

# **NARRATIVE HERMENEUTICS AS DIGITAL TAFSĪR: RECONSTRUCTING QUR'ANIC MEANING AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY ON INSTAGRAM @NADIRSYAHHOSEN\_OFFICIAL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines emerging trends in digital Qur'anic interpretation by analyzing how Nadirsyah Hosen employs narrative hermeneutics on his Instagram account @nadirsyahhosen\_official. Existing research on digital tafsir has largely focused on thematic content, presentation style, or audience interaction, yet little attention has been given to the use of storytelling as an interpretive method. This study fills that gap by investigating how narrative structures function as hermeneutic tools in interpreting Sūrah al-Falaq and al-Nās. The research employed a qualitative design that integrates two forms of data: Instagram posts containing Hosen's story-based interpretations and user comments responding to these posts. Narrative analysis based on Labov and Waletzky's framework is applied to identify the structural components of the stories, while netnographic analysis is used to examine audience reception patterns. The findings show that Hosen's interpretations consistently incorporate key narrative elements such as orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda, which enhance communicative clarity and contextual relevance. Audience responses cluster into four dimensions: emotional spiritual engagement, epistemic trust in religious authority, social communitarian bonding, and educational pragmatic learning. These results demonstrate that narrative hermeneutics strengthens interpretive authority and fosters participatory religious discourse in digital environments. The study concludes that storytelling functions not only as a rhetorical device but also as an epistemic strategy that reshapes Qur'anic interpretation in the digital age. It recommends further exploration of narrative based tafsir across diverse platforms and audiences.

**Keywords:** Digital Tafsīr, Nadirsyah Hosen, Narrative Hermeneutics, Religious Authority.

**Abstrak**

*Kajian ini mengkaji tren baru dalam tafsir Al-Qur'an digital dengan menganalisis bagaimana Nadirsyah Hosen menggunakan hermeneutika naratif pada akun Instagram-nya @nadirsyahhosen\_official. Penelitian yang ada tentang tafsir digital sebagian besar berfokus pada konten tematik, gaya penyajian, atau interaksi audiens, hanya sedikit perhatian diberikan pada penggunaan storytelling sebagai metode interpretasi. Studi ini mengisi celah tersebut dengan menyelidiki bagaimana struktur naratif berfungsi sebagai alat hermeneutik dalam menafsirkan Surah al-Falaq dan al-Nās. Kajian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif yang menggabungkan dua bentuk data: posting Instagram yang berisi interpretasi berbasis cerita Hosen dan komentar pengguna yang merespons posting tersebut. Analisis naratif berdasarkan kerangka kerja Labov dan Waletzky diterapkan untuk mengidentifikasi komponen struktural cerita, sementara analisis netnografi digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi pola penerimaan audiens. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa interpretasi Hosen secara konsisten memasukkan unsur-unsur naratif kunci seperti orientasi, komplikasi, evaluasi, resolusi, dan coda, yang meningkatkan kejelasan komunikatif dan relevansi kontekstual. Respons audiens terbagi ke dalam empat dimensi: keterlibatan emosional dan spiritual, kepercayaan epistemik terhadap otoritas agama, ikatan komunal sosial, dan pembelajaran pragmatis pendidikan. Tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa hermeneutika naratif memperkuat otoritas interpretatif dan memfasilitasi diskursus agama partisipatif dalam milieu digital. Studi ini juga menyimpulkan bahwa narasi tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat retorik semata, namun juga sebagai strategi epistemik yang merekonstruksi interpretasi Al-Qur'an di era digital. Kajian ini merekomendasikan untuk melakukan penelitian lebih lanjut tentang tafsir berbasis narasi di berbagai platform dan audiens.*

**Kata kunci:** Tafsir Digital, Nadirsyah Hosen, Hermeneutika Naratif, Otoritas Keagamaan

## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has had a significant impact on the contemporary social, political, and religious landscape.<sup>1</sup> In many

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<sup>1</sup> Ellya Rosana dkk., "Public Sympathy as Political Mobilization in the Digital Space Based on the Study of Religious Figures on Social Media,"

Muslim countries, digital media has not only become a space for information exchange but also a strategic means for articulating, negotiating, and expanding religious movements.<sup>2</sup> This development has also reconfigured religious authority, which was previously centered on traditional institutions, towards a new form of legitimacy mediated digitally.<sup>3</sup> Through the presentation of creative content and contextual narratives, da'wah actors can expand the reach of religious messages and increase audience acceptance.<sup>4</sup> Several recent studies have shown that social media-based da'wah plays a significant role in transmitting Islamic values, shaping public morality, and simultaneously fostering a more interactive and participatory ecosystem of religious discourse.<sup>5</sup>

