dialogue. At the level of discursive practice, the study examines how different forms of discourse interact to produce meaning throughout the narrative. Finally, the social dimension considers how the Qur'anic narrative constructs ethical values, justice, authority, family relationships, leadership, and social responsibility.

Fairclough's model is particularly appropriate for ***Surah Yusuf*** because the narrative consists of multiple forms of discourse that operate simultaneously within a unified literary structure. Divine revelation, prophetic speech, familial dialogue, political communication, legal reasoning, dreams, and public announcements collectively construct the narrative while conveying theological and ethical principles. Consequently, discourse serves not merely to report events but to shape readers' understanding of morality, responsibility, forgiveness, patience, and divine justice.

The study also benefits from van Dijk's (1998, 2008) socio-cognitive approach, which emphasizes the relationship between discourse, cognition, and ideology. According to van Dijk, discourse influences the mental models through which readers interpret reality, evaluate moral choices, and understand social relationships. Within *Surah Yusuf*, discourse repeatedly reshapes both the characters' perceptions and the audience's interpretation of events. Yusuf's dream, Ya'qub's advice, the accusations of Yusuf's brothers, the testimony of the witness, the king's dreams, and Yusuf's final speech of forgiveness all function as cognitive turning points that transform understanding and redefine human relationships.

The discourse-historical perspective developed by Wodak and Meyer (2016) further strengthens the present analysis by emphasizing that discourse must be interpreted within its historical, cultural, and ideological context. Although *Surah Yusuf* narrates historical events, its discourse simultaneously addresses universal ethical principles that transcend historical circumstances. Justice, truthfulness, forgiveness, patience, trust in God, and moral responsibility are presented not merely as historical values but as enduring principles applicable to all societies.

The linguistic dimension of discourse analysis is further informed by Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics, which identifies three meta functions of language: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. These meta functions are clearly reflected throughout *Surah Yusuf*. The ideational function represents events, experiences, and moral realities; the interpersonal function constructs relationships among God, prophets, rulers, families, and communities; while the textual function organizes the narrative into a coherent and cohesive literary discourse. Halliday's functional approach therefore complements both narratology and Qur'anic literary criticism by demonstrating how linguistic structures support narrative organization and communicative purpose.

Unlike many previous applications of **Critical Discourse Analysis** to religious texts, the present study does not treat discourse as an isolated linguistic phenomenon. Instead, discourse is examined as an integral component of the *Qur'anic Narrative Structure*, interacting continuously with plot development, characterization, thematic progression, and dramatic organization. Every significant narrative episode is simultaneously a discourse event through which ethical values, psychological development, theological truths, and social relationships are communicated.

CDA forms the discourse-oriented component of the study. It is used to examine how narrated speakers claim authority, assign responsibility, conceal motives, persuade others, and renegotiate relationships. The analysis distinguishes these human discourse events from the Qur'anic discourse that frames and evaluates them.

- **Divine Discourse**, which establishes the theological framework of the narrative and affirms God's sovereignty, wisdom, and providence.
- **Prophetic Discourse**, through which Yusuf and Ya'qub communicate faith, patience, wisdom, and reliance upon God.
- **Family Discourse**, which reflects affection, jealousy, conflict, deception, repentance, reconciliation, and forgiveness.
- **Political Discourse**, which illustrates leadership, governance, justice, consultation, and administrative responsibility through Yusuf's interaction with the king and the Egyptian court.
- **Legal Discourse**, particularly in the episodes concerning Yusuf's imprisonment, the investigation of the attempted seduction, and the legal procedures surrounding Benjamin.

- **Economic Discourse**, represented by Yusuf's management of famine and the equitable distribution of resources during the years of crisis.
- **Ethical Discourse**, which permeates the entire narrative by emphasizing honesty, patience (*ṣabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), repentance (*tawbah*), forgiveness (*ʿafw*), and justice (*ʿadl*).

Used in this way, **CDA** does not become a general theory of the *Holy Qur'an*. It offers a method for examining represented social interaction and its linguistic effects, while Qur'anic hermeneutics addresses the revelatory framework and theological significance.

Discourse contributes to unity because speech acts change the course of events: a dream is reported, an accusation is made, a testimony intervenes, an interpretation establishes authority, and a confession enables reconciliation. The narrative consequence of speech provides the point of contact between **CDA** and poetics.

4.4. Conceptual Framework (Proposed Model of the Study)

The conceptual hierarchy is therefore as follows: *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* is the general proposal; *Qur'anic Narrative Structure* is its structural component; the **Prophetic Hero** is its model of character and agency; and the **Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model** organizes textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and revelatory levels of dialogue. Narratology, stylistics, and **CDA** remain supporting methods. Accordingly, the conceptual framework may be summarized as follows:

Primary Framework

- *Qur'anic Narrative Structure*

Supporting Analytical Frameworks

- *Narrative Theory* (Genette, Chatman, Bal, Herman)
- **Critical Discourse Analysis** (Fairclough, van Dijk, Wodak & Meyer)
- **Stylistic Analysis** (Leech & Short, Halliday & Hasan, Abdul-Raof)

This hierarchy constitutes the study's principal theoretical proposal. Its value depends on whether it clarifies the text more precisely than the separate application of its supporting approaches.

5. Discussion and Analysis: Critical Evaluation of *Surah Yusuf* through the Qur'anic Narrative Structure

The analysis proceeds from textual evidence to theoretical synthesis. Narrative events, character development, stylistic choices, and discourse strategies operate simultaneously rather than independently. Dialogue not only advances the plot but also constructs authority, identity, ideology, and ethical meaning. Similarly, stylistic devices—including repetition, symbolism, imagery, lexical cohesion, foregrounding, and rhetorical balance—are interpreted not merely as aesthetic ornaments but as structural mechanisms that reinforce narrative progression and thematic unity. Through this interrelated perspective, this section demonstrates that literary artistry and moral guidance function together within the Qur'anic narrative.

