



Interpretation of Qur'anic verses on hoax news: A comparison of the opinions of Ibn Katsir and Wahbah al-Zuhaili

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Abstract

Errors in response to news are still common in society. Some people easily spread information without verification, even though often the news is a lie or hoax. The impact is negative for society because it can trigger division and conflict due to lack of caution in responding to information. This action is contrary to the teachings of the Quran, as mentioned in Sura An-Nisa verse 83 and Sura Al-Hujurat verses 11-19. In the context of the interpretation of the verses on fake news, Ibn Kathir and Wahbah Az-Zuhaili are two scholars who pay attention to it in their respective tafsirs. This study aims to reveal the understanding of Ibn Kathir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, on the phenomenon of fake news in the context of the Qur'an. First of all, the study will explore how both interpret verses related to the spread of fake news. Then, research will highlight similarities and differences in their views on this phenomenon. Next, the focus will be on how the two interpreters describe the dangers of spreading fake news. Finally, the research will discuss how attitudes should be taken in dealing with fake news in this era. The results of this study indicate that accepting and spreading false news without checking its truth is a prohibited act and is considered a grave sin. The dangers of spreading hoaxes include the potential for disaster for a community, regret for the perpetrators, and the threat of adzab. Hoax spreaders can also be called liars and caught in satanic traps. The necessary attitude in dealing with fake news is to conduct research (tabayyun), get reliable witnesses, hold the principle of good assumptions towards others, speak based on correct knowledge, do not underestimate the seriousness of the situation, and return the case to the competent authority.

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Introduction

Islam is a religion that is *rahmatan lilalamin* that Allah sent to him the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) as a role model and a presenter of his treatises. Allah sent down a revelation in the form of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) as a guide for human life that guides people so that they do not get lost in living their lives in this world and in the hereafter. And as a form of realization and reflection of the Qur'an is the morality of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) because the purpose of his sending is none other than as a moral perfecter.

Islam has regulated all lines of human life in the Qur'an, especially a Muslim in carrying out his daily life. Among those regulated by Islam is the matter of muamalah to others, namely in terms of news, a Muslim has ethics in terms of spreading or receiving a news, not just anyone can be trusted and justified in this matter, even the scholars of *ahlu hadith* are very careful in accepting and narrating *hadith* and do not accept *hadiths* who comes from an untrustworthy person, who has the character of a liar. If in the past a news was spread through word of mouth to word of mouth, it is different from today, where the news is spread in just a matter of seconds, news from various parts of the world.

The story of *the hadith al-ifki*, for example, which happened to Ummul Mu'minin Aisyah *radiyallahu'anha*. The news spread so quickly from word of mouth that Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul accused that Aisha had committed adultery with Shafwan bin Muathol. The incident occurred when the Prophet returned from the battle of al-Muraisi' or the battle of the bani al-Mushtaliq ^[1]. Aisha was left behind from the army and was found by Shafwan bin Muathal and Aisha was lifted on her mount and Shafwan walked and led her mount until it reached the gate of Medina during the day. From here began to spread false news alleging that Aisha had committed adultery with Shafwan from the mouth of Abdullah ibn ubai bin Salul.

As technology develops in today's era that is all sophisticated, almost everything that humans need can be accessed with just the touch of a finger without requiring a large effort to achieve it. Which will accelerate the spread of a news beyond what happened in the time of the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allaah* be upon him), of course one can access information quickly that is happening in various parts of the world very easily. On the other hand, although there are many benefits obtained from technological developments that make it easier for humans to exchange information, on the other hand, a person must also be able to choose the source of information, news or news from electronic media, print, or from oral to oral must be reliable. Because there are many fake news that is not in accordance with reality which is spread through electronic, print and oral media. This can cause a slander, accusations, provocations, and hostility caused by the news which will certainly trigger and arise conflicts that are detrimental to various parties involved.

What often happens in Indonesia itself is broadcast, which is a message or news that is spread without checking the truth that it carries which is widely scattered on social media, be it in the form of SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media. The content of the news is mostly scams such as prize draws, news of someone's accident, asking for donations and others which sometimes can cause conflict, chaos and make losses to the public.

