Jurnal El-umdah
Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir

From Tabayyun To Digital Justice: Reading Q. 49:6 In The Age Of Virality

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Received: Filled Out by the Editor	**Accepted:** Filled Out by the Editor	**Published:** Filled Out by the Editor

Abstract

This article re-examines tabayyun in Q. 49:6 in relation to digital public judgment, where fragmented videos, screenshots, anonymous allegations, and decontextualized posts may develop into collective condemnation and reputational harm. Previous studies commonly frame tabayyun as a principle of fact-checking and protection against hoaxes. This study argues that such an approach is incomplete because the verse links verification not only to informational truth but also to the prevention of harmful action based on insufficient knowledge. Using qualitative library research, the study comparatively analyzes eight classical, modern Arab, and Indonesian Qur'anic commentaries. The analysis combines lexical-semantic examination, structural reading, intertextual engagement with Q. 17:36, Q. 4:83, Q. 24:15–16, Q. 49:12, and Q. 33:58, and maqāṣidī normative reconstruction. The findings show that Q. 49:6 regulates the transition from receiving information to acting upon it. Tabayyun therefore includes source scrutiny, assessment of contextual and evidentiary sufficiency, and restraint from judgment when knowledge remains inadequate. This framework contributes to Qur'anic media ethics by extending verification toward the procedural requirements of fair digital judgment.

Keywords: *tabayyun, Q. 49:6, digital public judgment, virality, Qur'anic ethics, online shaming, maqāṣidī interpretation*

A. Introduction

Digital media have altered not only the speed at which information travels but also the social position of those who receive it. In earlier mass-communication structures, the production, verification, publication, and evaluation of news were institutionally differentiated. Social media compress these functions into the activities of ordinary users. A person may receive an allegation, add an interpretation, redistribute it to a wider audience, and demand sanctions against the reported party within the same communicative sequence. The recipient is therefore no longer merely a consumer of information; he or she may simultaneously become its editor, distributor, commentator, and informal adjudicator. This transformation complicates the ethics of digital communication because the social consequences of a report are no longer controlled exclusively by professional media institutions.

The velocity of digital circulation further intensifies this problem. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral's large-scale analysis of approximately 126,000 rumor cascades on Twitter found that false news travelled farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than truthful information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Their study also indicated that human sharing behaviour, rather than automated accounts alone, played a substantial role in this asymmetry. Subsequent research has shown that the social-media environment can interfere with users' capacity to distinguish truth from falsity and that repeated exposure may increase the perceived credibility of misleading information (Ecker et al., 2022). The difficulty, therefore, is not simply the existence of inaccurate content but the communicative architecture in which immediacy, repetition, and social response can precede careful evaluation (Pennycook et al., 2018).

The digital circulation of information also involves what Davis and Jurgenson conceptualize as context collapse: the convergence of audiences, norms, and social settings that were previously separated. A statement originally produced within a specific conversation, professional environment, cultural setting, or temporal sequence may be presented to an

audience that lacks access to those contextual conditions. Loh and Walsh's empirical examination of context collapse found that such collisions significantly affect perceptions of lost face and emotional responses. In practical terms, a short video may be authentic while still being evidentially misleading because its preceding and subsequent events are absent. A screenshot may reproduce words accurately while concealing irony, interpersonal history, or the larger conversation in which those words appeared. The central epistemological problem is thus not always fabrication; it may also be the conversion of a partial truth into a totalizing account of another person.

These conditions make social media an important arena of moral evaluation. Users frequently encounter posts that identify an alleged violation and invite immediate emotional and punitive responses. Brady and colleagues found that observers systematically overestimated the moral outrage expressed by other social-media users, and that such overperception inflated beliefs about collective hostility, polarization, and ideological extremity (Brady et al., 2023). Research also indicates that social feedback can amplify the use of emotional language, while online exposure to moral content may increase public shaming and distort the social functions of compassion and punishment (Crockett, 2017). Digital audiences may consequently interpret the intensity of visible comments as evidence of moral consensus, even when the apparent consensus is partly produced by platform dynamics, selective visibility, and the repetition of highly emotional reactions.

