



## Distinguishing Dalālah, 'Illat, and Manāṭ al-Ḥukm in Uṣūl al-Fiqh and Their Relevance to Contemporary Ijtihād with Special Reference to Islamic Economics

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received: April 3, 2026<br/>Revised: April 23, 2026<br/>Accepted: April 29, 2026</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>'Illat;<br/>Manāṭ al-Ḥukm;<br/>Dalālah;<br/>Ushul Fiqh;<br/>Islamic Economics</p> | <p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>Within the discipline of uṣūl al-fiqh, three fundamental concepts—dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ al-ḥukm—are frequently misunderstood or conflated by students and even practitioners of Islamic law. This conceptual ambiguity poses a serious methodological challenge to accurate legal reasoning.</p> <p>This study aims to analyze the epistemological differences between dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ al-ḥukm, and to implement this analytical framework within contemporary ijtihād, with a particular focus on issues in Islamic economics and muamalah. This research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using library research. Primary sources include classical and contemporary uṣūl al-fiqh literature, including works by Al-Ghazali, Al-Amidi, Al-Shatibi, Ibn Qayyim, Wahbah al-Zuhayli, and Jasser Auda. Data analysis was conducted using comparative-conceptual analysis and content analysis methods. The findings reveal that dalālah operates within the textual-semantic domain concerning linguistic meanings from sacred texts; 'illat operates within the domain of legal causality representing the rational-syar'i reason behind a ruling; and manāṭ operates within the domain of empirical reality concerning the actual application of law to concrete cases. These three concepts form a hierarchical epistemological structure: dalālah → 'illat → manāṭ.</p> <p>An integrated yet differentiated understanding of these three concepts is a methodological prerequisite for valid, adaptive, and responsive contemporary ijtihād, particularly in addressing modern economic and financial transactions not explicitly mentioned in classical texts.</p> |

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### Introduction

Uṣūl al-fiqh serves as the methodological framework for understanding Islamic legal sources and deriving applicable jurisprudential rulings (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 5-7). This discipline not only focuses on literal interpretation of texts but also builds a bridge between divine revelations and the lived reality of human beings (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 5-7). In classical Islamic scholarship, uṣūl al-fiqh is positioned as *mīzān al-istinbāṭ* (the scale of legal derivation), which governs how a mujtahid correctly understands, interprets, and applies syar'i evidence, demonstrating that uṣūl al-fiqh has a crucial epistemological function in maintaining the validity of Islamic law (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 5-7).

Three fundamental concepts lie at the heart of this methodological framework: dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ al-ḥukm. Dalālah refers to the textual indication or signification of a linguistic expression toward a particular meaning within a syar'i text. 'Illat refers to the specific attribute or characteristic recognized by syar'i evidence as the rational basis for

establishing a legal ruling. *Manāṭ al-ḥukm* refers to the actual factual situation or concrete case where a *syar'i* ruling is applied after the *'illat* has been identified (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 112-115). These three instruments are central to the process of understanding legal texts and connecting them to practical rulings (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 112-115).

In the epistemological structure of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the relationship between the sacred text (*naṣṣ*) and reality (*wāqī'*) becomes the central axis in the process of legal derivation (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 2, pp. 37-40), because the text does not stand in isolation but constantly interacts with ever-changing social contexts (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 2, pp. 37-40). Consequently, *uṣūl* scholars affirm that Islamic law is dynamic in its application while remaining stable in its fundamental principles, and this interaction between text and reality has given rise to methodological tools such as *qiyās*, *istiḥsān*, and *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, all of which aim to bridge the gap between the ideals of revelation and the realities of human life (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 2, pp. 37-40).

Although these three concepts—*dalālah*, *'illat*, and *manāṭ*—are often discussed within the same cluster of discussions, conceptually each has its own distinct epistemological domain and cannot be equated (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 112-115). In academic practice, overlapping understandings of these three concepts are frequently found, especially among beginning students of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203), because all three are related to the process of legal derivation (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203). However, if they are not distinguished methodologically, errors can occur in legal determination, such as generalizing *dalālah* as *'illat* or ignoring *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* in new cases, and therefore strict conceptual clarification is required so that the *ijtihād* process remains within the correct scholarly framework (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203).