Three analytical dimensions organize the discussion: narrative structure, dialogue and discourse, and theoretical synthesis.

The first dimension follows plot, conflict, recognition, resolution, temporal arrangement, and characterization.

The second applies discourse analysis to selected exchanges, asking how wording and interaction construct authority, identity, responsibility, and ethical judgment.

The final dimension evaluates the **Prophetic Hero** and **Four-Dimensional Discourse Model** in relation to the findings of the preceding analyses. This integrative stage evaluates the relationship between Qur'anic narrative principles and Aristotelian poetics, introduces the concepts of the **Prophetic Hero** and the **Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model**, and demonstrates how narrative structure, discourse, stylistics, ethics, and theology converge to form a unified literary framework.

No single method is expected to explain every feature of the surah. The purpose of integration is to coordinate limited analytical tasks, not to claim automatic superiority over all existing approaches. The discussion consequently tests whether the proposed model adds explanatory precision to established literary readings of *Surah Yusuf*.

5.1. Narrative Structure of Surah Yusuf

Surah Yusuf combines a continuous sequence with recurrent reinterpretation of earlier events. The opening dream anticipates the resolution, but its meaning becomes clear only after jealousy, separation, temptation, prison, political responsibility, and reunion have reshaped the characters' circumstances. The following tables summarize this sequence and its comparison with Aristotelian categories. Their claims should be read alongside verse-based analysis rather than as substitutes for it.

Table1: The Narrative Structure of *Surah Yusuf* according to the Proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory*

Narrative Stage	Qur'anic Episodes	Narrative Function	Dramatic Function	Ethical Purpose
Exposition	Yusuf's Dream	Introducing central vision	Dramatic anticipation	Divine promise
Rising Action	Brothers' conspiracy	Builds conflict	Suspense	Human jealousy
Crisis	Prison	Maximum tension	Delayed resolution	Patience and faith
Climax	King's dream	Turning point	Recognition	Divine wisdom
Falling Action	Family reunion	Resolution	Emotional closure	Forgiveness
Final Resolution	Dream fulfilled	Narrative completion	Structural unity	Divine justice

Table 1 maps the principal stages of the narrative. Its value lies in showing how later scenes answer earlier ones: the dream anticipates recognition, separation prepares reunion, and the exercise of power culminates in forgiveness. The sequence is coherent, but its ethical meaning emerges from the specific dialogues and choices within each stage.

5.2. Comparison between Qur'anic Narrative Theory and Aristotelian Theory

Table 2: Comparative Analysis Table:

Analytical Aspect	<i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i>	Aristotelian Dramatic Theory	Critical Evaluation
Primary Source	Divine revelation (<i>The Holy Qur'an</i>)	Human literary theory (<i>Poetics</i>)	Both seek coherent literary structure, but their epistemological foundations differ fundamentally.
Nature of the Text	Sacred narrative combining literary artistry and divine guidance	Secular dramatic theory based on Greek tragedy	The Qur'anic narrative integrates aesthetics with revelation, whereas Aristotle emphasizes artistic representation.

Analytical Aspect	<i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i>	Aristotelian Dramatic Theory	Critical Evaluation
Ultimate Purpose	Moral guidance, spiritual transformation, and ethical education	Catharsis through pity and fear	The Qur'anic model expands dramatic purpose beyond emotional purification to ethical and spiritual reform.
Concept of Narrative	Integrated literary, ethical, theological, and discursive system	Representation (mimesis) of serious human action	Qur'anic narrative transcends imitation by presenting revealed truth and moral instruction.
Structural Unity	Unity achieved through thematic, ethical, and theological coherence	Unity of action based on causal progression	Both emphasize unity, although the Qur'anic concept is multidimensional.
Plot Development	Progresses according to divine wisdom and providence	Developments through probability and necessity	Qur'anic causality includes divine providence alongside human agency.
Conflict	Moral, psychological, social, and spiritual	Primarily human and tragic	Qur'anic conflict aims at moral growth rather than inevitable destruction.
Hero	Prophetic Hero characterized by moral perfection and divine guidance	Tragic Hero characterized by noble status and hamartia	The Prophetic Hero represents an alternative model that replaces tragic downfall with moral exemplarity.
Character Development	Ethical and spiritual transformation	Psychological development through action	Qur'anic characterization integrates psychological realism with moral instruction.
Hamartia	Moral testing and human weakness without prophetic corruption	Error of judgment leading to tragedy	The Qur'anic narrative rejects fatal flaws in prophets while acknowledging human trials.
Peripeteia	Reversal leading toward reconciliation and divine justice	Reversal leading toward catastrophe	Similar structural function but different philosophical outcomes.
Anagnorisis	Recognition of divine wisdom and moral truth	Recognition of hidden human reality	Qur'anic recognition possesses spiritual as well as narrative significance.
Resolution	Forgiveness, reconciliation, and fulfillment of divine promise	Catastrophe restoring moral order	The Qur'an replaces tragic destruction with ethical restoration.
Dialogue	Vehicle of revelation, persuasion, education, and characterization	Instrument of dramatic action and characterization	Qur'anic dialogue performs literary, ideological, ethical, and theological functions simultaneously.
Discourse	Multi-layered (textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and divine)	Primarily dramatic and rhetorical	The Qur'anic discourse model considerably broadens classical dramatic communication.
Stylistic Organization	Repetition, symbolism, lexical cohesion, rhetorical precision, and thematic integration	Diction appropriate to character and action	Qur'anic stylistics functions as an organizing principle rather than merely an aesthetic ornament.