The Government of Indonesia itself provides sanctions for perpetrators who spread fake news or hoaxes and includes very serious criminal cases, because spreading hoax news is not only spreading fake news that misleads its readers and defames the defamation and honor of the person concerned, and harms the community. For the spreader of hoaxes, they can be threatened with Article 28 paragraph 1 of the Electronic Information and Transaction Law or the ITE Law (ITE Law) which states "Every person intentionally, and without the right to spread false and misleading news that results in consumer losses in Electronic Transactions that can be criminally threatened based on Article 45A paragraph (1) of Law 19/2016, which is punishable by imprisonment for a maximum of 6 (six) years and/or a maximum fine of Rp 1 billion ^[2]. This is even though the government implements laws and provides sanctions for the perpetrators, but there are still many people who are trapped in fake news cases, either believing it or spreading the news.

The acceleration of the spread of fake news itself is due to

the fact that the public does not know the truth of the news when it reaches him and re-conveys the news to others without checking the source of the news. Even though a Muslim is required to be careful in this matter and pay attention to the news that reaches him, it is not easy to accept news that comes from untrustworthy people and sources so as not to fall into cases that can lead to conflicts and slander that harm him and others. As stated by Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 6 which reads:

"O you who believe, if an wicked man comes to you with important news, then study the truth so that you do not harm a people because of your ignorance which causes you to regret your deeds" ^[3].

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* himself has given a warning to his believing servants to be careful in this matter, Allah tells the believer that when someone comes to bring a news or listen to a news that comes to him, it is obligatory for him to *pray*, especially the person who brings the news is wicked, so that we do not easily justify the news, let alone spread it to others. Because it can inflict harm on himself and others for the deeds he does. Not only in the Qur'an, but also in the *hadith* the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allaah* be upon him) has warned about this problem:

"Narrated from Abu Hurairah radiyallahu anhu, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: Stay away from you suspects, because prejudice is the most deceitful word. And do not listen to the conversation of others, and do not seek fault with others, and do not commit najasy (cheating), and do not envy one another, and do not hate one another, and do not enmity with one another. Be you brotherly servants of Allah" ^[4]

Looking at the verses and *hadiths* above, it is clear that Allah and his Messenger forbid the act of spreading false news, because this act is a despicable act that can damage the honor of others and can also add *ghibah* (talking about the ugliness of others) and hostility. Therefore, before knowing for sure the truth of a news or news, do not accept it, swallow the news raw and do not spread it before *verifying* the news, check the truth of the source of the news so that it is not easily provoked and cause harm to others.

Seeing the condition of the general public and the academic environment who still do not understand this problem that often occurs in their environment, they underestimate and take the act for granted even though the act of spreading false news is a sin that they are not aware of, and most of them spread a news without seeing and paying attention to the negative effects that will arise from what they do to themselves and others. Therefore, researchers are interested in researching fake news (*hoaxes*) in the Qur'an.

Researchers are not the first to research this problem, of course, there have been many previous studies that talk about fake news. Therefore, researchers choose to research fake news according to Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili to be

¹ Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, trans. by Abdul Hayyie Al-Kattaani, vol. 9, 15 vol. (Bandung: Gema Insani, 2001). Pages: 457-461.

² "Full Review: Articles to Ensnare Hoax Spreaders," accessed March 28, 2021,

<https://www.hukumonline.com/klinik/detail/ulasan/lt5b6bc8f2d737f/pasal-untuk-menjerat-penyebarnya-ihoaks-i/>.

³ Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat verse 6

⁴ Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Shahi Bukhari* (beirut: darr Ibnu katsir, 1987), 1976. No. 4849.

different from previous research and to strengthen previous research.

Research Methodology

The method that will be used in this study is *the analytical-comparative method*. That is to try to describe the interpretation of the fake news verses of the two tafsir figures, then critically analyze and look for similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages of the thinking of the two figures ^[5].

Theoretical Review

Definition of Hoaxes

Hoaxes that come from the English language which means fraud, false stories, forgeries, mocking, false news, or tricks ^[6]. Meanwhile, in Arabic there are several words or meanings that are equivalent to lies (hoaxes), namely, *ifk* (lies; lies), ^[7] *al-buhtan* (lies), ^[8] *iftiraa* (things that make lies), 9 *kadzib* (lies/denials) ^[10].

A hoax is a lie or a fake news that is not in accordance with reality, so the meaning of a hoax here is a news story that cannot be accounted for because of its vainous sources that are spread in the community, electronic media and others.

Among the meanings of hoaxes in Arabic or those that are often mentioned in the Qur'an usually depend on the context of the verse, namely in terms of deeds or events. Like some verses in the Qur'an where not all verses use the same word, of course it also shows that there are different meanings. The giving of the words *ifki*, *buhtan*, *kadzib*, *iftara* to the perpetrators of these lies is not the same, for example, when a person who lies in the name of Allah as done by the scholars of the book uses the word *iftara*, while a person who accuses someone of adultery, or a person who comes with false news accuses those who maintain his honor as adulterers, as happened in the story of ummul mu'minin Aisyah radiyallahu anhu using the word *ifiki* means (reversal) which means to reverse a fact or a news from the actual event.