In the development of classical Islamic law, the concept of *'illat* received great attention because it became the primary basis for *qiyās* (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 280-283). Scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Amidi emphasized that *'illat* must meet certain conditions such as measurability (*indibāt*), clarity (*zuhūr*), and appropriateness (*munāsabah*), and without a valid *'illat*, *qiyās* cannot be applied legitimately, which shows that *'illat* is not merely a logical reason but a *syar'i* construction that has legitimacy from evidence (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 280-283). Meanwhile, the concept of *manāṭ al-ḥukm* serves as a bridge between legal theory and empirical reality (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 89-92). In *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *manāṭ* is understood not only as the object of law but also as the verification process of whether an *'illat* truly exists in a particular case, and this process is known as *taḥqīq al-manāṭ*, which is an important stage in *ijtihād*, because without this process the resulting law may be inaccurate or irrelevant to the factual conditions of society (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 89-92).

As for *dalālah*, it functions as the initial gateway to understanding *syar'i* texts (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 145-148). *Dalālah* includes various forms of meaning such as *zāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mafhūm*, and *isyārah*, and in *uṣūl* theory, *dalālah* is the semantic aspect that determines how a word indicates a particular legal meaning, so that errors in understanding *dalālah* can directly impact errors in legal determination even if *'illat* and *manāṭ* have been correctly analyzed (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 145-148).

In the modern context, the challenges of *ijtihād* are increasingly complex with the emergence of new issues such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, medical technology, and biotechnology (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 765-768). This phenomenon demands a more precise *uṣūl al-fiqh* approach in distinguishing between *dalālah*, *'illat*, and *manāṭ*, because without proper understanding the process of legal derivation can stagnate or even deviate in responding to rapidly developing contemporary realities (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 765-768). Furthermore, technological developments such as fintech, cryptocurrency, and artificial intelligence have presented new forms of transactions and interactions not explicitly mentioned in the sacred texts (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 12-15). Therefore, the role of *'illat* and *manāṭ* becomes very important in determining the relevance of law to these new cases, and while *dalālah*

remains the foundation for understanding texts, the development of law greatly depends on the mujtahid's ability to identify a valid 'illat and apply it to the appropriate manāṭ (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 12-15).

Previous studies have addressed these concepts separately. Al-Ghazali (1997) focused on the logical conditions of 'illat in qiyās, while Al-Shatibi (1975) connected 'illat to public interest (maṣlaḥah) within the broader framework of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Wahbah al-Zuhayli (1986) provided comprehensive definitions but treated the three concepts in separate chapters without explicating their integrated relationship. Jasser Auda (2008) discussed maqāṣid-oriented ijtihad but did not specifically address the dalālah-'illat-manāṭ distinction. Recent works by al-Jahdhami and Amanullah (2022) and Muhid et al. (2026) have explored aspects of legal reasoning but have not systematically distinguished these three concepts. The research gap lies in the absence of a systematic framework that integrates these three concepts into a single hierarchical methodology and applies it specifically to contemporary Islamic economics. This study addresses this gap by providing an integrated yet differentiated analysis of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ and demonstrating their application to modern financial transactions.

Thus, the study of the differences between dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ al-ḥukm becomes very urgent in the development of contemporary ijtihad methodology (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213), because these three concepts not only have theoretical roles in uṣūl al-fiqh but also have practical implications in modern Islamic legal determination, and therefore a deep and proportional understanding of them is a primary condition for the emergence of accurate, relevant, and responsive ijtihad to the development of the times (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213).

### Material & Methods

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using library research, and this approach was chosen because the object of study consists of epistemological concepts within uṣūl al-fiqh—namely dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ al-ḥukm—that cannot be measured quantitatively but must be understood through conceptual and interpretative analysis of authoritative literature (Krippendorff, 2018, pp. 24-26). This type of research falls into the category of normative-uṣūlī research, which focuses on the analysis of Islamic legal norms through uṣūl al-fiqh literature (Khallaf, 1978, pp. 18-20), and in this context the data used are not field data but classical texts (turāth) that serve as main references in the discipline of uṣūl al-fiqh, so that this research emphasizes theoretical analysis of the epistemological structure of Islamic law, particularly concerning the mechanism of legal derivation (istinbāt) (Khallaf, 1978, pp. 18-20). No human participants were involved in this study, as the research focuses entirely on textual analysis rather than empirical fieldwork.

The primary sources of data in this research are classical uṣūl al-fiqh literature that holds high authority in Islamic scholarly tradition (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 25-27). Among these are the works of Al-Ghazali in *Al-Mustasfā*, Al-Amidi in *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, Al-Shatibi in *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah in *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'in*, and Wahbah al-Zuhayli in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, and these works were selected because they represent the spectrum of classical to contemporary uṣūl al-fiqh thought that discusses in depth the concepts of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 25-27). In addition to primary sources, this research also uses secondary sources including books, journal articles, and academic works discussing the theory of legal derivation and the development of contemporary ijtihad, and these secondary sources function to enrich the analysis and provide additional perspectives in understanding the conceptual differences between dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ in the modern context (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 30-32).

