

## Building a Critical Society Towards Hoaxes from The Perspective of the Qur'an

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**Abstract:** Hoaxes cause unrest, social conflict, and even division. Islam, through the Qur'an, provides important guidance on adopting a critical attitude towards news. One such guidance is found in QS. Al-Hujurat, verse 6. This article examines At-Thabari's Tafsir perspective on this verse and its relevance in building a critical society in the digital age. The method used in this research is qualitative, involving library research, and employs a descriptive-analytical approach. The results show that the Qur'an emphasises the principle of tabayyun (clarification) as the foundation for building a rational, objective, and critical society in dealing with information. QS. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, emphasises the importance of tabayyun in responding to information effectively. The interpretation of At-Thabari and other scholars emphasises verification, reading, telling the truth, and reminding each other as strategies to counter hoaxes. This verse is relevant for building a critical society in the digital age, which is rife with disinformation, propaganda, and disturbing, destructive, and systematic social impacts.

**Keywords:** Critical Society, Hoax, Quranic Interpretation.

**Abstrak:** Hoaks menimbulkan keresahan, konflik sosial, bahkan perpecahan. Islam melalui Al-Qur'an memberikan tuntunan penting terkait sikap kritis dalam menerima berita. Salah satunya terdapat dalam QS. Al-Hujurat ayat 6. Artikel ini mengkaji perspektif Tafsir At-Thabari terhadap ayat tersebut dan relevansinya dalam membangun masyarakat kritis di era digital. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah bersifat kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (library research), pendekatannya menggunakan deskriptif analisis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Qur'an menekankan prinsip tabayyun (klarifikasi) sebagai fondasi membangun masyarakat yang rasional, objektif, dan kritis dalam menghadapi informasi. QS. Al-Hujurat ayat 6 menegaskan pentingnya tabayyun dalam menyikapi informasi. Tafsir At-Thabari dan ulama lainnya menekankan verifikasi, membaca, berkata jujur, dan saling mengingatkan sebagai strategi menangkal hoaksi.

**Kata Kunci:** Masyarakat Kritis, Hoaks, Tafsir al-Qur'an.

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## Introduction

A hoax can be defined as information that is not necessarily factual, as information is a collection of factual data. According to a 2021 survey by Mastel, of 1,116 respondents, 14.7% received hoaxes more than once a day, 34.6% received hoaxes daily, 23.5% received hoaxes once a week, and 18.2% received hoaxes once a month (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Hoaxes are not only spread online; mainstream media is also contaminated and sometimes publishes hoax news.

The percentage of media that spread hoaxes includes radio (1.20%), print media (5%), and television (8.70%) (Aloysius Romein & Chudra, 2024). Currently, hoaxes are spread through various channels, including chat applications such as WhatsApp, Line, and Telegram (62.80%), websites (34.90%), and social media (92.40%) (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) (Sarjito, 2021). Data from the kominfo.go.id website indicates that there are 800,000 websites spreading hoaxes and hate speech in Indonesia (Subekti et al., 2025).

One factor that increases society's vulnerability to hoaxes is the lack of digital literacy and critical thinking skills in evaluating information (van Zyl et al., 2020). Recent research in Indonesia highlights the importance of strengthening digital literacy and critical thinking through both formal education policies and public literacy programs, as a means to prevent the spread of misinformation (Iwin Ardyawin & Habiburrahman, 2024). Lack of ability to verify and assess information sources makes it easier for individuals to accept and spread hoaxes without clarification.

Low digital literacy makes people susceptible to believing provocative, emotional, and unverified information. (Changwong, 2022) explain that emphasized that digital literacy must be accompanied by a culture of critical thinking, so that individuals are not merely consumers of information but are also able to analyze, clarify, and evaluate information before disseminating it further. In a recent study, (Nabila Hafifah et al., 2024) also found that digital literacy among Indonesian students remains weak, particularly in evaluating the authenticity and credibility of information sources. This highlights the need to enhance critical thinking in navigating the overwhelming flow of information (McLean, 2005).

From a religious perspective, the Quran emphasizes the importance of exercising caution when receiving news as a moral obligation. Verse 6 of Surah Al-Hujurat

explicitly encourages verification to check and clarify information so that people do not accuse or act on news whose veracity is uncertain (Bahtiar & Maimun, 2024). Modern exegetical studies emphasize the relevance of this tabayyun principle in the context of information management in the digital age; several contemporary studies link the concept of tabayyun to Islamic communication ethics and strategies for controlling the dissemination of hoaxes on social media.

Contemporary interpretations also enhance the relevance of this verse to current conditions—the concept of verification in the Quran. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, is highly relevant in the social media era, where verifying information is essential before disseminating it (Maisyanah et al., 2024). Similarly, it emphasizes that Islamic communication ethics must serve as a foundation for addressing the phenomenon of hoaxes, as Islamic communication principles prioritize honesty, caution, and moral responsibility for the accuracy of information (Nurfadilah et al., 2025).