This article describes the resulting process as digital public judgment. The term refers to the collective construction of a judgment concerning a person's guilt, character, or social worth through digitally circulated information before the evidence, context, and explanations of relevant parties have been adequately examined. Digital public judgment is broader than believing or sharing misinformation. It includes the movement from information to accusation, from accusation to collective interpretation, and from collective interpretation to informal punishment. Such punishment may take the form of humiliation, stigmatization, coordinated denunciation,

demands for dismissal, exposure of private information, or the permanent association of an individual's identity with a disputed allegation.

The concept overlaps with online public shaming, but the two should not be treated as completely identical. Public shaming may sometimes be defended as a means of enforcing shared norms or calling powerful actors to account. Forestal demonstrates that the effects of online public shaming depend not merely on its scale but also on the structure of the social network within which it occurs (Forestal, 2024). Productive forms of shaming require, among other conditions, recognizable authority to sanction, shared norms, and the possibility that the offender can be reintegrated into the community. Open social networks, however, may turn shaming into pathological "piling on," in which dispersed participants impose reputational penalties without a shared procedure, proportionality, or avenue for restoration. Frye similarly argues that social media tend toward disintegrative forms of shame that corrode rather than restore cooperation (Frye, 2021).

Digital public judgment is especially problematic when it separates the power to punish from the burden of establishing knowledge. Participants in a viral condemnation may have no relationship with the accused, no access to primary evidence, no recognized authority to adjudicate the case, and no responsibility for repairing the damage if the allegation is later corrected. Yet each individual contribution—a repost, insult, reaction video, or disclosure of identity—adds to a cumulative reputational sanction. The judgment is decentralized, but its injury may be concentrated upon a single person. Moreover, digital records are persistent and reproducible: an initial accusation may remain searchable and socially consequential even after clarification. The ethical issue is therefore not exhausted by asking whether criticism is permitted. It also requires examining the evidentiary and procedural conditions under which public condemnation becomes legitimate.

The problem has particular relevance in Indonesia, where the expansion of digital participation has been accompanied by persistent misinformation and contentious online discourse. The Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs identified 1,923 items of hoax content during 2024 and

reported 1,674 hoax issues between October 2024 and October 2025 (Indonesia, 2025a, 2025b). These figures do not encompass every form of incomplete, decontextualized, or accusatory content, but they indicate the continuing significance of information disorder in the Indonesian digital public sphere. More importantly, misinformation is not socially harmful merely because it produces false beliefs. It can also provoke stigmatization, hostility, institutional pressure, and collective action against persons or groups presented as morally blameworthy.

Within Qur'anic discourse, Q. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:6 provides a significant normative structure for examining the relationship between information and harmful action:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

The verse is commonly invoked as the Qur'anic foundation of *tabayyun*, usually translated as verification, clarification, or careful investigation. Its ethical architecture, however, is more extensive than a general instruction to distinguish true reports from false ones. The verse links five elements: the credibility of the bearer, the significance of the report, the command to investigate, the danger of harming others through inadequate knowledge, and the regret that follows consequential action. The object of prevention is not merely an incorrect belief. It is *iṣābat qawm bi-jahālah*: the infliction of harm upon a people under conditions of epistemic insufficiency (al-Qurtubi, 1964; al-Razi, 1999; al-Tabari, 2000; Shihab, 2002).

The placement of the consequence clause—*an tuṣībū qawman bi-jahālah*—is crucial to the present study. It indicates that verification possesses a preventive moral function. Information is examined because it can generate action, and action taken without adequate knowledge may injure others. Accordingly, the verse may be read as regulating the transition from receiving a report to acting upon its implications. The recipient is required to create an epistemic interval between information and judgment. This interval is not an expression of moral indifference toward wrongdoing; it is a condition for ensuring that the response to an alleged wrong does not produce another injustice.

Several terms in the verse invite closer exegetical analysis. The term *naba'* is commonly distinguished from ordinary information because it conveys a report of significance or consequence. This distinction suggests that the degree of verification required may correspond to the potential impact of the report. The term *fāsiq* directs attention to the trustworthiness of the bearer, but in digital contexts the bearer is often structurally difficult to identify: information may come through anonymous accounts, copied captions, edited recordings, or screenshots detached from their original source. Meanwhile, *jahālah* should not automatically be equated with a complete absence of information. A person may possess a real fragment of evidence and nevertheless remain in a condition of epistemic inadequacy because the fragment does not justify the conclusion or punishment imposed upon another person.

