



Strengthening Adolescent Digital Literacy through the Principle of Tabayyun in Q.S. Al-Hujurat Verse 6 to Counter Hoaxes

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Abstract:

The rapid spread of hoaxes on social media highlights the importance of strengthening adolescents' digital literacy. This study examines the principle of *tabayyun* in Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6, its relevance to digital literacy, and its application in countering hoaxes based on Islamic values. Using a qualitative library research method and content analysis, data were collected from the Qur'an, selected Qur'anic exegesis, scholarly books, journal articles, and relevant literature on digital literacy and misinformation.

The findings show that *tabayyun* provides an ethical and theological foundation for verifying information before accepting or sharing it. This principle supports essential digital literacy competencies, including source verification, content evaluation, critical thinking, and responsible communication. Based on these findings, this study proposes a four-stage model: *talaqqī al-ma'lūmāt* (critically receiving information), *taḥqīq al-maṣḍar* (verifying sources), *taqyīm al-muḥtawā* (evaluating content), and *nashr al-ṣidq* (sharing verified information responsibly). The model can be implemented in schools, Islamic boarding schools, and youth communities through fact-checking exercises, hoax simulations, and digital ethics education. Integrating *tabayyun* into digital literacy education may help adolescents develop critical thinking skills, avoid misinformation, and promote responsible online behavior. Further empirical research is needed to evaluate the model's effectiveness among adolescents.



Introduction (مقدمة)

The exponential advancement of information and communication technology in the current era has brought significant changes to the structure of modern human life. The emergence of social media and the internet, including platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter), has transformed the way people access, consume, and disseminate information rapidly, regardless of spatial and temporal boundaries (Parhan, 2021)

Globally, the issue of hoaxes and misinformation has received widespread attention from academics, government institutions, and international organizations. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is not merely a marginal issue; it has developed into a real information crisis. The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo) has recorded thousands of hoax contents being blocked each year, covering a wide range of issues, from health and politics to religion. This condition is further exacerbated by the low level of digital literacy among the public and the lack of critical attitudes in receiving and evaluating information (Istianah, 2022).

According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo) in 2023, more than 3,500 hoax contents were recorded as being circulated on social media, while a survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) showed that 62% of Indonesians had encountered false information, with the most common topics relating to politics, health, and religion. This condition demonstrates the fragility of social resilience amid the rapid flow of digital information (Kominfo, 2024). This figure continues to increase, with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) identifying 1,923 pieces of false news content throughout 2024 (Komdigi, 2025).

This phenomenon indicates a low level of information verification culture within the digital society. Many social media users tend to immediately believe and share information without checking its source or verifying its accuracy. This situation has resulted in various social impacts, including conflict, defamation, social polarization, and even economic losses.. (Harahap, E, Nasution, D.M, Daulay, F., Wahdini, Rafiq, 2026).

Islam, as a comprehensive religion, provides clear guidance regarding the ethics of communication and the dissemination of information. The Qur'an and Hadith explicitly prohibit Muslims from telling lies, spreading slander, and believing information without first conducting *tabayyun* (verification) (Aisyah, 2024).

In the context of Indonesian society, where the majority of the population is Muslim, the question of how to instill Islamic ethical values in the use of social media has become increasingly important. Islam, as a comprehensive religion, has provided comprehensive guidelines for communication long before the emergence of the digital era. The principle of *tabayyun* (information verification) found in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, serves as a normative guideline that is highly applicable to addressing the problem of hoaxes (Jannah, 2024). The concept of *tabayyun* is an important principle in Islam to prevent people from easily falling into errors that may have serious consequences for themselves and others. Based on this background, this study aims to examine the phenomenon of hoaxes and misinformation from an Islamic perspective, particularly concerning the ruling on their dissemination, the textual evidence prohibiting such practices, their impacts, their relevance to *maqashid al-shariah*, and the solutions offered by Islam through the concept of *tabayyun* and the strengthening of digital communication ethics.

This article addresses three questions. First, what is the meaning of Q.S. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, and the concept of *tabayyun* in dealing with information? Second, how can the principle of *tabayyun* be connected to adolescents' digital literacy? Third, how can digital literacy strengthening based on Q.S. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, be implemented as an effort to counter hoax

news? The purpose of this article is to analyze the Islamic basis of *tabayyun*, relate it to digital literacy competencies, and formulate practical steps that adolescents can apply when receiving digital information.



Method (منهج)

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative library research and content analysis design (Krippendorff, 2018) to examine the integration of the *tabayyun* principle into digital literacy frameworks for adolescents. The procedures were structured to ensure clarity and reproducibility without reiterating standard qualitative analytical routines.

