

Combatting Hoaxes in the Age of Social Media: Reinterpreting Q.S. An-Nur:11 Through Jorge J.E. Gracia's Hermeneutics

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore Qs. an-Nur: 11 as the foundation of social interaction ethics in dealing with hoaxes in the digital age. Although the material context has been extensively studied in various legal-formal and psychological aspects, the author adds a philosophical-religious approach based on the Qur'an, which will later be contextualized. Using Jorge J.E Gracia's hermeneutical approach, this study traces the stages of analysis: *historical function*, *meaning function*, and *implicative function*. The results show that the basis of Qs. an-Nur: 11 reveals values relevant to building a critical-clarificatory culture and awareness of the protection of honor in both individual and collective aspects. Furthermore, the analysis highlights that the roots of hoaxes during the time of the Prophet Muhammad emerged from epistemic violence and a lack of information literacy, which are relevant to modern issues. This leads to the integration of Islamic history and modern issues, resulting in a transformative public ethics model, meaning that revelation serves as a source of values to strengthen moral resilience in an information ecosystem prone to manipulation.

Keywords: Qs. An-Nur: 11, Hadith al-Ifk, ethics, hoaxes, social media, Gracia hermeneutics

A. Introduction

Social media today has transformed into an arena of contestation of meaning where the space between truth and lies is increasingly crowded with the speed and unstoppable amount of information being a big concern. For example, Indonesia, as one of the world's largest digital markets, faces a paradox; on the one hand, technological advances allow for the democratization of information, on the other hand, this space has become a battlefield for hoaxes with increasing intensity. Data from 2023-2024 recorded a 262% spike in political hoaxes compared to the previous period¹, this figure reflects not only the failure of the information filtering system, but also a fundamental crisis, lodged in the media culture that surrounds society.

My assumption is that the root of the problem may lie in the way we understand "hoax" itself, not just as misinformation, but as a form of epistemic violence that has historical precedents in religious traditions. The Qur'an, through the narrative of the slander against Aisyah in Qs. an-Nur: 11-20, has actually provided a sharp conceptual framework of the anatomy of a hoax; how a structured lie can shake the most fundamental social joints, undermine trust, and leave deep collective wounds.² This story from the 7th century turns out to be not just a historical fragment, but a mirror that reflects the reality of the 21st century with chilling accuracy.

This study is motivated by academic concerns regarding the dominance of techno-legal and psycho-social approaches in the study of hoaxes, which tend to ignore the philosophical-religious dimension as a framework for solutions. In the context of Indonesian society, where religion is the primary source of moral values, an approach is needed that can bridge the gap between transcendental values and ethical challenges in the digital age. Within this framework, the fundamental question posed is not merely "how do hoaxes work," but rather: how can the Qur'an, as a moral guide, offer a relevant and transformative ethical paradigm in addressing disinformation that threatens social stability, from the individual to the national level.

QS. an-Nur: 11 is positioned in this study not merely as a historical record of the divine response to the crisis of false information that befell the people of Medina during the time of the Prophet, but also as a verse containing universal principles

¹Komdigi Public Relations, "Komdigi Identifies 1,923 Hoax Content Throughout 2024," 2025, <https://www.komdigi.go.id/berita/siaran-pers/detail/komdigi-identifikasi-1923-konten-hoaks-sepanjang-tahun-2024>.

²Abu Muslim bin Hajjaj Qusairy An-Nisabury, *Al-Musnad as-Sahih al-Mukhtasar bi Naql al-'Adl an 'Adl ila Rasulillah Saw* (Beirut: Dar Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1992), 4974.

of social responsibility in interaction. To uncover the depth of meaning in this verse and connect it to the contemporary context of hoaxes, Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutical approach is employed. This approach is deemed relevant as it unravels the philosophical meaning of the text while maintaining historical distance, thereby avoiding simplistic analogies between the 7th-century context and the communication challenges of the 21st century. Gracia offers a flexible yet rigorous interpretive method, enabling critical dialogue between sacred texts and contemporary reality. Thus, this study aims to enrich the discourse on digital ethics through contextual Qur'anic interpretation, and to encourage the formation of a paradigm of social interaction that is not only technically rational but also morally and spiritually charged.