A growing body of Qur'anic scholarship has already applied *tabayyun* to contemporary communication. Nur and colleagues examined Q. 49:6 through *Tafsir al-Mishbah* and related it to the careful management of information on YouTube (Nur et al., 2022). Their study emphasizes the need to investigate information before accepting or redistributing it. Asfar, Prayoga, and Hidayatullah subsequently developed the concept of digital *tabayyun* as a moral pause before speaking, uploading, forwarding, or framing religious messages (Asfar et al., 2024). They proposed verification, message formulation, and dissemination as three stages of Qur'anic communication ethics. These studies have helped move the interpretation of *tabayyun* from its original communicative setting into contemporary digital practices.

Other scholarship has expanded the concept into more specialized fields. Yanuar and Karim employ Q. 49:6 to criticize exaggerated claims in digital skincare marketing and present *tabayyun* as a foundation for ethical consumerism and digital literacy (Yanuar & Karim, 2025). Ummah and Badruzaman combine Q. 49:6 with Q. 24:15 through a *maqāṣidī* approach, emphasizing verification, honesty, and social responsibility in response to hoaxes and post-truth communication (Ummah & Badruzaman, 2026). The existing literature therefore offers several significant developments: *tabayyun*

has been interpreted as careful information management, a digital-literacy principle, an ethical restraint in message production, and a response to disinformation and manipulative commercial claims.

Nevertheless, the dominant analytical orientation remains centred on the validity and circulation of information. Most studies ask whether a report is reliable, how users should verify it, and whether it may ethically be forwarded. Even studies that recognize social consequences generally position those consequences as reasons for more responsible communication. Less attention has been given to the distinct normative question of what judgments and punitive actions may legitimately follow once a report has entered the public sphere. This distinction matters because factual accuracy alone does not automatically justify every form of social response. A video may be genuine but incomplete; a private statement may be accurately quoted but disclosed without legitimate public interest; an allegation may warrant investigation without warranting humiliation; and an actual violation may deserve criticism without justifying unlimited reputational destruction.

The research gap is therefore not the absence of studies connecting *tabayyun* with digital media. Such studies clearly exist and are increasing (Asfar et al., 2024). The unresolved issue lies in the movement from verification to adjudication. Existing Qur'anic digital-ethics literature has not sufficiently conceptualized *tabayyun* as a restraint upon premature public judgment, nor has it systematically examined the procedural conditions required before information may be converted into condemnation and punishment (Yanuar & Karim, 2025). Conversely, philosophical and political studies of online public shaming carefully address authority, proportionality, reputation, reintegration, and network structure, but rarely place these issues in dialogue with Qur'anic exegesis. The present article brings these two scholarly conversations together.

This study accordingly argues that Q. 49:6 constructs *tabayyun* not merely as a procedure for verifying propositional truth, but as a preventive ethic governing the transition from information to consequential action. The relationship between *fa-tabayyanū* and *an tuṣībū qawman bi-jahālah* establishes

an epistemic threshold: before acting against another person or community, the recipient must possess knowledge adequate to the seriousness of the contemplated response. The verse also implies a procedural restraint because the prohibition concerns not only believing incorrectly but causing harm under conditions of insufficient knowledge. In the digital context, this restraint may require source scrutiny, contextual reconstruction, an opportunity for clarification, proportionality between evidence and judgment, and suspension of condemnation when the evidentiary basis remains incomplete.

The term digital justice is employed in this article as a normative analytical category rather than as a direct lexical equivalent of *tabayyun*. It refers to fairness in the production, circulation, interpretation, and consequential use of digital information. Digital justice requires that individuals not be reduced to decontextualized fragments, that allegations be distinguished from established findings, that affected parties be given a meaningful opportunity to respond, and that social sanctions remain proportionate to both the evidence and the violation. It does not eliminate public accountability or protect genuine misconduct from criticism. Rather, it seeks to prevent accountability from degenerating into punishment without adequate knowledge, recognizable authority, or limits.