Analytical Aspect	<i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i>	Aristotelian Dramatic Theory	Critical Evaluation
Narrative Time	Combines chronological progression with thematic emphasis	Linear dramatic sequence	Qur'anic narrative employs temporal flexibility while preserving coherence.
Narrative Space	Symbolic and theological as well as geographical	Primarily dramatic setting	Space in the Qur'an contributes ethical and symbolic meaning.
Audience Response	Reflection, guidance, belief, and moral transformation	Emotional catharsis	The Qur'an seeks intellectual, ethical, and spiritual engagement in addition to emotional response.
Ideological Dimension	Explicitly promotes justice, faith, patience, and forgiveness	Implicit ethical instruction through dramatic representation	The Qur'anic narrative openly articulates its ethical worldview.
Narrative Ending	Fulfillment of divine justice and moral reconciliation	Resolution of tragic conflict	The Qur'anic ending affirms hope and redemption rather than irreversible loss.
Overall Literary Function	Integration of literary beauty, ethical instruction, discourse, and revelation	Artistic imitation of human action	Qur'anic Narrative Theory extends Aristotelian poetics into a comprehensive literary, ethical, and theological framework.

Analytical Commentary

Table 2 identifies formal affinities between Aristotelian poetics and the proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory*, including unified action, causal progression, reversal, recognition, and characterization. These affinities justify comparison but not equivalence. Aristotle's account of tragedy concerns the imitation of serious human action and its relation to pity, fear, and catharsis (Aristotle, 2013; Halliwell, 1998). In Surah Yusuf, conflict moves instead toward recognition, responsibility, reconciliation, and trust in divine providence. Reversal and recognition remain structurally visible, but they lead to restoration rather than irreversible catastrophe.

Yusuf also differs from the Aristotelian tragic hero. His suffering does not arise from a fatal error that causes his downfall. Instead, his trials reveal patience, moral constancy, faith, and forgiveness while preparing him to exercise knowledge and authority responsibly. The concept of the **Prophetic Hero** therefore connects characterization with ethical agency and restorative leadership.

The proposed theory further coordinates narratology, stylistics, and **Critical Discourse Analysis**. These approaches contribute different forms of evidence concerning structure, language, dialogue, power, and identity. The **Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model**—textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and revelatory—organizes these insights without treating any single method as a complete explanation of the surah.

Critical Evaluation

The comparison is most convincing when it remains limited and textually grounded. Aristotelian categories help clarify narrative arrangement, reversal, and recognition, while the Qur'anic context changes their ethical

and theological significance. The proposed model should therefore be understood as a qualified interdisciplinary synthesis rather than a rejection or simple extension of Aristotle.

Its contribution lies in relating literary form to revelation, ethical development, discourse, and restorative resolution. Its wider theoretical value, however, must be tested through further analysis of other Qur'anic narratives.

5.3. Prophetic Hero versus Aristotelian Tragic Hero

Table 3: Characterization in Comparison between the Two Theories

Aspect	Aristotle's Tragic Hero	Prophet Yusuf (Surah Yusuf)	<i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i> (Present Study)
Nature of the Hero	A tragic hero whose downfall forms the center of the drama.	A prophetic hero whose trials lead to moral and spiritual triumph.	The Prophetic Hero is an independent literary model based on revelation, moral perfection, and divine mission rather than tragedy.
Social Status	Usually a king, prince, or nobleman of high social rank.	Son of Prophet Ya'qub; later becomes a statesman, but his significance derives from Prophethood rather than political status.	Heroism is determined by divine election, ethical excellence, and spiritual leadership rather than aristocratic birth.
Source of Greatness	Noble birth, political authority, and exceptional ability.	Faith, prophecy, wisdom, patience, and moral integrity.	Greatness is measured by righteousness (<i>taqwā</i>), knowledge, and obedience to God.
Moral Character	Morally good but imperfect; possesses human weaknesses.	Morally exemplary, sincere, patient, and consistently righteous.	The Prophetic Hero functions as a moral model whose conduct embodies divine guidance.
Hamartia (Tragic Error)	Suffers because of an error of judgment or tragic flaw.	Commits no tragic error; suffers because of the wrongdoing of others.	Prophetic innocence replaces Hamartia ; conflict originates externally rather than within the hero.
Cause of Suffering	Personal error combined with fate or necessity.	Jealousy, betrayal, temptation, injustice, and divine testing.	Trials are divinely ordained as means of purification, education, and preparation for leadership.
Conflict	Internal weakness and external fate produce tragedy.	Family conflict, temptation, imprisonment, political injustice, and spiritual testing.	Conflict functions as moral and spiritual refinement rather than tragic destruction.
Peripeteia (Reversal)	Reversal leads toward catastrophe and downfall.	Reversal moves from suffering to honor (well → slavery → prison → authority).	Reversal demonstrates divine providence and gradual fulfillment of God's plan.
Anagnorisis (Recognition)	Hero discovers a devastating truth about himself.	Recognition results in forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, and awareness of divine wisdom.	Recognition becomes spiritual enlightenment and moral transformation.
Relationship with Fate	Human destiny is governed by fate or necessity.	Human destiny unfolds according to divine providence while preserving free will.	Divine providence replaces blind fate as the governing narrative principle.