B. Literature Review

Provide The development of hoax studies in an Islamic perspective has produced some interesting approaches, although it has not touched the root of the problem comprehensively. Studies such as the analysis of Hadith al-Ifk by Muhammad Mundzir with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics are enough to reveal the historical dimensions of the slander against Aisyah ra, but it is still limited to textual reading without linking it to the complex mechanism of spreading digital hoaxes.³ Similarly, Halir Ridla's research analyzes the hoax verses with the ma'na cum maghza approach, which explains the linguistic and historical conceptual framework but is not enough to help in the implications of the meaning that arises from the concept.⁴ And the last article, the author thinks that the research of Habsatun Nabawiyah and Ana Istianah, as an illustration of Qs. An-Nur: 11, still leaves a gap, namely, the unmeasured psychological conditions of the Prophet Muhammad Saw, Aisyah ra, and the people of Medina, so that it is not enough to hit the historical emotional implications. As a result, the ethical meaning taken from the hoax event at that time is still an incomplete moral benchmark.⁵ According to the author, this study is like two separate sides of a coin, one side understanding religious texts, the other side observing digital phenomena, so there has been no serious effort to unite the two in a holistic analytical framework.

³ Muhammad Mundzir, "Contextualizing the Understanding of Hadith Al-Ifki in Interacting in Social Media: An Application of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Hermeneutics," *Riwayah: Journal of Hadith Studies* 7, no. 2 (2021).

⁴ Moh Halir Ridla, "Ma'Nā Cum Maghzā Analysis of the Verses on Fake News (Hoax) in the Qur'an," *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 291–312, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v5i2.1185>.

⁵Habsatun Nabawiyah and Ana Istianah, "Hoax in the Digital Age: Solutions in Responding to Hoax News," *As-Syifa: Journal of Islamic Studies and History* 1, no. 1 (2022).

So what is interesting comes from the study of Jorge J.E. Gracia's philosophical hermeneutic approach, as an analytical tool to bridge the gap. If developed further, Gracia's framework can be an analytical tool to dissect how the hoax narrative in Qs. an-Nur: 11 not only tells the story of slander in the past, but also possibly maps the power structure behind the production and reproduction of contemporary hoaxes. This is the research gap that this study aims to fill by building a bridge between a historical perspective rich in ethical values and a modern critique of the digital media ecosystem that often sacrifices truth for the sake of certain interests.

C. Research Methods

This research uses the *library research* method, because the main sources are document-based such as books of tafsir, books, and journal articles. For the Qur'an reference, this research fully refers to the Qur'an Kemenag in words. Then, Jorge J.E. Gracia's hermeneutic approach is applied to explore the meaning and implications of fake news (hoax) in the current context. Primary data are Quranic verses that discuss the theme of hoaxes, reinforced by Gracia's theoretical works such as *A Theory of Textuality* as a hermeneutical foundation. Secondary data include language dictionaries such as *Lisan al-Arab*, *Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, *Mu'jam Maqayis*. Then, books of interpretation (Tafsir al-Biq'a'i, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Munir az-Zuhaili, and Tafsir Ibn Ashur) as well as Islamic historical literature such as *Sirah Nabawiyyah*, *the History of the Quran* and *Lubab an-Nuqul fi Asbab an-Nuzul*. These sources serve as linguistic and historical *interpretive* instruments to comprehensively interpret the verses about hoaxes.

D. Findings

1. Overview of Jorge J.E. Gracia and his Theory of Interpretation

Born in Cuba in 1942, Jorge J.E. Gracia⁶ emerged as one of the modern philosophers who quite successfully bridged the scholastic tradition with modern philosophical discourse. His educational journey from Wheaton College (B.A. in Philosophy, 1965), the University of Chicago (M.A.), to the University of Toronto (Ph.D.), his study history shows a responsible consistency in mastering philosophy as a major discipline while demonstrating his capacity as a multidisciplinary thinker. His deep expertise in metaphysics, hermeneutics, and philosophy of language did not emerge in

⁶ This short biography is taken from the University of Buffalo website. Department of Philosophy, "Jorge J. E. Gracia," 2021, <https://www.buffalo.edu/cas/philosophy/faculty/memoriain/gracia.html>.

a vacuum, but rather over a long intellectual engagement characterized by critical readings of three major traditions: medieval scholasticism (especially Aquinas), continental phenomenology, and Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy.