Three questions guide the study. First, how do selected classical, modern Arab, and Indonesian exegetes explain the semantic and ethical relationships among *nabaʾ*, *fāsiq*, *tabayyun*, *jahālah*, *iṣābah*, and *nadam* in Q. 49:6? Second, how can the internal structure of the verse illuminate the phenomenon of digital public judgment, particularly when fragmentary information develops into collective reputational punishment? Third, what epistemic and procedural principles of digital justice can be normatively reconstructed from a comparative and *maqāṣidī* reading of the verse?

To answer these questions, the article conducts a comparative analysis of eight exegetical works representing classical transmitted, linguistic, rational, legal, modern social, and Indonesian contextual traditions. Q. 49:6 is treated as the principal textual unit, while Q. 17:36, Q. 24:15–16, Q. 4:83, Q. 49:12, and Q. 33:58 provide an intertextual field concerning unsupported claims,

irresponsible circulation, suspicion, exposure of faults, and unjustified harm. The exegetical findings are then placed in critical dialogue with studies of context collapse, misinformation, moral outrage, and online public shaming.

The article makes three contributions. First, it distinguishes the epistemology of information from the ethics of judgment: verifying that a fragment is authentic does not necessarily establish that it is sufficient for condemnation. Second, it reconstructs *tabayyun* as a preventive ethics encompassing source credibility, evidentiary sufficiency, context, consequence, and restraint. Third, it introduces digital public judgment as a specific problem for contemporary Qur'anic ethics, thereby moving beyond the more familiar framework of hoax prevention. The article proceeds with an explanation of its philosophical orientation and textual method, followed by the theoretical framework, comparative exegetical findings, discussion of their implications, and conclusion.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative interpretive design based on document analysis. The design was selected because the research sought to examine the semantic structure of Q. 49:6, compare its interpretation across different exegetical traditions, and reconstruct its contemporary relevance to digital public judgment. Rather than treating the verse as a direct regulation of modern communication platforms, the study examined how its normative logic concerning source credibility, verification, inadequate knowledge, harmful action, and regret may be applied to current problems of online information circulation. This interdisciplinary design combines Qur'anic studies, communication studies, and digital ethics, thereby aligning with the multidisciplinary orientation of *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*.

The object of the study was Q. 49:6 and its interpretation in eight Qur'anic commentaries selected purposively. The selection was based on four considerations: each commentary provides a substantive interpretation of the verse, the corpus represents different exegetical orientations, the works span classical, modern Arab, and Indonesian traditions, and each commentary has sufficient scholarly influence to support comparative

analysis. The classical corpus consisted of al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, and al-Qurṭubī's *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*. The modern Arab corpus included Ibn ʿĀshūr's *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* and Sayyid Quṭb's *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*, while the Indonesian corpus comprised Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* and M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. These works were chosen to represent transmitted, linguistic, rational-theological, legal, social, purposive, and contextual approaches to Qur'anic interpretation.

Q. 49:6 served as the principal textual unit, while Q. 17:36, Q. 4:83, Q. 24:15–16, Q. 49:12, and Q. 33:58 formed the supporting thematic corpus. These passages were included because they address related issues of unsupported claims, uncontrolled information circulation, suspicion, exposure of faults, and unjustified harm. Data collection was conducted through systematic textual extraction. The analysis focused on exegetical discussions of *nabaʾ*, *fāsiq*, *tabayyun*, *tathabbut*, *jahālah*, the phrase *an tuṣībū qawman*, subsequent regret, and the legal, moral, or social implications derived from these expressions. The extracted passages were organized in a comparative matrix containing the commentator, historical period, exegetical orientation, relevant Arabic expression, interpretive proposition, evidentiary basis, anticipated harm, and normative implication. Peer-reviewed studies on Qur'anic communication ethics, misinformation, source credibility, context collapse, online public shaming, reputational harm, and procedural justice were used as secondary sources. Popular websites, anonymous religious materials, derivative tafsir summaries, and individual viral controversies were excluded to preserve the academic reliability of the corpus.