Data Sources

The research data are derived from primary and secondary sources consisting of reputable scientific literature, Primary Sources: The Holy Qur'an (specifically Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6), standard exegesis (*tafsir*) books (such as *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, and *Tafsir al-Misbah*), as well as regulations regarding digital information in Indonesia. Secondary Sources Scientific books and reputable international journals (such as *Journal of Media Ethics*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, as well as journals indexed in Scopus/SINTA) addressing the phenomenon of misinformation, adolescent digital literacy, and Islamic communication ethics published within the last 10 years.

Procedure & Analytical Steps

Following the established integrative review protocol data were processed through three sequential steps, (Torraco, 2016) Identification & Retrieval: Systematic search across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using targeted boolean terms ("*tabayyun*" OR "*information verification*") AND ("*digital literacy*" OR "*fake news*") AND "*adolescents*". Categorization & Coding: Textual units from *tafsir* literature were coded according to core Islamic communication tenets (*fatabayyanu*, source verification, harm mitigation (Krippendorff, 2018)). Concurrently, modern digital literacy metrics were categorized based on UNESCO/EU digital competency standards. Synthesis: Comparative synthesis mapping theological concepts onto operational digital behaviors for adolescents.



Result (نتائج)

This study produces three main findings that address the research questions: (1) the meaning of Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 and the concept of *tabayyun*; (2) the relationship between the principle of *tabayyun* and adolescents' digital literacy; and (3) a *tabayyun*-based digital literacy strengthening model to counter hoaxes.

Meaning of Q.S. Al-Hujurat Verse 6 and the Principle of Tabayyun

The development of social media has brought significant changes to the way people access and disseminate information. Through various digital platforms, information can spread widely in a short time without undergoing prior filtering. This situation makes it easier

for people to gain knowledge and communicate, but it also increases the risk of spreading fake news (hoaxes), unverified information, and digital manipulation. These issues demonstrate that social media literacy cannot be measured solely by the ability to access information, but also by users' ability to evaluate its accuracy and take responsibility for the information they share. (Harahap, E, Nasution, D.M, Daulay, F., Wahdini, Rafiq, 2026)

From an Islamic perspective, the issue of information verification had received attention long before the digital era emerged. The concept of tabayyun, which refers to being cautious, thorough, and selective in receiving and disseminating information, is one of the fundamental teachings outlined in the Qur'an. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, which means:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهْلَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

"“O you who believe, if a wicked person brings you news, verify it carefully, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and then become regretful for what you have done.”." (QS. AlHujurat: 6) (Pitasari, 2026).

This verse explicitly instructs believers to clarify and verify every piece of information they receive before acting upon it. The principle of tabayyun signifies not only caution but also encompasses a spiritual dimension of obedience to Allah, a social dimension that protects community cohesion from provocation and false news, and an intellectual dimension that aligns with critical thinking skills in digital literacy(Pitasari, 2026)

The analysis of Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 6 and classical-contemporary interpretations indicates that this verse commands believers to practice tabayyun (verification and clarification) before accepting and acting upon information, particularly when it comes from a wicked person or a source whose credibility is uncertain. The principle of tabayyun encompasses four main dimensions: (a) examining the credibility of the source (isnad), (b) clarifying the context and content of the information, (c) evaluating its substantive truthfulness, and (d) considering its social impact before disseminating it. From the perspective of Islamic communication, tabayyun is not merely a technical procedure but an ethical-theological obligation aimed at preventing errors, slander, and social harm resulting from unverified information. (Muhammad Iqbal Rahman, Iis Arifudin, 2026)

n addressing these issues, Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 can serve as a foundation for developing more prudent communication behavior. This verse emphasizes the importance of verifying received information, particularly when it originates from sources whose credibility is questionable. This teaching highlights that information should not be immediately trusted or used as a basis for action before its accuracy has been established. Thus, tabayyun is not merely a fact-checking process but also a form of prudence in decision-making to prevent harm to others.

When applied to digital life, tabayyun is relevant to digital literacy, particularly in evaluating information sources, comparing statements from different sources, and assessing whether information is appropriate for dissemination. Social media users need to develop the habit of looking beyond the appeal or popularity of a post by examining its content and the

credibility of its sources. Studies on Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 indicate that the principle of tabayyun can serve as a foundation for strengthening digital literacy by encouraging society to adopt a critical attitude toward information circulating in the public sphere. (Nasution, Wirahyuda, & Rubino, 2026).