The consequence of this shift is the strengthening of the role of digital platforms, particularly Instagram, as the primary locus for the production and circulation of religious discourse. With a large user base in Indonesia, this platform not only facilitates the dissemination of religious content but also shapes

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart M. Hoover, ed., *The Media and Religious Authority* (Penn State University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv14gp1zt>; Ahmad Muttaqin, “Women’s Identity in the Digital Islam Age: Social Media, New Religious Authority, and Gender Bias,” *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 2 (Desember 2020): 253, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v8i2.7095>; Muhamad Yoga Firdaus, Suryana Alfathah, dan Dadan Rusmana, “Komodifikasi Al-Qur’an dalam Media Digital,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 12, no. 2 (Desember 2022): 243–60, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2022.12.2.243-260>.

<sup>3</sup> Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Abingdon, Oxon New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Eva F. Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia,” *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1–2 (Februari 2018): 68–99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340085>.

<sup>5</sup> Eva F. Nisa, “Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (Januari 2018): 24–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1416758>.

the way verses from the Qur'an are represented, interpreted, and negotiated by religious actors in the digital public sphere.<sup>6</sup> Through aesthetic visualizations and inspirational narratives, digital interpretations on Instagram present new forms of religious expression, such as interpretive memes and reflective quotes, that bridge the Qur'an's text with the audience's daily experiences.<sup>7</sup> This pattern of interpretation aligns with Pink's conceptualization of popular interpretation,<sup>8</sup> a style that is communicative, concise, and oriented towards a wide audience, operating in harmony with the logic of digital communication that demands speed, readability, and connection to current issues.<sup>9</sup>

However, the dynamics of popular interpretation in digital spaces also raise several discursive issues. The same space is often used by conservative, even radical, religious actors to spread religious narratives based on literal and rigid interpretations of the Qur'an.<sup>10</sup> This pattern of interpretation tends to

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<sup>6</sup> Ani Nabila Farahdiba, "The New Trend in Digital School of Tafsīr: Qur'an Journaling and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority on @Aisharizqy's Instagram," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 2, no. 1 (June 2024): 119–47, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2024.2.1.119-147>; Izzuthoriquel Haq and Muhammad Labib Syauqi, "Digital Native Character In Social Media Interpretation: A Study On Instagram Accounts, @Quranreview," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 18, no. 1 (June 2021): 47–68, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v18i1.3491>.

<sup>7</sup> Feby Audina Fadia dan Nugraha Andri Afriza, "Tafsir and Gender Normativity in the Digital Age: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Career Women in Instagram Memes," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 1, no. 2 (Desember 2023): 164–96, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2023.1.2.164-196>.

<sup>8</sup> Fadhli Lukman, "Digital Hermeneutics and A New Face of The Qur'an Commentary: The Qur'an in Indonesian's Facebook," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 56, no. 1 (Juni 2018): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2018.56.1.95-120>.

<sup>9</sup> Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunnī Tafsīr: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12, no. 1–2 (Oktober 2010): 56–82, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2010.0105>.

<sup>10</sup> Mukhammad Zamzami dkk., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in the Digital Space: An Examination of Islami.co Web Portal in the Perspective of Jürgen Habermas' Communicative Rationality," *Jurnal*

simplify meaning and limit the ability of interpretation to respond to contemporary social dynamics. In this context, the need for a more contextual, humanistic, and communicative approach to interpretation becomes increasingly important as a counterbalance to the dominance of conservative discourse in the digital space.

In this landscape, the rise of Nadirsyah Hosen as a prominent figure in digital Qur'anic interpretation merits scholarly consideration. As a Muslim scholar, he consistently disseminates his Qur'anic interpretations across multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, and his personal website. From an authoritative perspective, Hosen has strong legitimacy, as his background is shaped by the intersection of Islamic boarding school tradition and global Islamic legal academic discourse, allowing him to occupy a credible position in both the academic realm and popular Islamic practice. This approach makes him a representative figure for understanding the dynamics of interpretive authority in the social media era, where religious legitimacy and intellectual credibility are negotiated simultaneously.