The data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each commentary was examined intra-textually to identify lexical explanations, grammatical relations, transmitted reports, legal deductions, and statements concerning the consequences of unreliable information. Second, the extracted material was compared across the corpus through deductive and inductive coding. Deductive categories were derived from the structure of Q. 49:6, namely source, report, verification, epistemic insufficiency, harmful action, and

regret. Inductive categories were added when recurrent themes emerged, including credibility, restraint, evidentiary proportionality, communal protection, and responsibility for consequences. Third, the findings were examined intertextually through comparison with the five supporting Qur'anic passages to determine whether the identified themes formed part of a broader Qur'anic ethic of knowledge, communication, judgment, and protection from harm. Fourth, a controlled normative reconstruction placed the exegetical findings in dialogue with contemporary digital public judgment. This stage identified the moral problem addressed by the verse, the harm it seeks to prevent, and the structural similarities and differences between the original communicative context and present digital environments. Meanings directly stated by the exegetes were consistently distinguished from contemporary interpretations developed by the researcher.

Analytical rigor was maintained through transparent corpus-selection criteria, preservation of the original Arabic passages, a documented coding matrix, comparison across different exegetical orientations, and attention to interpretations that did not fully support the proposed argument. This study did not involve human or animal participants and therefore did not require ethical approval or informed consent. Nevertheless, all data were collected and analyzed in accordance with scholarly ethical standards through accurate attribution, contextual quotation, acknowledgment of interpretive limitations, and avoidance of adjudicating identifiable digital controversies.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

Source Credibility and the Epistemic Status of Naba'

The first comparative finding concerns the relationship between the credibility of the information bearer and the consequential character of the report. Q. 49:6 does not formulate an unrestricted command to distrust every item of information. Instead, it constructs a specific epistemic situation through the conditional expression in jā'akum fāsiqun bi-naba'in (al-Razi,

1999; al-Tabari, 2000; Ibn Ashur, 1984). Two elements are placed under scrutiny: the moral-epistemic reliability of the bearer, expressed by fāsiq, and the significance of the information, expressed by nabaʾ. The verse therefore concerns information whose acceptance may generate consequential judgment or action, rather than ordinary speech without substantial social effects (Kim et al., 2023);(Prike et al., 2024; Traberg et al., 2024).

Al-Ṭabarī interprets the two transmitted readings, fa-tabayyanū and fa-tathabbatū, as closely related instructions. He explains them as delaying acceptance until the accuracy of the report becomes known and explicitly warns against hastily accepting it. His account of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq incident reinforces this reading: an adverse report concerning the community's alleged refusal of alms could have led to military action, although the reported conduct had not occurred. The report was thus epistemically defective not because it was trivial, but because its unexamined acceptance threatened innocent people with concrete injury (al-Tabari, 2000).

Al-Rāzī expands the verse beyond its reported occasion of revelation. He treats its wording as general guidance requiring caution against dependence on the report of an unreliable person. Significantly, he also questions the uncritical identification of al-Walīd as a fāsiq, reasoning that a person who mistakenly forms an inaccurate assumption is not necessarily morally equivalent to a deliberate liar. This distinction demonstrates that the verse's epistemic concern cannot be reduced to labelling a source as personally wicked. It also concerns the insufficiency of a report that originates in fear, assumption, or erroneous interpretation (Asfar et al., 2024; Traberg et al., 2024). Al-Rāzī further connects reliance on such information with the possibility of conflict between Muslim groups, placing the verse within a broader sequence concerned with social injury and communal disorder (al-Razi, 1999).

Ibn ʿĀshūr develops the juridical implications more explicitly. He argues that the report of a fāsiq may initiate investigation, but cannot by itself serve as a valid basis for judgment. The truth must be established through evidence independent of the unreliable source. The report therefore has an alerting

function rather than an adjudicative one: it may justify inquiry, but it does not authorize condemnation (Ibn Ashur, 1984).

These interpretations establish an important distinction for digital communication. Anonymous allegations, screenshots, or short recordings may contain information worthy of investigation, but their circulation does not automatically confer evidentiary sufficiency (Kim et al., 2023; Prike et al., 2024). The more serious their potential effects on reputation, employment, safety, or communal relations, the stronger the obligation to separate the initial report from the judgment eventually formed upon it. In this sense, nabaʾ is not defined merely by its ability to attract attention, but by the consequences that may follow from its acceptance.