What makes Gracia interesting is that he is not confined to pure philosophy. His sharp focus on issues of ethnicity and identity especially in the Latin American context reveals how his philosophical framework remains firmly rooted in concrete human problems thus making his hermeneutical approach unique, a synthesis of Anglo-Saxon analytical rigor, continental historical depth, and the cultural sensitivity of a diasporic intellectual. His works on *textuality* (*A Theory of Textuality*, 1995) and interpretation (*How Can We Know What God Means?*, 2001) are not mere theoretical abstractions, but brilliant responses to the anxieties of the times in an era of clashing civilizations.

In the field of hermeneutics, Gracia has developed a complex and systematic approach. He has written extensively on the logical and epistemological dimensions of textual theory, which he considers essential for building a coherent and contextually relevant interpretive framework. His methodology integrates insights from both textual and contextual traditions, then enriches them with the intellectual heritage of great historical thinkers. One of Gracia's main contributions lies in his logical analysis of the concept of "text", which he clearly distinguishes from other entities such as language, artifacts and artworks. He classified texts based on their functional modalities in an attempt to resolve the epistemological problem of textual meaning, a challenge that has long attracted the attention of philosophers of language, semioticians, and hermeneutic theorists.⁷

Furthermore, Gracia not only offers an ontological characterization of texts; she also explores the identity-related issues embedded in them. He articulates how the text reflects the identity of the author, the purpose of writing, and its relationship to meaning. In Gracia's view, hermeneutics is not simply a method of interpretation, but a reflective field concerned with understanding the complex interplay between meaning, identity and the existential status of the text itself.

Before discussing Gracia's complex definition of interpretation, we should start by understanding the similarities between *interpretation* and *tafsir*.

⁷Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutics and the Development of Ulumul Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawasea Press, 2009), 112-25.

Etymologically, the Arabic term *tafsīr*, as al-Dzahabī notes, comes from a root meaning "to illuminate" or "to explain".⁸ While the English term *tafsir* comes from the Latin *interpretatio*, which is derived from the word *interpres*, meaning "to spread".⁹ While both words share the same primary mission of making a discourse, whether written or spoken, intelligible, "tafsir" in English covers a broader semantic field; it can denote the act of producing meaning, the process of interpretation from one language to another, or the practice of explanation that clarifies obscurity, organizes chaos into coherence, and moves from the general to the particular. Conversely, Arabic may definitively provide *tafsīr* for interpretive exposition, while interpretation is expressed by *tarjamah*.¹⁰ These various notions of interpretation converge in a single hermeneutic activity insofar as they all involve the text or object under study, additional interpreter's comments that enrich understanding of it, and the interpreter who synthesizes these elements into a proper interpretive product. Together, the aim is to transform the raw text into complex elements with meaning and relevance.

In *A Theory of Textuality*, Jorge J. E. Gracia introduces what he calls the function of interpretation, a *tripartite* framework for gaining a thorough understanding of the text under study. Previously, Gracia defined interpretation by asserting that a "text" is never a timeless or context-free object; rather, it is a historical entity produced at a particular time and place, bearing traces of its author's choices. Interpretation, then, is an attempt to reconnect the text with its sources and its readers. He calls the historical text an *interpretandum*, a raw material that demands understanding. Since we cannot directly revive the author's original horizon, the hermeneutical task raises a fundamental problem: how will interpreters bridge the temporal and situational gap between authorial intent and contemporary reception? For Gracia, this gap is not a minor difficulty, but the crux of hermeneutics.

To address this, Gracia argues that interpreters should engage in what he calls textual interpretive development. This "interpretation" consists of a multi-part process in which interpreters reconstruct the signs embedded in the text, tracing their evolution from authorial conception to historical use,

⁸Muhammad Husain Al-Dzahabi, *Al-Tafsir wa Al-Mufasssirun* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), 17.