A hoax is originally a word or deed that is done to deceive people which is usually done by magicians, magicians and others by using tricks to deceive people so that they believe that what they do and convey seems to be true. This is as the witches in the time of the Prophet Moses in the Qur'an surah Ash-Shuara verse 45

Kemudian, Musa melemparkan tongkatnya, tiba-tiba ia (tongkatnya yang sudah menjadi ular) menelan segala yang mereka ada-adakan itu.

According to Zamakhsyari, the word *yafikun* in the verse has the same meaning as *yaqlibuna* which means to reverse the original form and essence with their magic and deception ^[11]. The Prophet Moses AS debunked the lie of what the witches did that they were lies, the snakes they threw were actually fake sticks and ropes. They use deceptive tricks by playing with people's eyes, so that what they see is like snakes

moving. This is based on the words of Allah Almighty in Surah Al-A'raf verse 116

He (Moses) replied, "Throw it (first)!" So, when they throw (rigging), they bewitch the eyes of the crowd and make them afraid. They show great (amazing) magic.

Hoaxes were first carried out by Satan when he lied to the Prophet Adam As. The devil said that Allah subhanahu wa ta'alaah forbade the Prophet Adam to eat the fruit because Allah did not want Adam (a.s.) and Eve to become Angels and be eternal in heaven. This is where the history of hoaxes began and continues to this day. Fake news usually happens as well as inherited by ancestors, among which we see a lot of news or fairy tales that are conveyed by most of the ancestors or previous parents who have been told the story to their children and grandchildren for generations and when researched and paid attention to the news or fairy tales that they convey are very far from the truth, facts, reality and most of them contain mere lies.

Results and Discussion

1. Comparison of the Two Mufasssirs

1.1 Similarities of the Two

News is important information for everyone, in order to know an event that occurs. As a knowledgeable person, he should be selective and critical in dealing with the news that reaches him, both in his daily life and news on social media.

The similarities presented by the two mufasssirs to the verses about fake news above between the tafsir of Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili have a similar interpretation in receiving a news. In general, the interpretation of Ibn Katsir and Wahbah al-zuhaili regarding fake news in surah Al-Hujurat and surah An-Nissa have the same view. That is, both mention the meaning contained in the surah that Allah has commanded to be really careful in responding to a news, not to act rashly and believe it first, but to check the clarity of a news received. It is forbidden to announce, or disseminate a news that is not sure of the truth and is still a conjecture. Then it is forbidden to spread and convey to many people everything that he hears, and it is also forbidden to say *qila wa qala* (this and that) and to rely on prejudices that will lead him to lie because it will bring disaster to a people who do not know it and will get remorse for his actions. Also, the two interpretations in this surah have the same common point in interpreting the verse, namely as signs and encouragements, so that it requires a person to receive a news so that they are always *in the habit of praying*. And always do not convey everything that is listened to because it can plunge him into lies.

Then the similarity found in surah An-Nuur is that according to both verses it is related to the deliverance of Allah against 'Aisha, the wife of the Prophet who was the victim of fake news. Both of them also mentioned that in the verse there are manners, upbringing and threats given by Allah to humans in

⁵ Abdul Mustaqim, *Research Methodology of the Qur'an and Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2014). Page 170

⁶ "Hoaxes in the Indonesia - United Kingdom-Indonesia Dictionary | Glosbe," accessed March 29, 2021, <https://id.glosbe.com/en/id/hoaks>.

⁷ Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab - Indonesia*, Cet. XI (Krapyak -Yogyakarta: Pengadaan Buku-buku Ilmiah Pon-Pes Al-Munawir, 1984).

⁸ Ibid. p. 112

⁹ Ibid. p. 112

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 112

¹¹ Abu Qoshim Mahmoud ibnu Umar ibnu Ahmad Az-Zamaksyari, *Al-Kasyaf 'an Haqiqi ghawamid At-tanjil*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (beirut: darr ibnu Al-'Arabi, 1986).

the problem of facing a news that often occurs in their environment. Moreover, a hoax news spreads quickly from word of mouth where the news can harm many people, scatter complaints, accuse people with heinous accusations, cause hostility, and raise hatred. And without realizing it, the act that is considered ordinary can invite wrath from God.