Tabayyun, Tathabbut, and Evidentiary Sufficiency

The second comparative finding concerns the procedural meaning of tabayyun. The exegetical tradition preserves two canonical readings of the command: fa-tabayyanū and fa-tathabbatū. Al-Qurṭubī records that Ḥamzah and al-Kisāʾī read fa-tathabbatū, whereas the other readers transmit fa-tabayyanū (al-Qurtubi, 1964). The former emphasizes deliberation and the avoidance of haste, while the latter emphasizes clarifying what remains obscure. These readings are complementary rather than contradictory: one suspends immediate acceptance, while the other requires an active process through which the truth of the report becomes sufficiently clear. Al-Qurṭubī consequently relates regret in the verse to haste and the abandonment of careful deliberation.

The two readings indicate that tabayyun cannot be reduced to passive doubt. It requires both temporal restraint and evidentiary inquiry (Rachmawati et al., 2024). Restraint prevents information from being converted prematurely into judgment, while inquiry seeks grounds independent of the disputed report. Ibn ʿĀshūr formulates this distinction precisely when he explains fa-tabayyanū as discovering the truth through a source other than the fāsiq. In his analysis, the unreliable report may prompt investigation, but it cannot itself constitute a valid basis for judgment. He further describes the command as a foundational principle in adjudication,

prohibiting decision-makers from following rumours, suppositions, and unexamined impressions.

Al-Qurṭubī similarly distinguishes between receiving information and implementing a judgment. He argues that verification must occur before a decision is enforced because investigation performed only after judgment cannot prevent injury to the person judged. At the same time, he does not equate jahālah with the impossibility of absolute certainty. A decision grounded in legally recognized evidence and a justified preponderance of probability is not classified as action through ignorance. What the verse prohibits is reliance on information that does not produce a warranted basis for judgment. Evidentiary sufficiency is therefore proportionate to the seriousness of the action contemplated rather than dependent upon unattainable certainty in every circumstance.

This distinction is particularly important for digital communication. Verifying that a screenshot is authentic or that a video has not been fabricated does not necessarily establish that it provides sufficient evidence for a comprehensive moral judgment (Martel & Rand, 2024). The material may remain temporally incomplete, selectively edited, or detached from the intentions and circumstances required to interpret it fairly. The exegetical relationship between tabayyun and tathabbut therefore supports a twofold obligation: to establish the reliability of the information and to determine whether its evidentiary scope is adequate for the conclusion being drawn. Where the evidence establishes only that an incident requires further investigation, it cannot legitimately sustain definitive condemnation (Santoso et al., 2025). In such circumstances, suspension of judgment is not negligence but the procedural outcome demanded by insufficient knowledge.

From Jahālah to Harm: Restraining Premature Public Judgment

The third finding concerns the consequence clause, an tuṣībū qawman bi-jahālah fa-tuṣbiḥū ʿalā mā faʿaltum nādimīn. The exegetical evidence indicates that the principal danger addressed by Q. 49:6 is not simply the formation of an inaccurate belief, but the conversion of epistemically inadequate information into action that injures others. Al-Ṭabarī explains the

clause as a warning against inflicting an offence upon people who are innocent of what has been attributed to them, followed by regret over the injury committed. His interpretation places the innocence and vulnerability of the reported community at the centre of the verse's moral concern. Error becomes ethically serious when it passes from private belief into consequential treatment of another person or group (Arisanty & Wiradharma, 2022; Forestal, 2024).

Ibn ʿĀshūr's grammatical analysis reinforces this preventive structure. He reads the clause as expressing the reason or purpose behind the command to investigate: verification is required in order to prevent harm caused by inadequate knowledge. The relationship between fa-tabayyanū and an tuṣībū therefore establishes a temporal and moral sequence. Investigation must precede action because regret after injury cannot substitute for the restraint that should have prevented the injury. Within this structure, nadam is not merely an emotional response to discovering that a report was false; it marks the ethical failure of having acted before the evidence justified action.

Al-Rāzī situates this danger within the wider organization of Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt. He connects reliance upon the report of a fāsiq with the possibility of conflict between groups of believers, noting that the instruction concerning unreliable information is followed by the command to reconcile fighting communities. He then relates this social danger to the subsequent prohibitions against ridicule, offensive labelling, suspicion, spying, and backbiting. His reading suggests a graded pattern of interpersonal harm: an unexamined report can lead not only to mistaken judgment but also to conflict, humiliation, and violation of another person's honour, whether the person is present or absent.