⁹Jorge J.E Gracia, *A Theory of Textuality: The Logic and Epistemology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 147.

¹⁰Manna Khalil Al-Qattan, *Mabahits fi Ulum al-Qur'an al-Qahirah* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2007), 307.

then projecting their significance into the present context. The *Interpretandum* serves as the starting point. *The interpreter's* task is first to uncover the various functions performed by the text in its original setting, then to map out how those functions have shifted through subsequent readings, and finally their current resonance. In this way, interpretation becomes a dynamic dialog over time.

At the heart of Gracia's definition is the pairing of *interpretandum* and *interpretans*. The *interpretandum* is the text as it was originally written, while the *interpretans* consists of layers of commentary, explanation, and contextualization added by interpreters. These interpretations can be scholarly annotations, historical reconstructions, or theoretical reflections, each of which represents an attempt to make the interpretandum understandable to new readers. Most importantly, Gracia emphasizes that *interpretans* are not an uncontrolled free-for-all, but rather *an* integral part of the careful meaning-making process; they bring the text to life, filling in the gaps left by the original author and enriching the semantic field. As such, interpretation is never simply the extraction of pre-existing meaning, but rather the active production of meaning through the interaction between text and reader.

Finally, this model aligns with the three functions; *historical*, *meaning*, and *implicative* outlined in Gracia's functions of interpretation. *Historical function* is concerned with investigating the origin and initial use of the *interpretandum*. Then, the *meaning function* step is relevant when the interpreter constructs the interpretans, identifying its specific linguistic-semantic intent and textual markers and *the implicative function* projects the findings outwards, exploring the consequences of the reconstructed meaning for contemporary discourse. By positioning interpretation as a multi-stage integrative process, Gracia does not reduce texts to immobile artifacts or allow meaning to slip away from its historical moorings. Rather, his definition ensures that every act of interpretation remains grounded in the text's origins, sensitive to authorial intent, and responsive to evolving contexts so as to provide a comprehensive, non-normative, yet logical account of how texts speak relevantly across time.¹¹

2. Hoaxes and the Construction of Contemporary Interaction Dynamics

In Berger and Luckmann's social construction framework, the term construction from Latin *constructio* which means "the process of building"

¹¹ Gracia, *A Theory of Textuality: the Logic and Epistemology*, 157–79.

or "systematic arrangement" refers to the way of forming patterns of human relations through language, norms, and symbolic practices.¹² Meanwhile, Goffman asserts that the word interaction comes from *inter* and *actio* which signifies a dynamic exchange with reciprocal responses between actors.¹³ Thus, social interaction is not just sending and receiving messages, but a realistic, repetitive, and structured communication practice in accordance with the historical-cultural context.

In the normative realm, ethics from the Greek *ēthos* meaning habit, character, or custom is a branch of philosophy that studies human behavior, especially what is considered good and bad, right and wrong, and moral rights and obligations in social life.¹⁴ Aristotle's words in *Nicomachean Ethics* assert that ethics serves as a guideline for individuals and groups to judge actions, not only to comply with rules, but also to reflect moral responsibility in social interactions. The application of ethical principles helps individuals to act responsibly, maintain humanity, and improve behavior so as to create social harmony.

But with the transformation of social media, this constructive interaction has undergone a significant shift in influence by three main phenomena. *First*, the collapse of the social context, where the expansion of digitalization, for example the surge of social media users in Indonesia from 215 million in 2023 to 221 million in 2025, eliminates nonverbal cues (tone of voice and expression), thus increasing the potential for misinterpretation between content producers and audiences. According to Danah Boyd, online spaces dissolve private-public boundaries, blur norms of verification and empathy, and reduce information clarity.¹⁵

Second, anonymity and deconstruction of responsibility. It encourages a disinhibiting effect; individuals feel detached from their true identities, and launch hate speech, harassment, and hoaxes without any real moral sanction. The Voice of America report notes that more than half of Indonesian citizens have been either perpetrators or targets of hate speech or fake news, and the

¹²Peter Ludwig Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (England: Penguin Group, 1966), 55.