Aspect	Aristotle's Tragic Hero	Prophet Yusuf (<i>Surah Yusuf</i>)	<i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i> (Present Study)
Response to Adversity	Often struggles unsuccessfully against destiny.	Responds with patience (<i>ṣabr</i>), trust in God (<i>tawakkul</i>), forgiveness, and wisdom.	Moral perseverance is the defining characteristic of the Prophetic Hero.
Leadership	Leadership often ends in political or personal collapse.	Leadership is granted after moral testing and exercised with justice and humility.	Authority is viewed as a divine trust based on merit and ethical excellence.
Purpose of the Hero's Journey	To evoke pity and fear, producing catharsis.	To demonstrate God's wisdom, justice, mercy, and guidance.	The hero's journey educates, reforms, and inspires readers spiritually and ethically.
Catharsis	Emotional purification through pity and fear.	Encourages faith, hope, patience, repentance, and reliance on Allah.	Emotional response develops into ethical, intellectual, and spiritual transformation.
Resolution	Death, exile, blindness, or irreversible suffering.	Family reunion, forgiveness, political success, fulfillment of prophecy, and gratitude to God.	The narrative concludes with redemption, reconciliation, and divine justice rather than catastrophe.
Philosophical Foundation	Humanism, mimesis, and tragic inevitability.	Divine revelation, prophecy, moral accountability, and providence.	Heroism is understood through theology, ethics, and revelation rather than tragic philosophy.
Overall Literary Function	Represents the limitations of human beings before fate.	Demonstrates the triumph of faith, patience, and righteousness through divine guidance.	The Prophetic Hero serves as an enduring ethical model whose narrative unites literary beauty, historical truth, and spiritual instruction.

Table 3 compares the structural and ethical profiles of the tragic and prophetic protagonists. The categories are heuristic: they identify contrasting tendencies without implying that all tragic or prophetic narratives are identical.

Critical Evaluation

The prophet Yusuf shares the causal centrality and exposure to reversal associated with major dramatic protagonists, but his role is defined by prophetic knowledge, moral constancy, and responsible authority. His development concerns the unfolding public significance of these qualities rather than recovery from a fatal moral error.

The **Prophetic Hero** is therefore a characterological component of the wider theory, not a claim that prophets are fictional characters. It describes how prophetic agency functions within narrative organization while preserving the historical and theological claims of the text.

5.4. Dialogue and Discourse Analysis

The Qur'anic narrative advances its plot, develops characterization, constructs ideological positions, and communicates theological truths primarily through dialogue. Dialogue is central to *Surah Yusuf* because decisive changes occur through speech: dreams are narrated and interpreted, accusations are tested,

innocence is established, authority is negotiated, and forgiveness is pronounced. Description and dialogue therefore work together to move the action and shape judgment.

Aristotle's discussion of diction as one of the six elements of tragedy, clarifies the relation between speech and character, as a vehicle for advancing dramatic action and revealing character. But **CDA** asks a different question: how do utterances establish authority, assign blame, conceal interests, or transform social relations?

The study combines these questions with the two theories: **Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** and the ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory*** by examining dialogue as both narrative action and social interaction. The analysis remains attentive to the Qur'anic framing that evaluates the speech of human characters.

Fairclough (1992, 1995) conceptualizes discourse as a multidimensional phenomenon operating through three interconnected levels:

1. **Textual Analysis** (linguistic features)
2. **Discursive Practice** (production, interpretation, and interaction)
3. **Social Practice** (ideology, power, and society)

Fairclough's three dimensions illuminate wording, interaction, and represented social relations. The Qur'anic text also supplies a revelatory frame through which human claims are confirmed, corrected, or morally evaluated. The fourth dimension proposed here refers to that framing function; it does not claim to be part of Fairclough's original model.

Thus, dialogue in ***Surah Yusuf*** may be analyzed simultaneously as:

- Literary discourse,
- Interpersonal communication,
- Ideological negotiation,
- Theological revelation, and
- Ethical instruction.

Table 4: Types of Dialogue Comparative to 'Discourse Analysis'

Dialogue Scene	Speakers	Speech Acts	Power / Identity	Narrative Function	Primary CDA Focus
Dream and counsel (12:4–6)	Yusuf and Ya'qub	Disclosure, warning, interpretation	Knowledge, kinship, vulnerability	Foreshadowing and guarded knowledge	Text and interaction
Brothers' plotting and report (12:8–18)	Yusuf's brothers and Ya'qub	Coalition-building, persuasion, denial	Sibling hierarchy and control of testimony	Conflict and concealment	Interaction and social practice
Prison dialogue (12:36–42)	Yusuf and two prisoners	Request, interpretation, monotheistic argument	Epistemic and religious authority	Turning point and preparation	Text and social practice
Recognition and forgiveness (12:89–92)	Yusuf and his brothers	Question, confession, pardon	Authority reoriented toward mercy	Recognition and resolution	All three CDA dimensions

Table 4 distinguishes represented human discourse from the revelatory framing of the narrative. The terminology should be understood as an adaptation for this study, not as an unqualified extension of **CDA**.

Critical Evaluation

The combined approach shows that dialogue can advance plot, form character, negotiate authority, and communicate ethical judgment at the same time. The analytical task is to identify these functions in particular exchanges rather than assign every utterance to all categories automatically.

Accordingly, this study proposes that Qur'anic dialogue operates through a **four-dimensional discourse model**:

1. **Textual discourse**, expressed through its linguistic precision, rhetorical beauty, and stylistic coherence.
2. **Narrative discourse**, through which plot progression, characterization, and thematic unity are achieved.
3. **Socio-ideological discourse**, which challenges injustice, reconfigures power relations, and reconstructs moral identities.
4. **Divine discourse**, whereby revelation guides human understanding, establishes ethical norms, and directs the narrative toward spiritual transformation.