The intertextual reading of Q. 24:15–16 clarifies how such injury may become collective. The passage criticizes the transmission of an allegation "from tongue to tongue" and the utterance of something unsupported by knowledge, even when participants regard their contribution as insignificant. It thereby distributes responsibility beyond the original producer of the allegation to those who reproduce and normalize it.

Applied to digital public judgment, these findings support a distinction between **investigative attention** and **punitive judgment**. A report may legitimately prompt inquiry, but it does not authorize humiliation, reputational punishment, or definitive attribution of guilt before evidentiary and contextual sufficiency have been established (Arisanty & Wiradharma, 2022). This is a contemporary normative inference from the exegetical pattern: when knowledge remains partial, restraint is not neutrality toward wrongdoing but protection against producing a second injustice through premature condemnation.

2. Discussion

The findings extend the interpretation of tabayyun beyond the dominant framework of misinformation control. Existing Qur'anic studies commonly present Q. 49:6 as an injunction to verify reports, resist hoaxes, and cultivate responsible digital literacy (Rachmawati et al., 2024; Yanuar & Karim, 2024; Zulyadi et al., 2024). These contributions are important, but they generally focus on the validity of information and the ethics of forwarding it. The comparative analysis developed here adds a further question: when does information become sufficiently established to justify action against another person? The relationship between fa-tabayyanū and an tuṣībū qawman bi-jahālah indicates that verification is directed toward preventing consequential injury. Tabayyun therefore regulates not only belief and transmission, but also the transition from allegation to judgment. This reading complements recent maqāṣidī and digital-literacy studies while shifting the analytical centre from informational accuracy to the legitimacy of the response produced by information.

The first theoretical implication is the distinction between factual authenticity and evidentiary sufficiency. A video may be authentic without providing the temporal, interpersonal, or institutional context required to determine responsibility. A screenshot may reproduce actual words while concealing the preceding exchange or the audience for whom they were intended. The theory of context collapse explains how social media merge audiences and settings that were previously separated, allowing a fragment

intelligible in one context to acquire a different and more damaging meaning in another. Digital tabayyun must therefore ask not only whether content is fabricated, but whether it is sufficiently complete and contextually intelligible to support the conclusion drawn from it (Chen et al., 2023).

A second implication concerns the difference between investigative attention and punitive judgment. The exegetical findings permit a questionable report to initiate inquiry, but not to function as the final basis of condemnation. This distinction is crucial because platform interaction often compresses accusation, investigation, interpretation, and punishment into a single communicative event. False information has been shown to spread faster and more broadly than truthful information, while outrage increases the likelihood that misinformation will be shared (Budak et al., 2024). Users may also overestimate the moral outrage expressed by others, thereby mistaking visible intensity for genuine consensus (Traberg et al., 2024). The Qur'anic demand for restraint therefore intervenes precisely where platform dynamics reward immediacy, emotional reaction, and alignment with the crowd.

The findings also clarify the relationship between tabayyun and online public shaming. Forestal argues that productive public shaming requires recognizable authority, shared norms, and the possibility of reintegration; open networks frequently lack these conditions and may turn sanction into harassment or uncalibrated "piling on." Q. 49:6 adds an epistemic criterion to this debate: even where criticism serves a legitimate accountability function, condemnation remains unjust when the available knowledge is inadequate to the severity of the sanction (Forestal, 2024). "Digital justice" therefore does not prohibit public criticism. It requires that the quality of evidence, the opportunity to respond, and the proportionality of the reaction be examined before reputational punishment is imposed.

A procedural interpretation of Qur'anic communication ethics follows from this argument. Procedural-justice scholarship identifies voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthy decision-making as central elements of fair treatment. Applied cautiously to digital communication, these principles correspond to several implications of tabayyun: the reported party should

have a meaningful opportunity to clarify; evidence should be evaluated independently of popularity or partisan identity; criticism should preserve human dignity; and judgments should not be driven by undisclosed interests. This does not make Q. 49:6 identical to modern procedural-justice theory. Rather, the theory provides a contemporary vocabulary for explaining how the verse's prohibition of injury through jahālah may be operationalized in public communication.