To date, studies of Qur'anic interpretation on Instagram, and in particular Nadirsyah Hosen's interpretation, have been conducted by several scholars, albeit with varying foci and scopes. Research on Qur'anic interpretation on Instagram shows several main trends. First, studies that highlight the characteristics of digital interpretation, which are audience-centric and interactive, with the audience playing an active role in responding to and distributing meaning.<sup>11</sup> Second, studies emphasize that interpretations on Instagram are generally

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*Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 39, no. 1 (Maret 2023): 73–91, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2023-3901-05>; Nopriani Hasibuan, Eka Mulyo Yunus, dan Thohar Ahmad Hsb, "Digital Tafsir and the Construction of Religious Authority: A Critical Analysis of Gus Nur's Quranic Interpretation," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 3, no. 1 (Juni 2025): 65–97, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2025.3.1.65-97>.

<sup>11</sup> Iqomah Richtig and Muhammad Saifullah, "'Quranreview': Interaksi Anak Muda Muslim dengan Al-Quran di Era Digital," *SUHUF* 15, no. 2 (February 2023): 267, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v15i2.765>;

characterized by a thematic and contextual approach,<sup>12</sup> with efforts to relate Qur'anic verses to contemporary social issues.<sup>13</sup> Third, studies show that interpretations on Instagram are often presented through aesthetic<sup>14</sup> visuals and popular communication styles that are adapted to the logic of social media.<sup>15</sup> However, much of this scholarship remains focused on questions of representation, medium, and communicative style, while the methodological frameworks used to evaluate the epistemic validity and coherence of these interpretations are rarely examined in a systematic manner. This gap suggests the need to approach digital tafsīr not only as a form of religious communication but also as an epistemic practice that warrants critical assessment through established principles of Qur'anic interpretive methodology.

Meanwhile, this study goes further by highlighting the latest developments in the use of stories as hermeneutical instruments for interpreting the Qur'an on Instagram. This study aims to address three primary questions. First, the structure of story-based interpretation developed by Nadirsyah Hosen. Second, the responses and receptions of netizens to this story-

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<sup>12</sup> Al-Kahpi Wiguna, "Tafsir Media Sosial: Representasi Childfree Di Instagram" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2025), 5; Irfa Amalia, "Komodifikasi Nilai Islam Sebagai Alat Promosi Busana Muslim Di Instagram: (Analisis Tafsir Kontekstual)," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 5, no. 2 (November 2022): 321, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v5i2.3806>;

<sup>13</sup> Safira Azzah Riscilia, "Female Qur'an Exegesis and Scientific Discourse: Bidan Amel's Integrative Approach to Womens' Nature," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 2, no. 1 (Juni 2024): 35–66, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2024.2.1.35-66>; Kholila Mukaromah, "Wacana Kesetaraan Gender dalam Meme Hadis: Studi Etnografi Virtual pada Akun Instagram @mubadalah.id," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 10, no. 2 (Desember 2020): 292–320, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2020.10.2.292-320>.

<sup>14</sup> Rasidin Rasidin et al., "Qur'anic Interpretation on Instagram: The Shift from Traditional to Digital Platforms in Indonesia," *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 24, no. 1 (June 2025): 376–406, <https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v24i1.642>;

<sup>15</sup> Asykhariil Gustama Abay, "Al-Qur'an di Media Sosial: Menyoal Otensitas dan Negosiasi Otoritas Penafsir," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 8, no. 3 (2025).

based model of Qur'anic interpretation. Third, the extent to which the contribution and position of Nadirsyah Hosen's story-based interpretation can be understood within the framework of the dynamics of Qur'anic studies, as well as within the landscape of religious discourse contestation in Indonesia's digital space.

This paper argues that storytelling is closely related to the temporal nature of human experience; this correlation is not merely coincidental but reflects a transcultural need. Time becomes human insofar as it is articulated through narrative, which achieves its meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.<sup>16</sup> In the context of digital interpretation, narrative serves as a hermeneutic instrument that enables the Qur'an's text to engage with the life experiences of a digital audience. This framework emphasizes that the narrative structure in Nadirsyah Hosen's story-based interpretation serves not only as a rhetorical style but also as an epistemological strategy for producing meaning, while affirming narrative's role as a medium for contextual and reflective religious communication in digital space.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the narrative strategies and audience reception of Qur'anic interpretation on the Instagram account @nadirsyahhosen\_official. The methodological framework integrates narrative structure analysis and netnography, enabling a dual focus on the production of story-based interpretations and the social dynamics surrounding their digital reception. This combination is appropriate for capturing both the textual construction of meaning and the interactive practices that shape interpretive authority in online environments.