¹³Varqa Shamsi Bahar, "Self-Presentation Theory," Theory Hub, 2024, <https://open.ncl.ac.uk/theories/17/self-presentation-theory/>.

¹⁴Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/aristotle-ethics/>.

¹⁵Danah Boyd, *It's Complicated the Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven & London: Yale Univeristy Press, 2014), 31.

perpetrators often hide behind anonymous accounts, placing Indonesia 29th out of 32 countries in the Digital Civility Index.¹⁶ *Third*, the commodification of interaction; turning user attention into an economic product. The algorithms of platforms such as *X*, *Instagram* and *TikTok* prioritize content that triggers negative emotions, anger or fear, because as revealed in Kramer et al's study, emotional material generates higher engagement (likes, comments, shares) than positive or neutral content.¹⁷ As a result, the digital space has shifted from an exchange of ideas, information, and personal expression to a battleground, a psychological game of anger. Every click, view and reaction is measured as an economic unit that is traded to advertisers and third parties, as reflected in Terranova's concept of the *attention economy*.¹⁸

Therefore, without strict moderation mechanisms and digital ethics education, the degradation of moral responsibility in cyberspace will continue to fuel the escalation of hate and undermine users' sense of security. The author proposes a solution that is based on Qur'anic values, particularly lessons from the story of Aisyah Ummul Mu'minīn QS an-Nūr: 11, using Jorge J.E Gracia's hermeneutic method. This approach will actualize the Creator's main message in the sacred text as a basis for reflection and self-control, so that virtual interactions return to dignity, mutual respect, and ethics.

3. Application of Jorge J.E Gracia's Theory of Function Interpretation

Regarding fake news (hoaxes), Allah ta'ala says in Qs. an-Nur: 11, as follows;

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ لَا نَحْسِبُهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ بَلْ هُوَ خَبِيرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ أَمْرٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ
مِنَ الْإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِّنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝ ۱۱

¹⁶Eva Mazrieva, "Digital Civilization Index: Indonesia Worst in Southeast Asia," VOA Indonesia, February 26, 2021, <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/indeks-keberadaban-digital-indonesia-terburuk-se-asia-tenggara/5794123.html>.

¹⁷Adam D. I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, and Jeffrey T. Hancock, "Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion Through Social Networks," *National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111, no. 24 (2014): 8788–90, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320040111>.

¹⁸ Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Duke University Press* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33-58.

Verily, those who bring false news are from among yourselves. Do not think that the news is bad for you, rather it is good for you. Every one of them will be recompensed for the sin he has committed. And whoever among them takes the greatest share (of the sins he commits), then he will have a great punishment.

The author in this case does not systematically dissect the literal meaning of each letter or sentence that appears in Qs. an-Nur: 11, as explained above. However, the author takes the keywords of the verses that bring out the exact literal meaning, as a basis for finding the intended meaning with the reference basis made by the mufassirs in interpreting the study of the verse. Before the author moves on to the linguistic, inter-intratextual dissection and development of meaning, as a guideline in applying the theory, historical analysis needs to be explored first as a basis for historical data and reflection of the socio-political and psychological conditions of the first audience, namely the Prophet Saw and his sahabah.

4. Historical Function Analysis

Referring to the micro historical context, as-Suyuti revealed that the chronology of the revelation of Qs. an-Nur: 11 is a story that began when the Prophet was about to travel, then the Prophet drew lots on which of his wives would accompany him on his journey, and Aisyah's name came out as the winner of the lottery. This incident was narrated after the war with Bani Musthaliq, where the Prophet returned early to Medina, while Aisyah returned with the Muslim army. It is said that during the journey Aisyah asked for permission to relieve herself, but her escort did not realize that Aisyah was left behind, while the necklace she was wearing was left on her camel. To summarize, the last person in the group was Safwan bin Mu'athil al-Sullamy who saw that 'Aisyah was left behind and brought her to Madinah without a third person. When she arrived in Medina, the people of Medina were in an uproar and there continued to be unpleasant rumors about 'Aisyah and Safwan, while 'Aisyah was in a state of illness for one month so she was not privy to such false information. This caused Aisyah's position to suffer greatly and the Prophet's position as husband and leader of Madinah came under scrutiny, until the Prophet thought of divorcing Aisyah.¹⁹ The people who played a major role in spreading the rumors of false information were Abdullah bin Ubay Salul as the mastermind, Hassan bin Tsabit, Mistah bin

¹⁹ Jalaluddin As-Suyuti, *Lubab An-Nuqul fi Asbab An-Nuzul* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Kitab at-Tsaqafiyah, 2002), 183-84.