Table 5: Types of discourses in the surah and their functions:

Dimension	Function	Linguistic Features	Narrative Role	Ethical Purpose
Textual	Style	Cohesion	Structure	Beauty
Narrative	Plot	Sequencing	Progression	Unity
Socio Ideological	Society	Power	Conflict	Reform
Revelatory	Qur'anic framing and evaluation	Guidance, correction, affirmation	Ethical and theological orientation	Accountability, mercy, trust in God

Table 5 illustrates the four discourse types, functions, linguistic features, narrative roles and ethical purposes.

The four dimensions should be treated as analytical levels rather than four separate kinds of language. Textual analysis examines wording and cohesion; narrative analysis considers position and consequence; socio-ideological analysis examines represented power and identity; and revelatory analysis addresses Qur'anic framing and guidance. The model is useful only if its categories remain distinguishable and can be applied consistently. Selected dialogues provide an initial test, but broader validation will require analysis of other Qur'anic narratives. This framework demonstrates that the ***Qur'an*** should be understood not only as a sacred text but also as a highly sophisticated narrative discourse in which literary form, ethical instruction, historical authenticity, and divine revelation function as inseparable dimensions of meaning. The proposed model [**The Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model**] therefore offers a structured hypothesis for comparative criticism rather than a completed universal theory.

5.5. Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model and Surah Yusuf

The **Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model** coordinates textual, narrative, socio-ideological, and revelatory analysis. It grows from the need to distinguish human speech represented in the story from the Qur'anic discourse that frames its meaning.

Table 6: Application of the Four-Dimensional Model to Selected Dialogues in Surah Yusuf

Dialogue	Textual Discourse	Narrative Discourse	Socio-Ideological Discourse	Revelatory Discourse
Yusuf's Dream (12:4–6)	Symbolic language and rhetorical precision	Exposition and foreshadowing	Family dynamics and jealousy	Prophetic revelation and divine election
Yusuf and the Wife of al-'Aziz (12:23–29)	Concise, emotionally charged dialogue	Central dramatic crisis	Power, gender, and morality	Faith, chastity, and reliance on God
Prison Dialogue (12:36–42)	Logical and persuasive argumentation	Turning point leading to political ascent	Critique of false belief systems	Prophetic preaching and monotheism
Yusuf and His Brothers (12:89–92)	Emotional and reconciliatory language	Recognition and resolution	Repentance and restoration of family bonds	Mercy, forgiveness, and divine justice

Table 6 applies the four analytical levels to selected scenes. The table is a summary; the evidential basis of the model must remain the wording, placement, and consequences of the relevant dialogues.

Verse-Level Close Reading and Critical Discourse Analysis

The following close readings demonstrate how the model moves from wording to interpretation. English quotations follow Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation as issued by the King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex (Ali, 1991); the Arabic text remains controlling for lexical and grammatical analysis.

1. Dream, Knowledge, and Familial Vulnerability (12:4–6)

The scene begins with intimate address: O my father! I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:4). The Arabic report, *innī ra'aytu*, resumes the verb in *ra'aytuhum lī sājidīn*— 'I saw them prostrate themselves to me.' Al-Ṭabarī treats the repetition as verbal emphasis, while Ibn 'Āshūr relates the resumed clause to the completion and clarification of the extraordinary vision (al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021). The pronominal treatment of the stars, sun, and moon as rational agents also anticipates their eventual interpretation in human and familial terms.

As discourse, the dream report is an act of trusted disclosure rather than a public claim to status. Ya'qūb's warning— 'Relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they concoct a plot against thee' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:5)—regulates the circulation of knowledge because the child who bears the vision cannot yet protect it. Ibn Kathīr reads the celestial figures in relation to Yusuf's family and the later fulfilment of the dream, so the opening exchange serves as exposition, anticipation, and an early map of vulnerable knowledge (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Election is thus joined to concealment, patience, and gradual realization rather than immediate privilege.

2. Temptation, Coercion, and Counter-Discourse (12:23–29)

The temptation scene encodes coercion through a concentrated sequence of verbs. *Rāwadat-hu* conveys persistent solicitation, *ghallaqat* intensifies the deliberate closing of the doors, and *hayta laka* is rendered by Ali as 'Now come, thou (dear one)!' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:23). Al-Qurṭubī records the lexical and recitational range of *hayta*, whereas Ibn 'Āshūr attends to the cumulative preparation of the command (al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021). Yusuf's reply, *ma'ādha Allāh*— 'Allah forbid!'—is a compressed counter-utterance: it refuses the invitation, invokes divine protection, and replaces the imposed interpersonal frame with moral accountability.

The ensuing race, torn shirt, accusation, and conditional testimony convert speech into contested evidence. Social status initially favours the mistress of the household over a dependent young man, but the witness's if-then reasoning transfers credibility from rank to the direction of the tear. Sayyid Quṭb's discussion of the episode draws attention to the pressure exerted by an elite household and to the later institutional choice to imprison an innocent man in order to protect social reputation (Quṭb, 2003). CDA thus clarifies coercion, accusation, and institutional power, while tafsīr and Qur'anic framing prevent the analysis from generalizing the wrongdoing into a claim about gender as such.