A total of 15 classical and 5 contemporary uṣūl al-fiqh works were purposively selected for analysis based on two inclusion criteria: (a) the work dedicates a specific section to the discussion of 'illat, qiyās, or dalālah, and (b) the work is recognized as authoritative within the

Sunni uṣūl tradition (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 25-27). Sources were searched from 1975 to 2026 using keywords including "dalālah uṣūl al-fiqh", "'illat qiyās", and "manāṭ al-ḥukm". Only Arabic and English works were included. To minimize bias in interpretation, definitions of each concept were cross-referenced across at least three different sources before any analytical conclusions were drawn.

The data collection technique was carried out through documentation (documentary study) by systematically examining, reading, and reviewing literature relevant to the research object (Krippendorff, 2018, pp. 24-26). This process was conducted by selecting data directly related to the concepts of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ, then classifying them according to the theme of discussion, so that the data obtained are structured and focused on the epistemological aspects of uṣūl al-fiqh. The main instruments used in this research were a documentation sheet and a conceptual analysis matrix, both of which were employed to record definitions, functions, and contextual usage of each term across different sources. The research procedure involved three stages: first, data collection through documentary study of selected uṣūl al-fiqh texts; second, classification of data according to the three concepts of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ; and third, analysis using comparative-conceptual and content analysis approaches. The research was conducted over a period of four months, during which the author systematically reviewed, coded, and analyzed the selected literature.

Data analysis in this research used a comparative-conceptual approach, namely comparing and examining the differences and relationships between the concepts of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ across various uṣūl al-fiqh literature (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 98-100). This approach aims to find points of similarity, difference, and hierarchical relationships among the three concepts within the structure of Islamic legal derivation, so that the research is not merely descriptive but also analytical and interpretative (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 98-100). In addition, this research also uses a content analysis approach to examine key terms within uṣūl al-fiqh texts (Krippendorff, 2018, pp. 24-26). This analysis is conducted by identifying the definitions, functions, and contexts of usage of the terms dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ across different literature, then constructing the epistemological relationship among them systematically, and this approach helps clarify the conceptual structure within uṣūl al-fiqh more systematically (Krippendorff, 2018, pp. 24-26). The comparative-conceptual analysis proceeded in three specific steps: first, definitions of each concept were extracted verbatim from the selected sources; second, definitions were compared across sources to identify similarities and differences; third, hierarchical relationships were constructed through thematic synthesis of the extracted definitions and their contextual usage (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 10-12). Thus, the methodology of this research is designed to produce a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth analysis of the differences and implementation of the concepts of dalālah, 'illat, and manāṭ in Islamic legal derivation (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 10-12). Finally, this study is limited to library research and does not include field observation of fatwa institutions, and therefore the findings are theoretical-normative in nature and require further empirical testing through case studies of actual fatwa processes.

## Results and Discussion

### Epistemological Differences Between Dalālah, 'Illat, and Manāṭ al-Ḥukm in Uṣūl al-Fiqh

The findings reveal that dalālah operates within the textual-semantic domain (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 38-40). Dalālah refers to the indication or signification of a linguistic expression toward a particular meaning within the syar'i text (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 38-40). In classical uṣūl al-fiqh theory, dalālah includes various levels of meaning such as zāhir (apparent meaning), naṣṣ (explicit meaning), mafhūm (implied meaning), and isyārah (indicated meaning) (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 145-148). The function of dalālah is to provide the initial understanding of what the sacred text means before any further legal analysis begins (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 55-57). Therefore, accuracy in understanding dalālah directly determines the validity of the

entire *istinbāt* process, because errors in textual interpretation will inevitably lead to errors in legal conclusions (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 55-57). Furthermore, *uṣūl* scholars emphasize that correctness in understanding *dalālah* is crucial in determining the validity of legal derivation, and thus *dalālah* becomes a very critical semantic aspect in Islamic legal methodology (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 55-57). The four types of *dalālah*—*ẓāhir*, *naṣṣ*, *mafḥūm*, and *isyārah*—demonstrate that the understanding of *syar'i* texts is not singular but has layered meanings according to Arabic linguistic structures and contexts of usage within the sacred texts (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 145-148). In methodological perspective, *dalālah* has the characteristic of being a textual-semantic domain concerning the relationship between words and meanings within *syar'i* texts, and therefore *dalālah* has not yet entered the domain of legal causality (*ta'līl al-aḥkām*) because it does not yet speak about the "legal cause" but remains at the stage of understanding the meaning of the text (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 180-182).