Atsahah, Hammah bint Jahsy, and Abdullah Ahmad.²⁰ The people who instigated and spread the false news according to Ibn Hisham would be punished by stoning, after the revelation that erased the accusations against Aisyah.

The narratives that appear in the rumors of false information addressed to Aisyah are referred to in the Qur'an as *al-Ifk* (false news). At a macro level, if examined chronologically, according to Theodore Nöldeke, Surah an-Nur is the 24th Surah that was revealed in Medina, its content discusses issues of prostitution, marriage with prostitutes, adultery, punishment for those who spread false accusations and the psychological condition of the Prophet facing the socio-political situation in Medina.²¹ It is also in connection with the story of the near outbreak of another war with Banu Musthaliq due to the false report made by Walid bin Uqbah that Qs. al-Hujurat was revealed: 6, regarding the command to verify before acting. If read from the perspective of Sirah Nabawiyah, Ibn Hisham states that this event occurred around the year 5-6 Hijri, after the war with Banu Musthaliq. So that it still leaves socio-political tensions in Medina. Psychologically, the Prophet Muhammad was described as being very depressed over this unpleasant issue, and the Companions had diverse reactions such as Ali bin Abi Talib was described as strongly urging the Prophet to divorce Aisyah while Usamah bin Zaid restrained the Prophet from taking divorce action before there was concrete evidence, while Aisyah as a victim suffered greatly and would not repent because all the accusations were only presumptions and positioned herself patiently, that she was the party who did not benefit from the circumstances and people around her.²²

Izzat Darwazah, in his interpretation of QS. An-Nur: 11, responds that there is wisdom behind the chronology of the revelation of the verses related to the al-Ifk incident. He emphasizes that the time gap between the emergence of the fitnah and the revelation of the verses is not an oversight, but rather a form of divine wisdom that takes into account psychological and sociological aspects. This time was used as a cooling-off period to calm the heated emotions of the people of Medina, as well as to prepare them mentally

²⁰ Badr ad-Din bin Ahmad Al-'Aini, *Umdat Al-Qari' Syarah Shahih Al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Daar Ihya At-Turats Al-Araby, 2003), 227.

²¹ Theodor Nöldeke et al., "Geschichte des Qorans," in *The History of the Qur'an*, ed. by Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 170-72.

²² Muhammad Izzah Darwazah, *at-Tafsir al-Hadis Tartib as-Suwar Hasba an-Nuzuli*, 6 (Beirut: Dar al-Gharib al-Islamiy, 2000), 380-87.

before accepting the *sharia* solution. Darwazah sees that this gradual approach reflects the principle of *at-Tadarruj* (graduality) in resolving social issues, where the gradual revelation of the verses serves as a social therapy that heals collective wounds while upholding justice. More than just defending Aisyah's honor, these verses, according to him, lay the timeless foundations of social ethics regarding the obligation of *tabayyun* (clarification) and the prohibition of spreading unverified information—a principled framework relevant in today's age of information overload.

5. Meaning Function Development

After unraveling the historical layer as the foundation of the first listener's sociopolitical and psychological data, the next step is to analyze the *meaning function*. Before that, it is important to understand that the term of hoax in Indonesian is adopted from English *hoax* which means *hoax* or fake news. Etymologically, it is based on the Latin *hocus pocus*, which is a spell used by *magicians* to deceive the audience, and has a slight shift in meaning to mislead or deliberate deceit.²³ Then referring to the terminology of hoaxes, this term refers to the opinion of Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker, namely information that is deliberately created or spread with the aim of deceiving, causing social damage, its forms vary, from fake news to social media manipulation, but always contain elements of deception and wide distribution. The form can be in the form of images, videos or narratives that have been engineered.²⁴

Derakhshan and Wardle differentiate hoaxes into several spectrums, depending on their purpose, the reason being, to distinguish and investigate the hidden intentions of the messages created, produced, or spread by 'agents'. *The first* is disinformation, meaning false information that is deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization, or country. *Second*, misinformation, meaning false information, but not created with the intention to harm. Third, malinformation or propaganda, is information that is based on reality, but used to harm a person, organization, or country.²⁵

²³ "Hoax - Etymology, Origin & Meaning," etymonline, accessed May 30, 2025, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/hoax>.