3. Prison Discourse, Interpretation, and Epistemic Authority (12:36–42)

The prisoners first recognize Yusuf through conduct—'for we see thou art one that doth good (to all)' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:36)—before he holds formal office. His reply attributes interpretive knowledge to divine teaching and establishes its ethical source. The direct address *yā ṣāhibayī al-sijn* creates proximity, while the question 'Are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One Allah, Supreme and Irresistible?' redirects private curiosity toward public reasoning (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:39). Al-Qurṭubī and Ibn 'Āshūr identify the interrogative force and the contrast between dispersed objects of worship and divine unity (al-Qurṭubī, 2006; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021).

The discourse does not depend on institutional coercion. Yusuf's authority is ethical and epistemic: he answers a need, explains the source of his knowledge, and invites judgment through contrast. The prison, normally a location of exclusion, becomes a site of teaching and preparation. This reversal is central to the narrative design because the competence displayed in confinement later becomes the basis of public responsibility. Ibn Kathīr's exegetical sequence and Quṭb's scene-oriented reading both support the connection between prophetic proclamation, interpretation, and the movement toward social service (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Quṭb, 2003).

4. Recognition, Confession, and the Ethical Use of Power (12:89–92)

Recognition begins with Yusuf's question: 'Know yet how ye dealt with Joseph and his brother, not knowing (what ye were doing)?' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:89). The question compels the brothers to name the past from within a transformed relation of power. When they identify him, Yusuf attributes his position to divine grace and states the ethical principle governing the resolution: 'he that is righteous and patient, —never will Allah suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:90). Recognition therefore does not become self-glorification; authority is interpreted through God-consciousness, patience, and beneficence (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2021).

The brothers' confession creates the conditions for Yusuf's performative pardon: This day let no reproach be (cast) on you' (Ali, 1991, Q. 12:92). Al-Qurṭubī explains *tathrīb* as blame or reproach, while the temporal phrase *al-yawm* gives the utterance immediate social force (al-Qurṭubī, 2006). Yusuf neither denies the injury nor turns it into an instrument of domination; he ends the reproach and prays for forgiveness. Quṭb emphasizes the nobility and completeness of this response (Quṭb, 2003). In CDA terms, the speaker who now holds political and material authority renounces retaliatory discourse, transforming recognition into reconciliation and power into ethical responsibility.

Table 7: Operational CDA Protocol for the Study

Analytical Level	Guiding Question	Observable Evidence	Interpretive Limit
Textual description	Which linguistic choices organize the utterance?	Lexis, pronouns, modality, transitivity, cohesion, rhetorical form, speech acts	The English translation is checked against relevant Arabic wording.
Interactional interpretation	Who speaks, who may respond, and how is a claim accepted or challenged?	Turn-taking, address forms, silence, reported speech, testimony, circulation of knowledge	Narrated interaction is not identical with the historical production of the Qur'anic text.
Social explanation	Which represented relations of authority and identity are negotiated?	Kinship, gender, dependency, legal procedure, political office, religious and epistemic authority	The analysis avoids reducing revelation to social ideology.
Revelatory reading	How does Qur'anic framing confirm, correct, or ethically evaluate human speech?	Narratorial evaluation, fulfilled promise, divine attribution, ethical consequence	This level belongs to Qur'anic hermeneutics and is not part of Fairclough's original model.

Table 7 turns the theoretical discussion into a repeatable procedure. Each selected scene is examined in the same order, while the final column prevents the categories from being used beyond their proper scope.

Table 8: Verse-Level Evidence Matrix

Passage	Textual / Speech-Act Evidence	Power and Identity	Narrative Consequence	Revelatory-Ethical Function
12:4–6	First-person vision report; paternal warning; predictive interpretation	Privileged knowledge within a vulnerable child–family position	Plants the dream pattern and anticipates fulfillment	Election is joined to patience and divine teaching
12:23–29	Imperative, refusal, accusation, conditional testimony, material evidence	Household mistress versus dependent youth; status is tested by evidence	Creates a central crisis and establishes innocence	Chastity, accountability, and protection from wrongdoing
12:36–42	Request for interpretation; direct address; contrastive rhetorical question	Moral and epistemic authority without institutional power	Connect imprisonment to later public recognition	Knowledge is attributed to God and directed toward monotheism
12:89–92	Question, identification, confession, pardon	Political authority and family hierarchy are ethically reconfigured	Produces recognition and restorative resolution	Power is exercised through gratitude, forgiveness, and mercy

Table 8 provides the evidential bridge between the four close readings and the study's larger theoretical claims. It shows that textual form, social relation, narrative placement, and revelatory evaluation remain connected but analytically distinct.

Table 9: Integration of Arabic Taysir with the Verse-Level Analysis

Exegetical Source	Primary Analytical Strength	Focal Passage(s)	Contribution to the Present Study	Methodological Boundary
al-Ṭabarī (2001)	Transmitted interpretation, lexical explanation, grammatical observation	12:4–6	Supports the analysis of repeated seeing and the familial interpretation of the vision	Used as linguistic and exegetical evidence, not labelled as CDA
al-Qurṭubī (2006)	Lexical range, variant readings, ethical and legal implications	12:23–29; 12:39–40; 12:89–92	Clarifies hayta, interrogative force, testimony, and the semantics of tathrīb	Multiple reported views are not collapsed into a single position
Ibn Kathīr (1999)	Qur'an-by-Qur'an interpretation, transmitted reports, narrative fulfilment	12:4–6; 12:36–42; 12:89–92	Connects dream, trial, proclamation, recognition, and fulfilment	Historical reports are distinguished from demonstrable textual features
Ibn 'Āshūr (2021)	Syntax, rhetoric, contextual sequence, communicative purpose	All four focal scenes	Grounds claims about repetition, address, contrast, and narrative placement	Rhetorical interpretation remains distinct from modern social explanation
Quṭb (2003)	Scene construction, psychological movement, social atmosphere, ethical effect	12:23–29; 12:36–42; 12:89–92	Sharpens analysis of pressure, institutional reputation, movement, and restorative authority	Literary insight is used critically and checked against the verse wording

Table 9 makes the role of tafsīr explicit. The commentaries do not merely confirm a conclusion already reached; each contributes a distinct kind of evidence, and the final column records the boundary that prevents exegetical, literary, and **CDA** vocabulary from being treated as interchangeable.