In contrast, *'illat* operates within the domain of legal causality (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 280-283). *'Illat* refers to the specific attribute or characteristic that is apparent, measurable, relevant, and recognized by *syar'i* evidence as the basis for establishing a legal ruling (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 280-283). The function of *'illat* is to explain why a particular ruling was prescribed (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 115-118). In the context of *qiyās*, *'illat* serves as the essential link connecting the original case (*aṣl*) to the new case (*far'*) (Qanet & Hasan, 2026). The classical scholars established strict conditions for a valid *'illat*, including that it must be *ẓāhir* (clear and observable), *munḍabiṭ* (measurable and consistent), *munāsib* (appropriate to the purposes of *syariah*), and *mu'tabar* (recognized by *syar'i* evidence) (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 650-653). This indicates that not every attribute can serve as an *'illat*; only those meeting these methodological standards qualify (Razak & Rahmani, 2026). The characteristic of *ẓāhir* in *'illat* means that the legal cause must be objectively recognizable and not hidden or speculative, while *munḍabiṭ* affirms that the *'illat* must have a stable measure so that it does not change according to individual subjectivity, *munāsib* shows that the *'illat* must have a logical connection with the purposes of *syariah* (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), and *mu'tabar* affirms that the *'illat* must have legitimacy from the sacred text or scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) (Muhid et al., 2026).

Meanwhile, *manāt al-ḥukm* operates within the domain of empirical reality (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 88-90). *Manāt* refers to the actual factual situation or concrete case where a *syar'i* ruling is applied after the *'illat* has been identified (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 88-90). The function of *manāt* is to serve as the verification stage that ensures the *'illat* actually exists in the specific case under consideration (Naeem & Elshobake, 2026). In *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature, *manāt* is further divided into three operational forms (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 250-252): *taḥqīq al-manāt* (the process of confirming whether the *'illat* exists in a new case not explicitly mentioned in the texts), *tanqīḥ al-manāt* (the process of filtering out irrelevant elements from a case to identify the most accurate and authentic *'illat*), and *takhrīj al-manāt* (the process of extracting the *'illat* from *syar'i* evidence that does not explicitly mention the legal cause) (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 250-252). *Taḥqīq al-manāt* requires the *mujtahid* to observe and analyze reality to ensure that the legal attribute truly exists in the case under consideration (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 310-312). *Tanqīḥ al-manāt* requires the *mujtahid* to distinguish between attributes relevant to the law and those that are merely accidental, and this process is very important to avoid extending the *'illat* without a strong *syar'i* basis (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 120-123). *Takhrīj al-manāt* is one of the most complex *ijtihād* processes because it requires deep analytical ability regarding the text, context, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, enabling the *mujtahid* to discover the legal basis not directly mentioned in the sacred texts (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-782).

When these three concepts are compared, their epistemological differences become clear (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 110-113). *Dalālah* is concerned with the relationship between words and meanings within the text (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 38-41), and its object of analysis is linguistic and semantic, answering the question of what the text says (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1,

pp. 38-41). 'Illat is concerned with the relationship between the ruling and its underlying reason (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 145-148), and its object of analysis is causal and rational, answering the question of why the ruling exists (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 2, pp. 145-148). Manāṭ is concerned with the relationship between the ruling and the concrete reality (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 88-91), and its object of analysis is empirical and factual, answering the question of whether this specific case actually contains the 'illat (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 88-91). The discussion of these findings confirms that treating these concepts as interchangeable is a serious methodological error (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 150-153). For example, some scholars or students might mistakenly assume that the dalālah (textual indication) of a verse directly serves as the 'illat (legal cause) for extending the ruling to new cases, and this error leads to overgeneralization because it bypasses the necessary step of identifying the actual rational cause behind the ruling (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203). Similarly, some might ignore the manāṭ stage entirely, assuming that once the 'illat is identified the ruling automatically applies to all cases, and this error leads to misapplication because it fails to verify whether the 'illat truly exists in the new empirical situation (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203). Therefore, the three concepts must be understood as distinct yet sequentially connected stages in a single epistemological process.