The primary data comprises Instagram posts in which Nadirsyah Hosen interprets Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās, including captions and carousel content. Secondary data include classical and contemporary tafsīr works, scholarly literature on

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Ricoeur and Kathleen McLaughlin, *Time and Narrative.*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr, 2008), 52.



narrative hermeneutics, and studies on digital religion. These sources support theoretical grounding and contextualize the findings within broader developments in Qur'anic studies.

Narrative analysis follows Labov and Waletzky's framework<sup>17</sup>, which identifies five structural components: orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. This model examines how Hosen constructs narrative coherence, embeds interpretive messages, and frames religious authority through storytelling. To analyze audience engagement, the study employed netnography<sup>18</sup>, focusing on comments, interaction patterns, and recurring semiotic expressions such as emojis, keywords, and narrative echoes. Netnographic data are coded inductively to identify how users interpret, negotiate, and reproduce meaning in digital spaces. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive understanding of how narrative hermeneutics operates as both an interpretive technique and a participatory religious practice in contemporary digital culture.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Finding**

#### **Nadirsyah Hosen and the Strategic Use of Qur'anic Exegesis on Social Media**

Nadirsyah Hosen, also known affectionately as Gus Nadir, is a Muslim scholar born in West Java on December 8, 1973. He is regarded as one of the preeminent scholars of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).<sup>19</sup> He is the youngest son of K.H. Ibrahim Hosen, a

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<sup>17</sup> William Labov dan Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience1," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7, no. 1–4 (Januari 1997): 3–38, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar>.

<sup>18</sup> Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research*, Third edition (Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC Melbourne: SAGE, 2020); Eriyanto dan Asri Nur, *Metode Netnografi: Pendekatan Kualitatif dalam Memahami Budaya Pengguna Media Sosial* (Bandung: Remaja Roskadarya, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Lailatin Mubarakah dan Nadya Utari Br Tanggang, "Gus Nadir as an Ideal Role Model: Sociological Study on Counter Narratives Towards Caliphate Issue in Twitter," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 2, no. 2 (November 2019): 189, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v2i2.2011>.



distinguished scholar of fiqh and fatwa. His paternal grandfather, KH. Hosen, a prominent figure in the academic and commercial spheres, founded the Mu'awanatul Khair Arabische School in Tanjung Karang, Lampung, in the early twentieth century. His paternal grandmother, Siti Zawiyah, was a descendant of the nobility of the Selebar Kingdom in Bengkulu.

During his teenage years, Nadir pursued his studies at an esteemed Islamic boarding school in Buntet Village, Astana Japura District, Cirebon Regency.<sup>20</sup> The subjects he studied included Arabic, Aqidah Akhlaq, hadith, and Qur'anic interpretation. He pursued his studies in Arabic and hadith under the tutelage of KH. It is evident that the aforementioned individuals, namely Ali Musthafa Ya'qub, Kyai Makki, and Kyai Ali Musthafa, were alumni of the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school. Consequently, Nadir's chain of knowledge, originating from his teachers, was found to be intertwined with KH. Hasyim Asy'ari.

Following his studies at the pesantren, he proceeded to the Faculty of Sharia and Law at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, where he majored in comparative madhhab. He then continued his academic pursuits in Australia, where he obtained a double degree from the University of New England, comprising a Graduate Diploma in Islamic Studies and a Master of Arts with Honours. In addition, he completed a Master of Laws in Comparative Law at the University of Northern Territory. Nadir continued his doctoral studies, earning two degrees: one in Islamic Law from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and one in Law from the University of Wollongong.

Nadir obtained two doctoral degrees: a Doctor of Islamic Law from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and a Doctor of Law from the University of Wollongong. Subsequently, in 2005, he assumed the role of a postdoctoral researcher at the TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland, while concurrently delivering an LLM programme that focused on

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<sup>20</sup> Wahyullah Junaedi, "Pandangan Nadirsyah Hosen Tentang Makna Kata Awliya Dalam QS. Al-Maidah 51 (Studi Analisis dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam)" (UIN Alauddin, 2019), 9-16.

comparative law and anti-terrorism policy. In 2006, he assumed the position of visiting researcher at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and in 2008 at the Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of Singapore. In 2007, following a rigorous selection process, Nadir was accepted as an Associate Professor in the Department of Law at the University of Wollongong, where he completed his doctoral programme.