Thus, building a critical society against hoaxes from a Qur'anic perspective is a relevant area of study, particularly through At-Thabari's interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat, verse 6. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of Building a Critical Society Against Hoaxes from a Qur'anic perspective (Study of At-Thabari's Interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat, verse 6).

### **Research Method**

This article is a library research piece, with the primary data sources being the Quran and Hadith, which explain hoaxes. Library research is a type of research that utilizes library sources, including books, scientific articles, journals, documents, manuscripts, commentaries, and other literature, as primary data (Sari & Asmendri, 2018). This research does not require field data collection; instead, it emphasizes the review, analysis, and interpretation of texts.

The data collection in this article employs a documentary method, drawing on information from the Quran and Hadith. Data analysis in this article employs a descriptive analysis with the thematic method (*maudhu'i*), which aims to understand hoax prevention strategies by gathering information from Quranic verses and Prophetic Hadith related to the theme (Williams, 2022). Secondary data sources include commentaries, hadith commentaries, and books or articles related to the theme.

The stages of data analysis in a literature review include organizing relevant literature, synthesizing information from various sources to identify connections and patterns, and determining key issues or themes to inform conclusions and reports (Armann-Keown & Patterson, 2020). This process also involves collecting and cleaning data from the literature, as well as systematically presenting the findings clearly and concisely.

## Result and Discussion

### At-Thabari's Interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat Verse 6:

Results of the Study of At-Thabari's Interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat Verse 6:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ لَدْغِيٍّ

O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, sift through it, lest you inflict a calamity on a people without knowing their condition, and then become regretful for your actions (Kementrian\_Agama, 2019).

According to Tafsir At-Thabari, this verse was revealed in response to an incident where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent a companion to deliver zakat to a people, but he returned with a false report. From this incident, Allah commanded Muslims not to accept news at face value without *tabayyun* (clarification) (Katsirin & Suherman, 2023).

At-Thabari explained that *tabayyun* means researching, verifying, and ensuring the truth of news before acting on it. He emphasized that hastily believing news from untrustworthy sources will result in mistakes, regret, and even social destruction (Alwi HS et al., 2021). The hoax phenomenon in the digital age is highly relevant to the message of this verse. This is because fake news often originates from unreliable sources and spreads rapidly through social media. Hoaxes often cause unrest, hatred, and even division within society.

This verse serves as an ethical and theological foundation for responding to information, especially in the digital age, which is rife with hoaxes, disinformation, and propaganda. The concept of *tabayyun* (verification) in this verse contains important principles (Rufaida, 2025):

Verify the source: Not all information is trustworthy, especially from unreliable (fake) sources. Verifying the source of information is a crucial step in ensuring the validity and reliability of the information before accepting or disseminating it. In a digital age filled with a wealth of information, the ability to verify sources is increasingly necessary to prevent the spread of fake news and misinformation (Arifin, 2022).

The process of verifying the source of information involves several important steps. First, identify the author or creator of the content to evaluate their credibility and expertise in the field. Second, verify the publication date to ensure the information remains current and relevant. Third, confirm the institution or organization that published the information (Fitrah Sugiarto, Sumarlin, Muhammad Subki, 2021).

When conducting verification, it is crucial to assess several key factors, including the objectivity of the source, the methods used in data collection, and the absence of any conflict of interest. Allah has instructed in the Qur'an to take the following actions as a preventative measure or to handle hoax news. In *Dealing with Hoaxes on Social Media*, the application of the tabayyun concept in this context is crucial (Sassi, 2025).

### **Building a Society Critical of Hoaxes**

The proliferation of hoaxes is extremely worrying for society. Caution and thoroughness are essential when responding to news to avoid falling prey to misinformation. The Quran and Hadith explain strategies for preventing and dealing with the spread of hoaxes, including:

#### *a. Tabayyun*

The obligation to conduct tabayyun every time you hear information is illustrated in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6. Allah SWT warns believers always to be cautious when wicked people spread false news. According to M. Quraish Shihab, in his *Tafsir al-Misbah*, the word *fatabayyanu* means a command to examine it diligently. Meanwhile, Mawardi Siregar, in his work entitled "Thematic Interpretation on Information Selection," quoted from al-Syawkani's book, "Fath al-Qadir," explains that tabayyun is "al ta'arruf wa tafahhus," which means identifying, examining, or seeking the truth of an ongoing event (Andy Riski Pratama & Charles Charles, 2022).

According to Roslan Umar, in his journal "Approach to the Concept of Tabayyun in Contemporary Astronomy Issues," he states that there are differing opinions among

scholars regarding the interpretation of Allah SWT's word "fatabayyanu." Generally, Medinan scholars read it "fatatsabbatuu." Others read it "fayatabayyanu," with the same meaning: wait for news until its truth is proven, and do not rush to accept it.