### **Hierarchical and Systemic Relationship Among Dalālah, 'Illat, and Manāṭ in the Structure of Istinbāt**

The findings demonstrate that these three concepts form a clear hierarchical and sequential structure in the process of Islamic legal reasoning (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 150-153). This structure begins with dalālah as the stage of textual understanding (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 38-41). At this initial stage, the mujtahid reads the syar'i text and determines what the text means based on Arabic linguistic rules, contextual indications, and established principles of interpretation (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 38-41). Without correct dalālah, the entire subsequent process collapses because the mujtahid would be building legal reasoning on a misunderstood foundation (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203). After establishing the correct dalālah, the mujtahid proceeds to the stage of 'illat as the analysis of legal causality (Acim & Suharti, 2023). At this stage, the mujtahid asks why this ruling was prescribed and what attribute or characteristic of the original case serves as the rational basis for the ruling (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 115-118). The 'illat is not simply any attribute but must meet the methodological conditions mentioned earlier (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 650-653). The 'illat stage allows the ruling to be extended beyond the specific text to similar cases that share the same legal cause (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 2, pp. 302-305), and this is where the dynamic and adaptive character of Islamic law emerges because the 'illat enables the law to address new situations not explicitly mentioned in classical sources (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 115-118).

After the 'illat has been correctly identified, the mujtahid proceeds to the final stage of manāṭ as the empirical verification and application of law to concrete reality (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 88-91). At this stage, the mujtahid examines the actual new case or contemporary situation and determines whether the 'illat that was identified from the original case truly exists in this new context (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 3, pp. 145-147). This stage is not merely theoretical but requires empirical observation and contextual analysis (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 250-252). If the 'illat is found to exist, then the ruling from the original case applies to the new case through qiyās (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 310-312). If the 'illat does not exist, then the ruling cannot be extended and the mujtahid must seek other methods of legal derivation (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 120-123).

The discussion of this hierarchical structure reveals that the three stages are not optional but mandatory for rigorous ijtihād (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213). The relationship can be expressed as a sequential formula: dalālah (textual understanding) → 'illat (causal analysis) → manāṭ (empirical verification) (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 150-153). Each stage depends on the correctness of the previous stage (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 200-203).

Furthermore, this structure is not linear in a simplistic sense but involves feedback loops, such that difficulties in verifying the *manāṭ* in a new case might lead the *mujtahid* to reconsider whether the *'illat* was correctly identified or whether the *dalālah* was properly understood (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 200-202). Nevertheless, the basic sequence provides a systematic methodological pathway that distinguishes rigorous *ijtihād* from arbitrary opinion (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213).

### **Implementation of the *Dalālah-'Illat-Manāṭ* Framework in Contemporary *Ijtihād* on *Muamalah* and Islamic Economics**

The findings from implementing this framework in contemporary economic and financial issues reveal both the relevance and urgency of distinguishing *dalālah*, *'illat*, and *manāṭ* (Auda, 2008, pp. 173-176). Three major areas of contemporary *muamalah* are examined here: digital financial transactions including fintech and cryptocurrency, peer-to-peer lending and paylater systems, and modern contractual forms in Islamic banking (Auda, 2008, pp. 173-176).

Regarding digital financial transactions and cryptocurrency, the implementation begins with the *dalālah* stage (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 45-47). The sacred texts, particularly QS. Al-Baqarah verses 275 to 279, provide a clear textual indication (*dalālah qath'iyyah*) regarding the prohibition of *riba* (usury and unjust exploitation in exchange) (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 45-47). The linguistic and semantic analysis of these verses shows that the prohibition is not merely about a specific transaction type but about a substantive principle of justice in exchange, and this *dalālah* serves as the normative foundation that cannot be ignored in any analysis of modern financial instruments (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 45-47). Moving to the *'illat* stage, contemporary *uṣūl* scholars have identified that the underlying legal cause (*'illat*) of the *riba* prohibition is the presence of *ẓulm* (injustice, exploitation, or wrongful imbalance) in exchange transactions (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-783). This *'illat* is not limited to the specific classical cases of *riba al-faḍl* and *riba al-nasī'ah*, but rather it is a substantive cause that captures the *syar'i* purpose of protecting justice and preventing exploitation in all forms of economic exchange (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-783). The *'illat* of *ẓulm* is also *munāsib* (appropriate to the *maqāṣid*) and *mu'tabar* (recognized by the broader evidence of *syariah*) (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-783).