On the other hand, Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili have similarities in their methods of interpretation, both of which use the *tahlili* (analysis) method. The *tahlili* method is a method that tries to explain the content of Qur'an verses from various aspects, in accordance with the views, tendencies and desires of mufassir and its systematization according to the verses contained in the mushaf. Both are also a type of *tafsir bil ma'tsur ghairi mujarad birayi'*, namely both use *rayi'*, namely their own intellect or opinion without going out of the corridor of the Qur'an and As-Sunnah and the companionship. Although the method used by the two figures is the same, there is a slight difference in the interpretation steps according to the conditions of the life environment of the two mufassir.

1.2 The Difference between the two Mufassirs

After getting to know the similarities of Ibn Katsir's interpretation of Wahbah al-zuhaili about the verses of fake news, of course there is a difference in the interpretation of the methods used by the two. Although actually the difference in interpretation is not so significant.

According to the researcher, after seeing the interpretation of the two figures, there is a difference in interpreting the word in surah Al-Hujurat. In verse the two interpret it differently, Ibn Kathir interprets it with great sins, namely those who commit great sins, while Wahbah interprets it as coming out and peeling off from something, namely a person who goes out of the boundaries of religion or shari'a like a date fruit comes out of its skin.

Then the next difference is in the interpretation of Surah Al-Hujurat. Ibn Kathir interpreted it as being wary of a news that comes from the wicked, which is more of an attitude of being wary of all news that comes from the wicked. Meanwhile, Wahbah interprets it by seeking clarity, namely examining a news carried by the wicked carefully and clearly to find the truth of the news it brings. The difference is seen in terms of the expressions of the two mufassir which in essence both have the same purpose in interpreting the meaning of the verse.

Then in surah An-Nissa verse 83, the sanya of the verse according to Ibn Kathir is about a news spread among the Muslims about the talk that the Prophet divorced his wives, so that it reached Umar bin Khatab and then he spread the truth of the news to the Messenger of Allah and the Messenger of Allah did not justify what the people were talking about, then Umar shouted at the door of the mosque and said that the Messenger of Allah did not insult his wives so that people know that these issues are not true. Meanwhile, according to Wahbah himself, the meaning of the verse is that it is related to the news of security and emergency situations that come from unclear sources to the eyes of hypocrites and believers who are weak in their faith, so they immediately spread it quickly, which can cause danger to the public good. And Wahbah mentioned that news that is not clear about the truth that covers the public interest, especially the issue of war that will endanger the country, the news should be returned to Ulil Amri or the government so that they supervise and verify the truth of the news.

The next difference is that Wahbah Al-Zuhaili mentioned in his interpretation that in surah An-Nurr verse 15 he mentioned that there are 3 types of deeds that make the perpetrators of spreading false news get great adzab from Allah, namely *first* they receive and spread the news, the *second* Then talking about something that has no basis in knowledge or does not have strong evidence and evidence about a matter they are talking about, *third*, considering the deeds they do as ordinary things and underestimating them.

There is also a difference in the interpretation of the word (verse 14 in surah An-Nurr, Ibn Kathir interprets (*if there is no grace of Allah and His mercy*), that is, it means that O dissolved people accuse 'Aisha, Allah has accepted your repentance and *ibnabah* and forgiven you because of your faith in the Hereafter. As for Wahbah, it is interpreted with the meaning (*something does not happen because of something else*), that is, if it were not for the grace of Allah to you in the world with various blessings which include giving time of remembrance and the opportunity to repent and His mercy in the hereafter by giving forgiveness that is set for you.

According to the author, the difference between the two interpretations is also in the pattern of interpretation, namely Ibn Katsir he uses *the pattern of bil ma'tsur or riwayat*. That is, the interpretation prefers the method of interpretation of the salaf scholars, namely by interpreting the relevant verses of the Qur'an, then interpreting the verses with *the hadith* of the Prophet, the words of the companions, tabi'in and the previous scholars. While Wahbah, he has more of an *al-ijma'i* adab pattern. (social), where this style of interpretation better explains the instructions of the Qur'anic verses related to people's lives and seeks to overcome problems in society. also has more nuances to the fiqh.

Ibn Kathir in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an is not systematic, then his interpretation still contains a lot of *israiliyat* and adheres to the Narration with a long isnad. Meanwhile, Wahbah al-zuhaili has a systematic interpretation that is quite neat. Grouping verses according to the theme, starting the interpretation in terms of *qiraat*, *'irab*, *balaghah*, *mufradaat lughawi*, *asbab nujul*, the relationship of the verse interpreted with the previous verse, the interpretation of the verse and fiqh muamalat or ahkam (the lessons contained in the interpreted verse and its laziness) so that this is more structured which makes it easier for the reader to read it.