Subsequently, Nadir accepted a teaching position at Monash University, a globally renowned institution for its excellence in legal education, commencing his academic career in 2015. In this capacity, he specialises in teaching Australian constitutional law, an introduction to Islamic law, and Southeast Asian law. Concurrently, he fulfils the managerial responsibilities for the Monash Malaysia Law Program, a prestigious initiative that engages students from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and France. Beyond the confines of academia, he has been elected as Rais Syuriah Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdlatul Ulama (PCINU) Australia-New Zealand, a position in which he oversees the Al-Qur'an khataman assembly in Brisbane, Wollongong, and most recently, Melbourne.<sup>21</sup> In this capacity, he engages in discourse on the essence and intricacies of the sacred verses of the Al-Qur'an. Furthermore, he serves in an advisory capacity at Ma'had Aly Raudhatul Muhibbin, an Islamic boarding establishment owned by KH. Luqman Hakim, residing in Caringin, Bogor.

Nadir's engagement with the public extends beyond the realm of conventional writing; he also employs a variety of digital platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, websites, and Instagram, to disseminate his ideas. A cursory examination of the subject's Instagram account reveals that it currently has 242,000 followers and 1,794 posts. The content of these posts encompasses a wide array of subjects, including personal experiences, hadith, and interpretations of the Qur'an. Additio-

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<sup>21</sup> Nadirsyah Hosen, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an di Media Sosial: Mengkaji Makna dan Rahasia Ayat Suci Pada Era Media Sosial*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Bentang Pustaka, 2017), 6.

nally, the posts offer responses to contemporary phenomena pertaining to religious, political, and social issues in Indonesia.

## **Narrative Structure in Story-Based Tafsīr: Nadirsyah Hosen's Exegesis of Sūrahs Al-Nās and Al-Falaq**

### **1. The interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās**

In a recent publication on his Instagram account, Nadirsyah Hosen presented an interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās, articulated through a narrative structure comprising eleven slides. On the first slide, the title of the story was presented as “Under God’s Protection: A Reflection from Sūrah al-Nās,” accompanied by an illustration as the background.



Source:

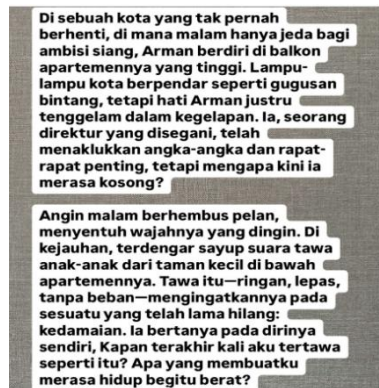
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEZdH9T0bG/?igsh=MWRyODJsMmtvODIzdA==>

**Figure 1. The first slide in the interpretation of Sūrah Al-Nās.**

In this figure 1, the story’s context is introduced implicitly through visual images. The illustration depicts a bearded man in white clothing sitting on a balcony against a backdrop of a metropolitan city filled with tall buildings and night lights. He appears to be holding a copy of the Qur’an solemnly, symbolizing spiritual contemplation amid the hustle and bustle of urban life. The title reflects Sūrah al-Nās, and the illustration

emphasises the symbolic contrast between worldly busyness and inner peace in drawing closer to God. Dramatic lighting from the right further reinforces this spiritual nuance, setting the scene for the main theme that will be elaborated on in the following slides.

The story proper begins on the second slide, which contains a description of the time and place of the story, as well as the characters and their positions and circumstances.



Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEZdH9T0bG/?igsh=MWRyODJsMmtvODlzdA==>

**Figure 2. The second slide of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās.**

As illustrated on the figure 2, the **orientation** function is evident through the introduction of the setting (a high-rise apartment balcony), time (night), character (Arman), character status (director/respected figure), and the inner mood that frames the entire narrative. Nadirsyah Hosen employs the metaphor of a busy, never-sleeping metropolis to illustrate the contemporary world, which, whilst filled with ambition, has lost its spiritual dimension. Arman is introduced not only as an individual, but also as a symbol of modern humans who are professionally successful but experience inner emptiness. In this context, the orientation serves a dual function: it both introduces the narrative and functions as an ideological device that critiques the dehumanisation caused by urban lifestyles. Despite his position

at the zenith of an apartment tower, Arman experiences a sense of emptiness and alienation, thereby reflecting the paradox of modernity: material success does not necessarily guarantee a meaningful existence. Nadirsyah employs a narrative strategy that utilises framing to accentuate the character's psychological and existential context. Concurrently, this strategy enhances the reader's awareness of the significance of spirituality as a response to the prevalent crisis of meaning in modern society.