Proceeding to the *manāṭ* stage, the contemporary *mujtahid* must examine the actual empirical reality of specific digital financial products (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 120-123). Taking cryptocurrency as an example, the *manāṭ* analysis asks whether a particular cryptocurrency transaction actually contains the *'illat* of *ẓulm* (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 120-123). The answer depends on the specific design and implementation of the cryptocurrency system (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 35-38). A cryptocurrency that is used purely as a medium of exchange without speculative manipulation, hidden fees, or unjust enrichment might not contain the *'illat* of *ẓulm*, whereas a cryptocurrency system that enables predatory lending, hidden interest mechanisms, or fraudulent schemes would contain the *'illat* of *ẓulm* and therefore fall under the prohibition (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 35-38). This *manāṭ* analysis shows that a blanket ruling on all cryptocurrency is methodologically unsound, and instead each specific application or contract must be examined individually to determine whether the *'illat* exists in that particular empirical context (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 120-123). The integration between *dalālah*, *'illat*, and *manāṭ* in fintech issues demonstrates that contemporary *ijtihād* cannot be conducted partially, because *dalālah* provides the normative foundation, *'illat* provides the legal rationalization, and *manāṭ* ensures the application of law to the appropriate reality, and errors in any one stage can cause distortion in Islamic legal determination regarding modern digital economic phenomena (al-Jahdhami & Amanullah, 2022).

Regarding peer-to-peer lending platforms and paylater systems, the same three-stage framework applies (Auda, 2008, pp. 210-213). The *dalālah* of the relevant texts remains the prohibition of *riba*, and the *'illat* remains the presence of *ẓulm* or unjust imbalance in exchange

(Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-783). The *manāṭ* analysis, however, reveals important distinctions (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 130-133). A paylater system that charges a flat, transparent, and mutually agreed service fee without any penalty interest might not contain the 'illat of *ẓulm* if the fee genuinely reflects administrative costs and no exploitation occurs, but a paylater system that imposes compounding late fees, changes terms unilaterally, or traps consumers in cycles of debt would contain the 'illat of *ẓulm* (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 130-133). Similarly, in peer-to-peer lending, the *manāṭ* analysis examines whether the platform actually facilitates an exploitative relationship between lender and borrower or whether it provides a genuine risk-sharing arrangement with full disclosure and mutual consent (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 130-133).

The discussion of these contemporary cases demonstrates that the *dalālah*-*'illat*-*manāṭ* framework prevents two common errors in modern Islamic economic fatwas (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 55-58): the first error is literalism, where the mujtahid only looks at the surface resemblance between a modern transaction and a classical prohibited transaction without analyzing the substantive 'illat; the second error is excessive abstraction, where the mujtahid assumes that all modern financial transactions are permissible simply because the literal names and forms differ from classical cases without checking whether the 'illat of prohibition exists (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 55-58). The proper methodology requires the mujtahid to honor the *dalālah* of the texts, rigorously identify the correct 'illat from the original cases, and then meticulously verify the *manāṭ* in each new empirical situation (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 55-58).

The findings of this study confirm, extend, and challenge previous research in several important ways. While Al-Ghazali (1997) emphasized the logical conditions of 'illat in *qiyās*—particularly the requirements of *zuhūr*, *inḍibāt*, and *munāsabah*—this study extends his work by demonstrating that 'illat cannot function properly without systematic *manāṭ* verification. Al-Ghazali discussed 'illat primarily as a theoretical construct within the logic of analogical reasoning, but he did not fully develop the practical methodology of applying that 'illat to new empirical cases. This study fills that gap by showing that the 'illat identified through textual analysis must be empirically verified through *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* before a ruling can be legitimately extended to contemporary cases.

Similarly, Al-Shatibi (1975) connected 'illat to public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) within the broader framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, arguing that legal causes must ultimately serve the higher objectives of Islamic law. While Al-Shatibi's work provides the philosophical foundation for understanding why 'illat matters, this study provides a practical three-stage framework—*dalālah* → 'illat → *manāṭ*—for implementing that philosophy in the context of modern financial transactions. The framework operationalizes Al-Shatibi's *maqāṣid*-oriented approach by requiring that the 'illat not only be logically sound but also empirically verifiable in concrete economic realities.

Wahbah al-Zuhayli (1986) provided comprehensive definitions of *dalālah*, 'illat, and *manāṭ* in his multi-volume work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, but he treated these concepts in separate chapters without explicating their integrated relationship. This study extends his work by demonstrating that these three concepts are not merely separate topics but form a coherent hierarchical sequence. The integrated framework offered here provides a methodological bridge that is missing from standard *uṣūl* textbooks. The findings also challenge the approach of some contemporary fatwa bodies that issue blanket rulings on entire categories of modern financial products. This study demonstrates that such blanket rulings are methodologically unsound because they fail to conduct the necessary *manāṭ* analysis. A product's permissibility depends not on its name or surface form but on whether its actual operational structure contains the 'illat of the original prohibition. This challenges the common practice of issuing categorical fatwas on cryptocurrency or fintech without distinguishing between different types of applications and structures.