The difference in interpretation and method used is the *ijtihad* of the mufassir in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, they have tried to interpret the Qur'an so that the results of their interpretation can be understood and accepted by the general public. Both use common sesthesia and language in their interpretations so that they are understood and adjusted to the conditions in the lives of the mufassir. Ibn Katsi as a mufasir figure in the classical era always used a common language and a simple method, rather than Wahbah al-zuhaili who used an easy-to-digest language, which was difficult in connecting his interpretation with the society of his time, namely the contemporary era.

1.3 The danger of fake news according to Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili

News is information that is widely spread in the surrounding environment, both in virtual media and in the real world. However, not a few of these news are classified as fake news (hoaxes), many people are not aware of the danger of a fake

news that they receive or spread. The following are the dangers posed by fake news in the Qur'an according to mufassir Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili.

1. Causing remorse for the perpetrator

In addition to the disaster and losses that will be inflicted on the accused victim, on the other hand, the perpetrator who spreads a false news will cause him to regret after he commits the act. For example, when a person accuses a holy woman of maintaining her honor with the accusation of adultery, and she is unable to bring in witnesses, then she will receive the punishment of having had (whipping), and then after the sentence is handed down to her, she regrets and wishes if she did not do so.

2. Falling into sin and getting adzab

The danger posed by a fake news is also to get sin and punishment. Sometimes without realizing it, the act of spreading false news that he considers trivial and underestimates it leads to sin and wrath from Allah which then he will get adzab for what he does. This is what happened in the story of the hadith al-Ifki, that the person who participates in the spread in the conversation and the spread of false news that is thrown at 'Aisha is a sin, and all of them will get retribution for the sins they commit.

3. Holding the title of liar

People who often spread fake news, do not follow the truth and cannot bring witnesses for what they bring, will fall into the nature of liars. This is based on the word of Allah against the people who accuse 'Aisha of heinous accusations, so Allah commands them to bring witnesses, if they do not bring witnesses for what they accuse them of, then they are before Allah and are liars. A person who often says something with such and such assumptions that are based on prejudices, says everything he hears, then it can be included in the deeds and nature of lies. As narrated in the hadith which reads, "It is enough for a person to be said to be a liar, if he says everything he hears."

1. Responding to Fake News

If you look at the interpretation of the two figures above, then what a person must do in responding to a news that reaches him in his daily life, especially a news in today's era is very much and very easy to access. Both in the form of writing, audio, video and others. Because in responding to the news are as follows:

1. Be vigilant and verify.

When a person receives a news from wherever it comes from, then it is appropriate for him to be aware and verify a news that comes to him. Bertabayun (verifying) by checking the truth of the news where it came from and who delivered it. It is not easy to hear and believe the news, and do not spread it carelessly that will cause harm to a people and regret what it has done. Because it could be that the news is just a trap to divide the people, provoke and enmity.

2. Bring in witnesses

If there is a news that comes to him, then the person who brings the news must bring witnesses to the news he brings, in order to be accountable and to ensure the truth of the news. Moreover, the news is related to the accusation of adultery, so four witnesses must be brought in, because the accusation is very serious and causes disaster to the victim who is accused.

3. Speaking based on science.

In order to face a news, knowledge is needed, not just

receiving news and spreading it without being based on knowledge. Without paying attention to the causes and consequences that will occur to the actions that are done. Do not speak arbitrarily because all words and deeds will be held accountable in the hereafter. Therefore, it is not appropriate to be in a hurry in spreading and receiving news or doing something without knowing the knowledge.

This is based on the words of Allah Ta'ala which reads:

Do not follow something you do not know. Indeed, hearing, sight, and heart. All of them will be held accountable.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the research results conducted by the author on the interpretation of fake news or hoax verses in surah An-Nissa, An-Nurr, and Al-Hujurat according to the mufasir of Ibn Katsir and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili is: that spreading fake news without paying attention to the truth is a forbidden act and a great sin. Therefore, it is appropriate for a Muslim to be vigilant, verify and examine the truth of the source of the news again a news that comes to him before he spreads it and make a decision on the news so as not to bring disaster to a people, and make him sad about what he has done. The act of spreading false news can cause danger, including being able to inflict disaster on a people, bring great regret, get sins and adzab, bear the title of pentusta, and enter the trap of shaythan.

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