The second slide is indicative of the narrative's **climax**, which is marked by Arman's realisation of the hollowness of his existence. It is evident that the aforementioned individual experiences a diminution of fundamental aspects, including but not limited to peace, joy, and inner tranquility. Despite his considerable career achievements and material success, Arman experiences profound anxiety, manifesting as a fear of failure, loss, and his image in the eyes of others. This finding lends further credence to the hypothesis that he typifies contemporary humans who, despite their material achievements, continue to grapple with a sense of inner emptiness, precipitated by a spiritual crisis.

As illustrated on the third slide, the character known as Arman begins a period of introspection, during which he contemplates the challenges he faces. In this particular slide, Nadirsyah Hosen commences his exegesis of Sūrah al-Nās, which is pursued until the seventh slide. The author's approach is not to interpret the verses individually, but rather to interpret multiple verses that bear similar meanings in conjunction. Nadirsyah Hosen's interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās is divided into three sections. Verses one to three are interpreted together, followed by verses four and five, and then verse six. In each section, the verse is presented, followed by a translation and an evaluation by the character "Arman" of the problems he faces based on the meaning contained in the verse. Finally, Nadirsyah Hosen further reinforces his interpretation by citing leading tafsīr works such as Tafsīr al-Qurtūbī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Thabarī. In

this study, Tafsīr al-Qurtūbī is employed to interpret verses 1-3,<sup>22</sup> Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr for verses 4-5,<sup>23</sup> and Tafsīr al-Thabarī for verse 6.<sup>24</sup> Following a comprehensive review of the literature, it was determined that not all interpretations of these verses in the book were quoted by Nadirsyah Hosen. The author's approach involved quoting specific sections, followed by a synthesis of these quotations in accordance with the interpretation the author sought to convey. Despite introducing a novel perspective and methodology of interpretation (one framed by stories), he nevertheless referred to classical tafsīr books, such as Tafsīr al-Qurtūbī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Thabarī (see, figure 3).



<sup>22</sup> 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurtūbī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, Lebanon: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2006), 579.

<sup>23</sup> Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2000), 2051.

<sup>24</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār al-Hādīst, 2010), 785.



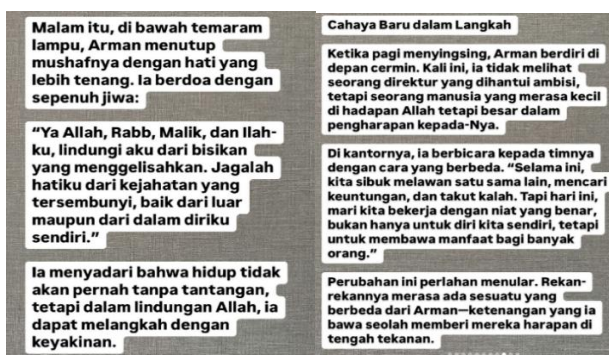


Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEZdH9T0bG/?igsh=MWRyODJsMmtvODIzdA==>

**Figure 3. The third to seventh slides of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās.**

The evaluation stage is seen in slides three to seven, when the main character reads Sūrah al-Nās and reflects on its meaning. Three realizations emerge in this process. First, from verses 1–3, he realizes that the burdens of life that he had thought he had to bear alone are actually in Allah's care. Second, from verses 4–5, he realizes that he often allows negative thoughts to control him, even though Allah's protection is always there. Third, from verse 6, he understands that his greatest enemy comes from within himself, when his heart and mind are filled with negative thoughts. This realization confirms that his main challenge is to face his own weaknesses.