Furthermore, the application of tabayyun is closely related to moral responsibility in communication. Incorrect information, when disseminated without verification, can influence public judgment, damage an individual's reputation, and even trigger conflicts between groups. Therefore, social media activity should not be viewed solely as a freedom to express opinions. Every user must also consider the consequences of the information they share, including the potential for misunderstandings and harm to others.

This view is consistent with the principles of Islamic communication, which emphasize honesty (shidq), caution (ihtiyath), and social responsibility. These three principles can serve as guidelines for developing communication habits that prioritize not only the speed of information dissemination but also its accuracy and potential impact on society. (Suliyanti, S., Tahir, & Fansuri, 2024) In this context, social media should be understood as a public space for interaction that requires every user to demonstrate ethical awareness.

Based on the discussion above, Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 demonstrates that the value of tabayyun can be contextualized as an ethical principle in social media use. Its application can be implemented through the habit of checking sources, verifying the accuracy of information, and considering its potential impact before sharing it with others. Thus, tabayyun is not only a religious concept but also a foundation for fostering a digital literacy culture that is critical, responsible, and oriented toward the common good.

The Relationship between Tabayyun and Adolescent Digital Literacy

The relationship between the principle of tabayyun in Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 and adolescent digital literacy lies in their shared goal of fostering critical, ethical, and responsible attitudes toward digital information. Information literacy emphasizes the ability to evaluate sources, understand context, and use information responsibly. (Frau-Meigs, D., Velez, I., & Michel, 2020)

The principle of tabayyun strengthens these abilities by incorporating an ethical and religious dimension, namely the obligation to verify information before accepting or disseminating it. Thus, tabayyun can serve as the foundation for deve. (Agosto, 2018)

In the context of social media literacy, adolescents need not only to be able to use digital platforms but also to evaluate source credibility, understand content, recognize bias, and take responsibility for the information they share. The principle of tabayyun serves as an ethical guide in this process by encouraging adolescents not to immediately believe or disseminate information without verification. Therefore, adolescent digital literacy should be assessed not only in terms of technical skills but also in terms of their ethical awareness and critical thinking when dealing with digital information (Purington Drake, 2023)

Verification strategies such as SIFT (Stop, Investigate the Source, Find Better Coverage, and Trace Claims) can be integrated with the principle of tabayyun as a practical approach to adolescent digital literacy. Adolescents are taught to pause before sharing information,

investigate its sources, seek information from other reliable sources for comparison, and trace the claims being circulated. This integration demonstrates that Islamic values and modern media literacy are not contradictory; rather, they can complement and reinforce each other in fostering critical and responsible adolescents..(McGowan-Kirsch, 2024)

News literacy is also an important aspect of the relationship between tabayyun and adolescent digital literacy. Adolescents need to be equipped with the ability to recognize provocative headlines, check URLs, evaluate publication dates, and compare news reports from credible sources (Ku et al., 2025). The principle of tabayyun strengthens these abilities by fostering an awareness that information must be verified before it is accepted or disseminated. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy based on tabayyun can serve as a preventive strategy to help reduce the spread of hoaxes among adolescents(Ku, K. Y. L., 2025)

A Tabayyun-Based Digital Literacy Strengthening Model

The findings indicate that the tabayyun-based digital literacy strengthening model is conceptually and practically relevant for countering hoaxes, as it combines digital verification skills with Islamic ethics before information is accepted or disseminated (Choiriyah, 2026)

Tabayyun serves as both an epistemological and an ethical principle, requiring information to be examined in terms of its accuracy, source credibility, and potential impact before it is accepted or shared (“The Relevance of the Prophet’s Hadith in Countering Hoaxes,” 2024). (Choiriyah, 2026).

This model enhances critical awareness, the ability to verify news, and responsible behavior on social media(Alya Nurpitria, 2026).

Model Stages

A digital literacy strengthening model can be developed in four stages based on the principle of tabayyun(Aminah, L., & Maulana, 2026).

Table 1. Stages of the Digital Literacy Strengthening Model and Its Application to Adolescents

Stages	Application for Adolescents
<i>Talaqqī al-ma'lūmāt</i>	Receiving information critically without immediately believing it.
<i>Tahqīq al-maṣḍar</i>	Checking the source, author, media outlet, and supporting evidence of a news report
<i>Taqyīm al-muḥtawā</i>	Evaluating information content based on facts and Islamic values.
<i>Nashr al-ṣidq</i>	Sharing only verified information responsibly.