Verse 6 of QS. Al-Hujurat aligns with the struggles of scholars of the past when selecting the Prophet's hadith. For example, there is the mutawatir hadith, a hadith whose narration is accepted because it was conveyed by several individuals who were deemed unlikely to agree on a lie. All scholars have recognized this hadith as a statement that applies to a large number of people who must meet certain conditions (Firman et al., 2024). This means that these conditions are a sign that if many people spread it, it does not necessarily guarantee its truth. Similarly, with news, even if many reports with duplicate content appear, this does not guarantee the message being disseminated is true.

b. Read the news first to determine whether it is true or not

QS. Al-Alaq: 1-3 teaches Muslims to read. Reading itself is not only interpreted as having a written text as the object of reading, nor does it have to be spoken aloud for others to hear. Instead, its purpose is general and encompasses everything, whether it is a sacred reading from God or not, whether it involves written or unwritten verses (Nurfadilah et al., 2025). Reading serves several purposes, including strengthening comprehension, expanding knowledge, and more.

Regarding anticipating hoaxes, reading is one way to determine whether the news is trustworthy. Individuals should avoid simply reading the headline and immediately spreading it without understanding the content, intent, and purpose of the information. Allah SWT commands humans to read and understand something before jumping to conclusions (Zarkasyi, 2022). This is to determine whether the information is true or false.

c. Always speak kindly and honestly

In Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 263, Allah SWT commands humans to speak ethically, always being honest, polite, and moderate. In this regard, such behavior is preferable to giving charity while masking it with hurtful actions. Today, most people communicate without considering the source and potential side effects (Afni et al., 2025). They are unaware of whether what they convey is good and accurate or



misleading (a hoax). As a result, the spread of false information (hoaxes) is becoming increasingly rampant and uncontrollable.

Maintaining good speech is obligatory for Muslims, as it is the foundation for a prosperous life. Furthermore, Allah SWT only accepts good deeds. Deeds performed in a depraved manner will not necessarily be accepted by Allah SWT unless the person repents and continues to do good (Edy et al., 2025).

Another hadith explains that, from Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (r.a.), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Always be honest, for honesty leads to goodness, and goodness leads to Paradise. Furthermore, if a person is always honest and chooses to be honest, he will be recorded with Allah as an honest person (Alfani et al., 2025). Moreover, avoid lying, for lying leads to evil, and evil leads to Hell.

Moreover, if a person consistently lies and chooses to lie, he will be recorded with Allah as a liar." (Narrated by Ibn Hibban). According to this hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explained that lying is a crime or forbidden act that will result in the perpetrator being punished in Hell.

#### d. Reminding Each Other

Reminding each other is a good thing that should be preserved. Humans can commit crimes because they are not aware that what they do is wrong behavior and is not justified by Islam. As believers, we are commanded by Allah SWT. not to be responsible for the actions of polytheists who despise His verses, nor will they bear the sins of polytheists. Believers are only ordered to remind polytheists not to commit deviant actions (Katsirin & Suherman, 2023).

However, there is a history that the Prophet SAW. Exemplifies what Muslims must do when polytheists make fun of the verses of Allah SWT, namely, standing up in their assembly. This is very hated by the polytheists. In Tafsir Al-Misbah, QS. Al-An'am verse 69 instructs Muslims to remind one another. Especially in terms of piety to Allah SWT. They are obliged always to stay away from His prohibitions and carry out what He commands.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the content of Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, aims to prevent slander, maintain social harmony, and avoid regret resulting from actions based on

ignorance. Some ways to foster a critical society include making it a habit to verify any information that causes unrest. Conduct factual research and verify the accuracy of information from trusted news sources. Research and verify the information received, and ensure that you do not immediately believe rumors or gossip without a strong basis. Think critically, selectively, and deliberately when receiving and disseminating information, whether on social media or other platforms.

Muslims are encouraged to conduct "tabayyun" (reconciliation) to avoid spreading false news or hoaxes that can lead to slander. By verifying the accuracy of information, "tabayyun" helps prevent misunderstandings and maintain good relationships with others. The process of "tabayyun" enables a person to make wise and appropriate decisions, not based on ignorance or misinformation. Someone who confirms the information will avoid regret resulting from committing evil actions or bringing disaster upon others due to the use of inaccurate information.

In addition to tabayyun (religious inquiry), building a critical society can also be achieved by making a habit of reading and understanding information in its entirety, maintaining honesty and good speech, and reminding each other not to fall prey to the spread of fake news. Thus, the strategy for preventing hoaxes from a Quranic perspective not only creates an intelligent and critical society but also maintains social harmony and upholds Islamic communication ethics.

Al-Hujurat verse 6, through Tafsir At-Thabari, emphasizes the obligation of tabayyun, namely, checking and verifying the truth of news before acting on it. This principle is highly relevant to the phenomenon of hoaxes in the social media era. Tabayyun serves as an ethical-theological foundation for Muslims to be more careful, critical, and responsible in receiving and disseminating information.

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