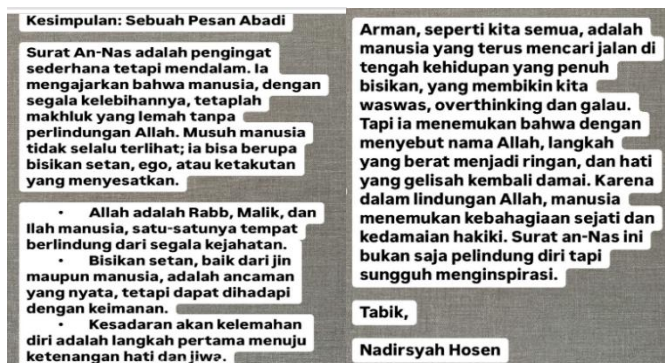
Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEZdH9T0bG/?igsh=MWRyODJsMmtvODIzdA==>

**Figure 4. The eighth and ninth slides of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās.**

The resolution stage is evident in the eighth and ninth slides, when Arman experiences spiritual enlightenment, marked by prayer and a determination to start anew (see, figure 4). He realizes that even though life is full of challenges, he can move forward with confidence under God's protection. This awareness changed his attitude, especially in his work interactions: he was no longer just an ambitious director, but a humble, hopeful, and morally responsible individual. At the office, he emphasized the importance of working with the right intentions for the common good, rather than just for competition. This change spread to his colleagues, bringing calm and inspiration amid pressure. Arman's spiritual transformation shows how reflection on Sūrah al-Nās can overcome inner conflict and be manifested in real life.

In the presentation's tenth slide, Nadirsyah Hosen drew his conclusions and reinforced the key points of his interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās. This constituted an evaluative stage.



Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEZdH9T0bG/?igsh=MWRyODJsMmtvODIzdA==>

**Figure 5. The tenth and eleventh slides of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Nās.**

As the reader progresses through the presentation, the final slide, eleven, is where the coda section is located (see, figure 5). This is where Nadirsyah Hosen guides the reader back from the fictional realm to the context of real life. The speaker places particular emphasis on the universal and eternal nature of the message of Sūrah al-Nās, highlighting its role not only as a protective reading but also as a source of inspiration that encourages individuals to live life with determination, relying on Allah. This coda also serves as a conduit between the character's experience and the reader's reflection, emphasising that spiritual strength can overcome negative whispers, whether they come from without or within.

## 2. The interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.

On the first slide (see, figure 6), the title of the story was presented, namely “Behind the Darkness, There is the Light of Dawn: The Story of Sūrah al-Falaq”, accompanied by an illustration as the background.



Source:

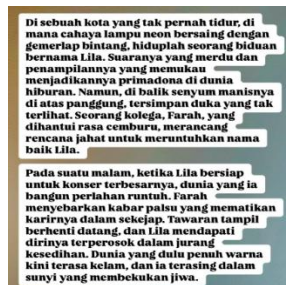
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFB8j8ovZks/?igsh=MXA3Zmw0Z3VhYng5ZW==>

**Figure 6. The initial slide of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.**

The orientation is implicit from the outset, as the initial slide introduces the narrative context through the use of visual media. This title intimates a reflection on Sūrah al-Falaq, which, within its own context, discusses protection from various forms of evil, including the darkness of night. The

choice of a background with cloudy skies and vast waters is symbolic of the transition from darkness to light, which aligns with the meaning of Sūrah al-Falaq, as explained in the following slides.

As illustrated on the second slide (see, figure 7), the narrative begins with a description of the setting, the circumstances, the characters involved, and the initial challenges they face.



Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFB8j8ovZks/?igsh=MXA3Zmw0Z3VhYng5ZW==>

**Figure 7. The second slide of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.**

The story in the picture shows a clear narrative structure. The orientation is shown by the introduction of the main character, Lila, a famous singer who lives in the glitz and glamour of a big city, and the supporting character Farah, who is portrayed as a jealous person. The setting of the “city that never sleeps” emphasizes a modern atmosphere characterized by intense competition and pressure.

The main conflict builds towards a climax when Farah spreads rumors that destroy Lila’s career, culminating in the collapse of Lila’s life amidst preparations for her biggest concert. This climax depicts Lila’s identity crisis and emotional breakdown, which is emphasized through descriptions of loneliness, alienation, and the loss of color in her life. Narratively, this story portrays the identity crisis often faced by individuals in modern society, particularly those living

under the public spotlight. This decline becomes a bridge to spiritual enlightenment.

Nadirsyah Hosen initiated his interpretation on slides three to eight with the assistance of a ustadz, who elucidated the contents of Sūrah al-Falaq (see, figure 8).