Implications

This model can be implemented through training programs in schools, Islamic boarding schools, youth communities, and religious activities, such as hoax news analysis simulations, fact-checking exercises, and reflections on digital media ethics(Nurpitria, A., 2026)

Thus, strengthening digital literacy based on Surah Al-Hujurat verse 6 not only trains adolescents to verify news through technical procedures but also fosters the moral habit of

refraining from sharing information whose accuracy has not been established (Choiriyah, 2026)



Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings of this study indicate that tabayyun in Q.S. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, can serve as an ethical and practical foundation for strengthening adolescent digital literacy against hoax news. This interpretation shows that information verification is not only a technical skill, but also a moral and religious responsibility. In a digital environment where information spreads rapidly and is often consumed without adequate evaluation, adolescents need the ability to pause, assess credibility, and consider the consequences before sharing content (Aïmeur et al., 2023)

The emphasis on tabayyun responds to the limitation of conventional digital literacy approaches, which often focus mainly on technical skills such as operating applications, searching for information, or recognizing suspicious links. Although these skills are important, they do not automatically produce responsible sharing behavior. Adolescents may understand how to use social media but still forward unverified messages because of emotional reactions, peer influence, or the persuasive nature of viral content. Therefore, tabayyun adds an internal ethical control by encouraging adolescents to verify information before accepting or disseminating it.

This finding is consistent with research showing that media literacy interventions can improve young people's confidence and self-efficacy in identifying fake news, even when changes in knowledge or awareness are limited (Tamboer, S. L., Vlaanderen, A., Bevelander, K. E., & Kleemans, 2024). In this context, tabayyun can strengthen the affective and ethical dimension of digital literacy. Adolescents are not only trained to recognize false information, but also encouraged to develop a habit of caution, honesty, and accountability in digital communication.

The integration of tabayyun with modern verification strategies is also relevant to the SIFT approach: Stop, Investigate the source, Find better coverage, and Trace claims. When adolescents stop before sharing a message, investigate its source, compare it with credible coverage, and trace the original claim, they practice the operational meaning of tabayyun. This alignment demonstrates that Islamic communication ethics and contemporary media literacy education can complement each other rather than stand in opposition.

The four-stage model developed in this study—*talaqqī al-ma'lūmāt*, *taḥqīq al-maṣḍar*, *taqyīm al-muḥtawā*, and *nashr al-ṣidq*—offers a practical contribution for schools, Islamic education institutions, and youth communities. This model can be implemented through hoax simulations, fact-checking exercises, analysis of viral messages, and reflective discussions on the social impact of misinformation. Previous research found a significant relationship between media literacy skills and the prevention of hoax news among students, which supports the assumption that structured literacy education can reduce vulnerability to false information (Dianah & Tetep, 2024). The practical implication is that hoax prevention should begin before information is disseminated, not only after a hoax has spread widely. Schools and religious

educators can integrate tabayyun-based verification activities into daily learning, while families can reinforce similar values through everyday communication. This approach is particularly important because misinformation in digital media can weaken public trust, trigger social conflict, and amplify polarization (Aïmeur, E., Amri, S., & Brassard, 2023)

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a tabayyun-based digital literacy model depends on sustained practice and a supportive digital ecosystem. Adolescents may face challenges such as algorithmic amplification of sensational content, limited access to credible sources, and the speed of viral communication. Therefore, educational interventions should also include awareness of how social media platforms shape attention, emotion, and information exposure. Collaboration among schools, families, religious institutions, digital platforms, and government agencies is needed to create an environment that supports accurate and ethical communication.

Overall, this study confirms that strengthening digital literacy based on Q.S. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of Qur'anic digital literacy by connecting tabayyun with contemporary media literacy competencies. Practically, it provides adolescents with a simple ethical standard for digital behavior: verify before believing, evaluate before responding, and take responsibility before sharing.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that Q.S. Al-Hujurat, verse 6, provides an ethical and theological foundation for strengthening adolescent digital literacy to prevent hoax news. The principle of tabayyun teaches adolescents to verify the source, evaluate the content, and consider the social impact of information before accepting or sharing it.

Tabayyun is relevant to digital literacy because both emphasize critical and responsible attitudes toward digital information. Its integration with modern verification strategies, such as the SIFT method, shows that Islamic values and media literacy can reinforce each other in forming prudent digital behavior.

This study also proposes a practical model consisting of four stages: *talaqqī al-ma'lūmāt* (receiving information critically), *taḥqīq al-maṣḍar* (verifying the source), *taqyīm al-muḥtawā* (evaluating the content), and *nashr al-ṣidq* (sharing only verified information). This model can be applied in schools, pesantren, and youth communities through fact-checking exercises and hoax simulations. Overall, this research contributes to the development of Qur'anic digital literacy by connecting tabayyun with contemporary digital literacy competencies. Future research is recommended to test the effectiveness of this model empirically among adolescents.

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