The framework contributes to the growing body of literature on maqāṣid-oriented ijtihad (Auda, 2008; Raysuni, 1995) by providing a concrete methodology for translating maqāṣid principles into practical legal determination. Rather than remaining at the level of abstract principles, the dalālah-'illat-manāt framework offers a step-by-step process that ensures the purposes of syariah are actually realized in specific cases.

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213). Theoretically, this study provides a clear epistemological framework that distinguishes three often-confused concepts in uṣūl al-fiqh, and this clarity strengthens the methodological rigor of contemporary ijtihād by providing a systematic pathway from text to reality (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 310-312). The framework prevents the common slippage where scholars move directly from dalālah to a final ruling without passing through the necessary stages of 'illat identification and manāt verification (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 310-312).

Practically, for Islamic financial institutions and fatwa boards, this framework offers a structured methodology for issuing fatwas on novel financial products (Arifin & Kholis, 2025). Instead of relying on superficial analogies or arbitrary judgments, the fatwa committee can follow the three-stage process: first, establish the correct dalālah of the relevant primary texts; second, identify the authentic 'illat from the original case; third, conduct a careful manāt analysis of the actual financial product in its specific operational context (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 150-153). This methodology reduces inconsistency across fatwas and increases the predictability and reliability of shariah compliance decisions (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 680-683).

From an economic perspective, the dalālah-'illat-manāt framework has significant implications for financial inclusion and market participation. According to the Islamic Financial Services Board (2025), the global Islamic fintech market is estimated at USD 79 billion, with projected annual growth rates exceeding 15% in key Muslim-majority markets including Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. A blanket prohibition on all cryptocurrency and digital financial products would effectively exclude Muslim consumers and investors from this rapidly growing market segment, potentially limiting their economic participation and financial inclusion. The framework offers a middle path that balances shariah compliance with financial inclusion: only products containing the 'illat of zulm (injustice or exploitation) are prohibited, while transparent, non-exploitative products remain permissible. This differentiated approach preserves the maqāṣid objective of protecting wealth (hifẓ al-māl) by allowing Muslims to participate in legitimate digital economic activities while still preventing unjust or exploitative financial practices. The framework also enables a more nuanced analysis of the trade-off between shariah compliance and financial inclusion; rather than framing these as opposing values, the framework suggests that well-designed Islamic financial products can achieve both simultaneously by incorporating the dalālah-'illat-manāt analysis into their product development and approval processes.

For the broader field of Islamic economics, this framework enables more nuanced and context-sensitive rulings (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 95-98). Instead of declaring all cryptocurrency haram or halal in one blanket statement, the framework allows jurists to distinguish between different types of cryptocurrency applications, different contractual arrangements, and different market practices (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 95-98). The same product might be permissible in one specific structure and impermissible in another depending on the manāt verification, and this granularity is essential for Islamic economics to function in the complex and rapidly evolving digital economy (Ibn Qayyim, 2002, Vol. 3, pp. 95-98).

The framework also provides a more differentiated analysis of the 'illat of zulm across different digital products. In cryptocurrency transactions, the 'illat of zulm may manifest as speculative manipulation, hidden transaction fees, fraudulent schemes, or extreme price volatility that harms unsophisticated investors. In peer-to-peer lending, zulm may appear as excessive interest rates, penalty fees, debt traps, or asymmetric information between lender and borrower. In paylater

systems, *zulm* may take the form of compounding late fees, unilateral changes to terms, or aggressive marketing that exploits consumers' financial vulnerabilities. This differentiated application of the '*illat*' allows for targeted regulation and product design recommendations that address specific forms of injustice in each financial context, rather than applying the same reasoning to all digital financial products regardless of their operational structure.

This study contributes to the existing literature in three specific ways (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213). First, it provides a systematic and explicit distinction between *dalālah*, '*illat*', and *manāṭ* that is missing from many standard *uṣūl al-fiqh* textbooks, which often treat these concepts in separate chapters without explaining their integrated hierarchical relationship (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 150-153). Second, it applies this integrated framework specifically to contemporary *muamalah* and Islamic economic issues that have not been collectively analyzed through this three-stage lens (Auda, 2008, pp. 173-176). Third, it offers a practical methodology that can be used by muftis, shariah advisors, and researchers in Islamic finance to evaluate new products in a consistent and rigorous manner (Asad et al., 2025).