Critical Synthesis

The application suggests that Aristotelian poetics and **CDA** illuminate different features of the narrative. Poetics clarifies arrangement; **CDA** examines represented discourse and power; the revelatory level accounts for the Qur'anic evaluation and direction of the action. Their coordination is useful, but the proposed synthesis remains open to testing and refinement.

5.6. Theoretical Contribution of the Proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory*

Table 10: Major Contributions of the Proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* to Literary Criticism

Area	Traditional Literary Approaches	Contribution of the Proposed <i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i>	Scholarly Significance
Literary Theory	Applies existing Western literary theories to the <i>Qur'an</i> .	Develops a literary theory derived from the Qur'anic narrative itself.	Establishes the Qur'an as a source of literary theory rather than merely an object of analysis.
Narrative Studies	Focuses primarily on plot and characterization.	Integrates narrative structure with ethical and theological dimensions.	Broadens the scope of narratology.
Dramatic Theory	Based largely on Aristotelian poetics.	Expands dramatic theory through the concept of the Prophetic Hero and revelatory narrative.	Provides a complementary model for sacred narratives.

Area	Traditional Literary Approaches	Contribution of the Proposed <i>Qur'anic Narrative Theory</i>	Scholarly Significance
Character Theory	Characters are evaluated through psychological realism.	Characters are analyzed through moral, spiritual, psychological, and narrative functions.	Introduces multidimensional characterization.
Discourse Analysis	Examines ideology and power within social discourse.	Adds the dimension of Divine Discourse alongside textual, narrative, and socio-ideological discourse.	Extends Critical Discourse Analysis to sacred texts.
Stylistics	Treats stylistic devices primarily as aesthetic features.	Explains stylistic devices as structural mechanisms of narrative organization.	Integrates style with narrative architecture.
Ethical Criticism	Often separated from formal literary analysis.	Treats ethics as an organizing principle of narrative construction.	Bridges aesthetics and ethics.
Comparative Literature	Compares texts across cultures.	Compare literary systems while respecting their distinct epistemological foundations.	Encourages intercultural literary criticism.
Sacred Narrative Studies	Frequently emphasizes theology over literary form.	Integrates literary criticism with theological intentionality.	Promotes interdisciplinary analysis.
Literary Criticism	Uses established theoretical models.	Proposes an original interdisciplinary framework combining Qur'anic studies, narratology, stylistics, discourse analysis, and Aristotelian poetics.	Represents the principal theoretical contribution of the present study.

Analytical Commentary

Table 10 summarizes the proposed contribution. Its strongest claim is not that previous criticism has ignored form, ethics, or theology, but that the present model assigns these concerns defined and related positions within one analytical hierarchy.

The study shifts attention from applying theory to the Qur'an toward asking what categories emerge from sustained reading of Qur'anic narrative. This shift must remain in dialogue with the long traditions of tafsīr, *Balaghah*, *Nazm*, **Structure's Eloquence** and modern Qur'anic literary criticism.

The model also treats ethical development as part of narrative form. Sequence, dialogue, characterization, and recognition are analyzed not only for aesthetic effect but for the ways in which they organize responsibility, testing, knowledge, and reconciliation.

The revelatory dimension marks the principal limit of **CDA** in this study. **CDA** can examine represented language and social relations; it cannot, by itself, adjudicate theological truth. Qur'anic hermeneutics is therefore required wherever the analysis moves from discourse function to revelation and guidance.

Critical Evaluation

The proposed theory '*Qur'anic Narrative Theory*' is best understood as a synthesis and extension of existing scholarship. Its originality lies in the arrangement and interaction of its concepts rather than in a claim that earlier scholars overlooked the literary or ethical character of the *Holy Qur'an*. It should be understood as

an **extension rather than a rejection** of existing literary theories. It preserves the structural insights of Aristotle while incorporating the explanatory strengths of modern narratology, stylistics, and discourse analysis. At the same time, it introduces new analytical concepts—such as **the Prophetic Hero, Divine Discourse, and ethical intentionality**—that cannot be fully explained within classical or modern Western literary frameworks alone.

The model offers a basis for further comparison, but its transferability cannot be assumed from one surah. Application to other Qur'anic narratives will be necessary before broader claims can be sustained.

6. Research Concluding Part

6.1. Major Findings of the Study

The verse-level narrative, discourse, and exegetical analysis yields nine principal findings.