²⁴ Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker, eds., *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 10-15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108890960>.

²⁵ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017), 21-24.

Whereas in the Qur'an hoax is represented by al-Ifk. Ibn Faris said the root of ifk is one root of *hamzah*, *fa'*, and *kaf*, which shows the meaning of turning something and turning it away from its proper direction.²⁶ The word ifk is mentioned in the Qur'an 30 times with four different derivative phrases (in the form of a noun, subject, passive verb, and majaz hyperbole).²⁷ However, there are nine verses that mention the relation of ifk as twisting or turning the truth, including Makki and Madani, although they have different discourses in their content. One of them is Qs. as-Saffat: 86, as follows;

أَبْغَا إِلَهًا دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ ۗ ٨٦

"Do you wish to lie with a deity other than Allah?"

Referring to the opinion of Ibn Faris above, ifk has the root sentence of the fiil form; *afaka*, *ya'fiku*, *'afkan*. Ibn Mandzur has previously affirmed with a poem from one of the arabic poet;

" تَأْخُذَنَّ التَّأْفِيكَ وَالتَّخْرُصَ فِينَا، وَلَا تَقُلْ الْهُدَى ذُو الْأَزْرَلَا "

"Do not take lies (التأفيك) and false predictions (التخرص) about us, and do not believe the words of an enemy with a grudge"

As the definitive explanation of hoax in general and al-Ifk in the view of linguists, Ibn Ashur in the explanation of al-Ifk asserts that ifk appears on the noun that indicates a lie that does not contain the slightest doubt, in the form of a surprise that can silence others. On the social aspect, Ibn Ashur is well aware that this verse was revealed to have a hierarchy over the distribution of information; meaning that there is malicious intent from the agent disseminating information, and there is a mass of uncritical recipients (*sadzaj*).²⁸ So it can be understood that this verse does not speak clearly of ordinary lies, but vicious lies, deliberate and has a socially destructive shock

²⁶ Abil Husain Ahmad Ibn Faris ibn Zakariya, *Mu'jam Maqayis fi al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dar al Fikr, 1994), 118.

²⁷ Muhammad Fuad Al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahraz li Alfadz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Egypt: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Misriyah, 1364), 34.

²⁸ Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Juz 18, (Tunisia: Dar al-Tunisiyya, 1984), 169-71.

effect, even this epistemic manipulation resonates strongly with modern disinformation communication models such as; producers, *spreaders* and passive recipients (*believers*).

Furthermore, the Qur'an explains that the process of spreading hoaxes is defined in the word 'Usbah, which has the root words '*ain, shad* and *ba*', derivatively derived from '*asaba, ya'sibu 'usban*, meaning something that is connected to many other things because of the connection.²⁹ In another sense, Al-Ashfahani defines it as a joint or nerve.³⁰ So it can be understood that the word 'usbah means a group of something can be human, who have a common vision in doing something. Like nerves that are interconnected and have a unified vision in their function.

Finally, there is an interesting phrase in verse 11 of Surah an-Nur, in the fragment "*la tahsabuhu syarran lakum, bal huwa khairun lakum*" meaning, do not think it is bad for you. In this fragmentation, it sounds paradoxical in the midst of Aisyah's pain as a victim, as Ibn Ashur understands it with this ethical parenting paradigm not only a form of historical tragedy crisis at that time, but there is a *maqashid* about the process of collective moral education for the basis of interaction and education in ethics-based social interaction,³¹ also rhetorically the structure of the Qur'anic language reveals an understanding of the importance of shaping people's way of thinking about processing information and public ethics.