This research has three main limitations (Al-Amidi, 2003, Vol. 4, pp. 210-213). First, it is based entirely on library research and does not include empirical observation of how fatwa institutions actually apply or fail to apply such a framework in their daily practice (Sugiyono, 2020, pp. 9-12). Second, the research focuses primarily on the *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature from the classical period and the modern Arab world, with less attention to regional variations in *ijtihād* methodology from South Asia or Southeast Asia (Krippendorff, 2018, pp. 24-26). Third, the implementation examples are limited to selected issues in Islamic economics and do not cover all areas of contemporary *muamalah* such as Islamic insurance (*takaful*), capital markets, or social finance instruments like *waqf* and *zakat* management (Zed, 2008, pp. 3-5).

Based on these limitations, several suggestions are offered (Al-Shatibi, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 150-153). First, future researchers should conduct empirical case studies observing how shariah advisory boards in Islamic financial institutions actually apply or neglect the distinction between *dalālah*, '*illat*', and *manāṭ* in their fatwa processes (Creswell, 2014, pp. 50-55). Second, comparative studies should examine how different *uṣūl* methodologies across different *madhhabs* and different regions conceptualize and apply these three concepts (Kamali, 2003, pp. 120-125). Third, future research should extend the framework to other areas of contemporary *fiqh* beyond economics, including medical ethics, environmental law, and family law (Auda, 2008, pp. 245-248). Fourth, researchers should develop practical tools or checklists based on the *dalālah*-'*illat*'-*manāṭ* framework to assist shariah compliance officers in their daily product review work (Wahbah al-Zuhayli, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 780-783). Fifth, future research should empirically test this framework through case studies of fatwa processes in Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the GCC to assess its practical applicability and identify barriers to its adoption.

## Conclusions

This study answers three research questions. First, regarding epistemological differences, *dalālah* operates in the textual-semantic domain concerning understanding what the text says, '*illat*' operates in the domain of legal causality concerning explaining why a ruling exists, and *manāṭ* operates in the domain of empirical reality concerning verifying whether the '*illat*' applies to a concrete case. Confusing these domains leads to methodological errors such as overgeneralization of rulings or misapplication of law to new cases.

Second, regarding their hierarchical relationship, the three concepts form a sequential and integrated structure in the process of *istinbāt*. The process begins with *dalālah* as textual understanding, proceeds to '*illat*' as causal analysis, and concludes with *manāṭ* as empirical verification. Each stage depends on the correctness of the previous stage, and skipping any stage compromises the validity of *ijtihād*.

Third, regarding implementation in contemporary *ijtihād*, particularly in *muamalah* and Islamic economics, the *dalālah*-*'illat*-*manāṭ* framework provides a rigorous and context-sensitive methodology for addressing modern financial transactions that were not explicitly mentioned in classical texts, including cryptocurrency, peer-to-peer lending, and paylater systems. The framework prevents both literal prohibition based on superficial resemblance and blanket permission based on changed forms. Instead, it requires the *mujtahid* to honor the *dalālah* of the texts prohibiting *riba*, identify the substantive *'illat* of *ẓulm* (injustice or exploitation) as the underlying legal cause, and then conduct a careful *manāṭ* analysis of each specific financial product to determine whether that *'illat* exists in its empirical reality. The permissibility of a modern financial product depends not on its name or surface form but on whether its actual operational structure contains the *'illat* of the original prohibition.

Finally, this study concludes that the integrated yet differentiated understanding of *dalālah*, *'illat*, and *manāṭ* is a methodological prerequisite for valid contemporary *ijtihād*. Without this understanding, *ijtihād* risks oscillating between sterile literalism and unmoored progressivism. With this understanding, contemporary *mujtahids* possess a rigorous epistemological tool that preserves the authority of sacred texts while enabling adaptive, context-sensitive, and just legal rulings in the rapidly evolving landscape of modern Islamic economics and finance.

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### Author Contribution Statement

The author affirms that he is the sole contributor to all stages of this research. Tarig Mansour (T.M.) was responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, the development and refinement of the research methodology, the execution of data analysis and interpretation, the drafting and revision of the original manuscript, and the final review, editing, and approval of the text for submission. This manuscript is an original work and has not been previously published, in whole or in part, in any journal, conference proceeding, website, preprint repository, or any other form of publication or public dissemination medium.

### AI Disclosure Statement

The author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) during the preparation of this work solely for language refinement, proofreading, and formatting the manuscript according to the *Al Wajiz* journal template. No AI tool was used for substantive content generation, including conceptualization, analysis, conclusions, or sourcing of references. All sources cited are accurate, relevant, and have been verified by the author. After using the tool, the author thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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