1. *Surah Yusuf* is organized by a sustained movement from dream to fulfillment. Its episodes are causally and thematically connected, while recognition scenes allow later events to reinterpret earlier ones.
2. Aristotelian concepts such as unified action, reversal, recognition, and characterization assist structural description, but their functions change in a narrative governed by prophecy, ethical testing, and reconciliation.
3. The proposed *Qur'anic Narrative Theory* is clearest when its components are distinguished: structure explains organization; the Prophetic Hero explains character and agency; and the discourse model explains interacting levels of dialogue.
4. Dialogue is a form of action. Dreams, accusations, testimony, interpretation, confession, and forgiveness alter relationships and redirect the plot while also communicating ethical judgment.
5. Yusuf functions as a prophetic protagonist whose constancy, knowledge, and responsible use of authority shape the resolution. His trials lead toward service and reconciliation, not tragic self-destruction.
6. The **Four-Dimensional Model** provides a useful distinction among textual form, narrative consequence, represented power relations, and revelatory framing, although it requires further testing across other passages and surahs.
7. Across the four focal scenes, linguistic choices do not merely express themes: disclosure regulates knowledge, imperatives attempt coercion, testimony redistributes credibility, rhetorical questions construct epistemic authority, and pardon performs reconciliation. This recurring link between speech act and narrative consequence provides the clearest empirical support for the proposed model.
8. The Arabic tafsīr tradition strengthens rather than displaces the literary argument. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āshūr, and Quṭb converge on crucial lexical, rhetorical, contextual, and ethical features, while differing in method and emphasis. Their integration makes the proposed model more textually accountable and limits interpretive overreach.
9. Taken together, these findings support a qualified interdisciplinary model. They do not establish that one framework exhausts the literary, theological, or historical meanings of the surah.

6.2. Major Contributions to the Study

The study makes six related contributions.

1. It proposes a clear hierarchy for *Qur'anic Narrative Theory, Qur'anic Narrative Structure, the Prophetic Hero, and the Four-Dimensional Qur'anic Discourse Model*.
2. It refines comparison with Aristotle by separating formal affinity from ethical and theological equivalence.

3. It coordinates narratology and discourse analysis by treating dialogue as both narrative action and represented social interaction.
4. It offers provisional analytical categories that can be tested through further verse-based analysis and comparison with other sacred narratives.
5. It demonstrates a controlled way of integrating classical and modern Arabic tafsīr with narratology and CDA without treating these traditions as methodologically identical.
6. It contributes to **Global Literary Theory** by positioning the *Holy Qur'an* as an active source of literary theory rather than merely an object of literary analysis.

6.3. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited, first, by its concentration on one surah. Surah Yusuf is unusually continuous, and conclusions derived from its structure cannot automatically be generalized to narratives distributed across several surahs. Second, the four focal passages provide analytical depth but do not represent every dialogue, lexical pattern, or exegetical issue in the chapter. Third, the use of an English translation may obscure features of Arabic morphology, sound, word order, and semantic range, even when selected claims are checked against the Arabic text.

Further limitation concerns method. Fairclough's model was developed for human social discourse; its application here is confined to represented speakers, institutions, and relations of power. The revelatory level is therefore a hermeneutic supplement, not an extension claimed on Fairclough's authority. Finally, the five tafsīr works were selected for complementary strengths and do not exhaust the classical or modern exegetical tradition.

6.4. Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should test the proposed categories on narratives with different compositional forms, especially stories distributed across multiple surahs. It should also expand the Arabic linguistic component through systematic analysis of morphology, cohesion, address, and transitivity; compare additional translations; and place the model in sustained dialogue with balāghah, naẓm, thematic exegesis, and a wider range of classical commentaries. A published verse-selection protocol and a reproducible Arabic corpus would be necessary before any quantitative generalization is attempted.

6.5. General Conclusion

This study has examined *Surah Yusuf* through a coordinated reading of narrative structure, Aristotelian poetics, narratology, and discourse analysis. The surah's movement from dream to fulfillment gives the action a strong unity, while its recurrent dialogues transform knowledge, authority, responsibility, and relationships.

Comparison with Aristotle is valuable at the level of form. Unity, reversal, recognition, and characterization help describe the organization of the narrative. Their purposes, however, are altered by prophecy, revelation, ethical testing, and restorative resolution. The comparison is therefore one of qualified affinity rather than equivalence.

The analysis also shows that literary form and ethical direction are closely related. Repetition, symbolic anticipation, dialogue, and recognition create coherence while directing attention toward patience, chastity, trust, responsibility, confession, and forgiveness. These ethical meanings emerge through the sequence of the narrative rather than being added externally to it.

Consultation of Arabic tafsir confirms that this relationship is visible in the language of the surah itself. Repetition in the dream report, the coercive sequencing of the temptation scene, the interrogative contrast of the prison discourse, and the semantics of tathrib at the moment of pardon all connect local wording with narrative consequences. The resulting interpretation is therefore not dependent on English translation or theoretical analogy alone.

The **Prophetic Hero** names Yusuf's narrative function as 'a protagonist whose trials disclose moral constancy and prepare responsible authority'. The term does not fictionalize prophecy; it identifies a characterological pattern within the literary organization of a text received as revelation.

The **Four-Dimensional Discourse Model** distinguishes textual form, narrative consequence, represented power relations, and revelatory framing. This distinction clarifies the limited role of CDA and prevents social discourse analysis from being treated as a complete theology of Qur'anic speech.

The proposed ***Qur'anic Narrative Theory*** should therefore be regarded as a provisional synthesis. Its contribution lies in arranging established and new concepts within a coherent hierarchy and in defining the analytical task of each component.

Further research should test the model across additional Qur'anic narratives, compare the results with classical tafsir, balaghah, and nazm, and examine how alternative English translations alter the visibility of lexical, grammatical, and interpersonal features. A larger study should also publish a verse-selection protocol and, where quantitative claims are made, a reproducible Arabic corpus and counting method.

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Stardom Scientific Journal of Humanities and Social Studies

**- Stardom Scientific Journal of Humanities and Social Studies -
Issued quarterly by Stardom University**

3rd issue- 4th Volume 2026

ISSN 2980-3772