6. Implications of Interpretation on Public Relations in Fighting Hoaxes

In the framework of *implicative function*, as Gracia interprets the text that is not only finished as a historical or linguistic level, but must be actively projected for broader and useful interests in the present era.³² Qs. an-Nur: 11 as the al-Ifk event, becomes a reference that uncovering hoaxes is not just a matter of misinformation, but there is a systematic operation of power. This structured lie is deliberate to denigrate and bring down a person's reputation and damage collective stability. If we look at Ibn Ashur's view, it is clear the pattern of how the Prophet's time and contemporary hoaxes are running; namely the existence of the main actor (Abdullah bin Salul, historical actors) by creating a surprising narrative of lies (*buhtan*), then understanding and

²⁹ Ibn Faris ibn Zakariya, *Mu'jam Maqayis fi al-Lughah*, 339.

³⁰ Raghīb Al- Ashfahani, *al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'refah, 1324), 336.

³¹ Ibn Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, 72–73.

³² Gracia, *A Theory of Textuality: the Logic and Epistemology*, 161–65.

utilizing the naivety of the community (*sadzaj al-muslimin*) in information literacy.³³

In the current context, there may be phenomena such as disinformation as well as propaganda spreading hoaxes about unsafe COVID-19 news, so that people become skeptical and the government program in spreading the covid vaccine becomes steep. Then the latest hoax about the accusation of Indonesian netizens that Saudi Arabia made a policy on the permissibility of alcohol consumption, which was denied by leading international media *Reuters* and *Arab News*.³⁴ Such hoaxes are not only misleading, but also display power relations that are utilized by certain actors to create fear and expose the throats of individuals and communities.

Not without intention Qs. an-Nur: 11 in both text and context speaks to the current reality. That the procession of false accusations against Aisha must be clarified by the Qur'an despite the repetition within a month. Given the saying of Joseph Goebbels, a ruthless Nazi that "*a lie repeated over and over again becomes the truth, if common sense does not work*".³⁵ So among psychologists, something like this is an irony that they call the *illusion of truth*, this truth effect according to Lynn Hasher occurs when repeating a true statement even though the actual facts are wrong.³⁶ This statement shows that hoaxes do not work because of technological sophistication, but because of the weak ethical ecosystem in society. So, implicatively, the Qur'an as a revelation has an interventionist attitude towards deviant public opinion and positions *tabayyun* not just a personal *adab*, but a collective obligation, so that harmony and honor of individuals and collectives are maintained.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that Qs. an-Nur: 11 does not merely record the al-ifk incident as a tragic event of the past without meaning, but provides a relevant and transformative ethical paradigm for addressing contemporary disinformation.

³³ Ibn Ashur, Tafsir at-Tahrir wa at-Tanwir, 169-71.

³⁴ Kompas Cyber Media, "[CLARIFICATION] Saudi Arabia Denies Alcohol to be Sold Freely Starting 2026," KOMPAS.com, May 28, 2025, <https://www.kompas.com/cekfakta/read/2025/05/28/100100482/-klarifikasi-arab-saudi-bantah-alkohol-dijual-bebas-mulai-2026>.

³⁵ Tom Stafford, "How Liars Create the 'Illusion of Truth,'" 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20161026-how-liars-create-the-illusion-of-truth>.

³⁶ Lynn Hasher, David Goldstein, and Thomas Toppino, "Frequency and the conference of referential validity," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* Vol. 16, no. 1 (1977): 107-12.

Through Gracia's hermeneutical approach, this verse is read as a text that is not confined to its historical dimension or literal understanding alone, but contains implicit meanings that must be actualized in today's digital social context. The concepts of interpretandum and the flexibility of interpretans open up an understanding that hoaxes are not merely informational errors, as the hypocrites once did in manipulating public opinion to tarnish the honor of Aisha and the Prophet (peace be upon him). The situation is the same today, where political interests and digital algorithms take precedence over factual truth in manipulating public emotions. Therefore, using Qs. an-Nur: 11 as the primary ethical foundation, rules emerge for building and maintaining public harmony based on the principle of *tabayyun*, *hifdz al-Irdh*, and the awareness of information literacy as a shared responsibility in the distribution of information today.

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