Practically, individual users should adopt a graduated response to consequential information. The first response to an allegation should be source identification, examination of the complete material, and assessment of whether the available evidence justifies a public conclusion. Where evidence remains incomplete, users should distinguish between "this requires investigation" and "this person is guilty." They should also ask whether sharing serves a legitimate public interest or merely enlarges humiliation. Because copied and repeatedly circulated content may outlive the original publication, deleting an erroneous post does not necessarily repair reputational harm. The ethical duty therefore arises before amplification, not only after an error has been recognized.

For journalists, content creators, and religious communicators, the findings recommend an editorial protocol that separates allegation, verified fact, interpretation, and judgment. Excerpted videos should be identified as partial material, fuller records should be provided when available, and affected parties should be given an opportunity to respond. Religious educators should teach tabayyun not merely as anti-hoax literacy, but as a discipline of contextual reading, evidentiary proportionality, protection of honour, and suspension of judgment. Platform designers and regulators may also consider friction mechanisms for high-risk accusatory content, clearer provenance indicators, accessible correction procedures, and safeguards against coordinated disclosure of personal information.

The study nevertheless has several limitations. It is a normative textual inquiry based on eight commentaries and does not measure how users actually practise tabayyun or how platforms respond to disputed accusations. The category of digital public judgment therefore requires

empirical testing across platforms, languages, and political settings. The corpus also does not represent the full diversity of Shiʿi, Ibadi, Sufi, feminist, or other contemporary interpretive traditions. Moreover, the article does not resolve cases in which urgent warnings may be necessary before complete evidence is available, particularly threats to public safety. Future research should combine tafsir analysis with digital ethnography, content analysis, interviews with victims and producers, and comparative legal study to determine when suspension of judgment protects dignity and when delay may itself permit preventable harm.

In sum, the article reframes tabayyun as a preventive ethic of fair judgment. Factual verification remains necessary, but it is not sufficient. The deeper Qur'anic question is whether the available knowledge is adequate to the action contemplated. By requiring an interval between report and injury, Q. 49:6 provides a normative basis for resisting the conversion of fragmented information into disproportionate public punishment.

D. Conclusion

The This article has examined Q. 49:6 as a normative framework for addressing digital public judgment. Through a comparative reading of eight classical, modern Arab, and Indonesian commentaries, the study demonstrates that tabayyun cannot be reduced to a general instruction to identify false information. The structure of the verse connects the reception of a consequential report, the credibility of its bearer, the obligation of verification, the danger of acting under conditions of jahālah, and the regret that follows unjustified harm. Verification is therefore directed not only toward establishing the truth of a report but also toward determining whether the available evidence is sufficient to justify action against another person or community.

Three principal conclusions emerge from the analysis. First, a report transmitted by an unreliable or unidentified source may warrant investigation, but it cannot independently serve as the basis of judgment. Second, the relationship between tabayyun and tathabbut combines active clarification with temporal restraint. The recipient must examine the

reliability, completeness, and context of the information while resisting premature conclusions. Third, the consequence clause, an tuṣībū qawman bi-jahālah, places the prevention of injury at the centre of the verse. The primary ethical failure is not merely believing inaccurate information, but converting epistemically inadequate material into accusation, humiliation, conflict, or reputational punishment.

The article contributes to Qur'anic communication ethics by distinguishing factual authenticity from evidentiary sufficiency. Digital content may be genuine yet remain insufficient for comprehensive moral or legal judgment because it is fragmented, selectively presented, or detached from its original context. On this basis, the study conceptualizes tabayyun as a preventive ethics governing the transition from information to consequential action. The notion of digital justice developed here emphasizes source scrutiny, contextual reconstruction, an opportunity for clarification, evidentiary proportionality, and suspension of judgment when knowledge remains inadequate.

The study is limited by its textual and normative design. It does not examine how social-media users understand or practise tabayyun, nor does it measure the effectiveness of specific platform interventions. Future research should therefore test this framework through digital ethnography, interviews, surveys, and comparative content analysis across platforms. Further studies may also examine urgent cases in which delayed communication could endanger public safety, the ethical responsibilities of algorithms and platform moderators, and the reception of Q. 49:6 in broader interpretive traditions. Such inquiry would clarify how the Qur'anic demand for verification can protect dignity without obstructing legitimate accountability and necessary public warning.

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