**Slide 1:** Hari-hari berlalu dalam kehampaan. Lila menjauh dari panggung, dari cahaya, bahkan dari dirinya sendiri. Dalam diam yang panjang, ia mulai merenungkan hidupnya. Hingga suatu malam, saat menatap langit penuh bintang, ia teringat akan pengajian tafsir yang pernah ia hadiri. Pengajian itu membahas Surat Al-Falaq—sebuah doa perlindungan dari segala bentuk kejahatan. Dalam hatinya yang merindu jawaban, Lila memutuskan untuk kembali ke tempat itu.

**Slide 2:** Saat ia tiba, suasana hangat dan tenang menyambutnya. Ustaz yang memimpin pengajian mulai membacakan Surat Al-Falaq dengan penghayatan yang mendalam.

**Slide 3:** “Katakanlah: Aku berlindung kepada Tuhan yang menguasai subuh.”

**Slide 4:** “Katakanlah: Aku berlindung kepada Tuhan yang menguasai subuh.”

**Slide 5:** Ustaz menjelaskan, “Subuh adalah waktu di mana kegelapan malam pecah oleh cahaya. Ini adalah simbol bahwa Allah mampu mengubah keadaan, mengusir gelap dengan terang, dan menggantikan kesulitan dengan harapan.” Kata-kata itu menyentuh hati Lila. Ia merasa bahwa selama ini ia terlalu tenggelam dalam kegelapan masalah, lupa bahwa Allah adalah sumber cahaya yang bisa menerangi jalannya.

**Slide 6:** “Dari kejahatan makhluk yang Dia ciptakan.”

**Slide 7:** “Setiap makhluk memiliki potensi untuk membawa manfaat atau mudarat,” jelas ustaz. “Namun, kita diajarkan untuk berlindung kepada Allah dari segala bentuk kejahatan, termasuk kedengkian yang berasal dari hati manusia.” Lila merenungkan ini. Ia sadar bahwa kejahatan Farah adalah ujian yang mengajarkannya untuk semakin mendekat kepada Allah.

**Slide 8:** “Dan dari kejahatan malam apabila telah gelap gulita.”

**Slide 9:** Ustaz melanjutkan, “Malam yang gelap sering kali menjadi simbol ketidakpastian, ketakutan, dan kelemahan manusia. Kita diperintahkan untuk berlindung kepada Allah dari segala yang tersembunyi dalam kegelapan, baik yang nyata maupun yang tak terlihat.” Lila merasakan ayat ini berbicara langsung pada hatinya, mengingatkannya bahwa Allah adalah pelindung dalam segala keadaan, termasuk saat ia merasa tak berdaya.

**Slide 10:** “Dan dari kejahatan tukang sihir yang meniup pada buhul-buhul.”

**Slide 11:** Penjelasan ustaz semakin membuka mata Lila. “Ayat ini mengingatkan kita untuk berlindung dari niat buruk manusia yang menggunakan segala cara untuk mencelakakan orang lain. Tetapi ingat, kekuatan mereka tidak pernah lebih besar daripada kuasa Allah.”

**Slide 12:** “Dan dari kejahatan orang yang dengki apabila ia dengki.”

**Slide 13:** “Dengki adalah racun hati,” ucap ustaz. “Ketika seseorang iri, ia tak hanya membahayakan orang lain, tetapi juga dirinya sendiri. Maka, berlindunglah kepada Allah dari kejahatan ini, karena hanya Dia yang mampu menjaga kita dari bahaya yang tak terlihat.”

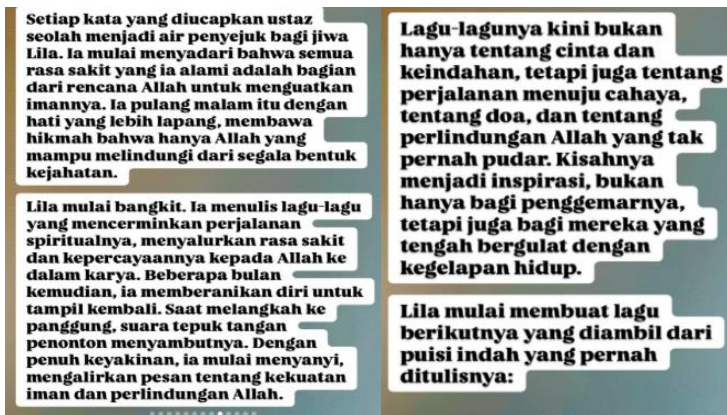
Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFB8j8ovZks/?igsh=MXA3Zmw0Z3VhYng5ZWw==>

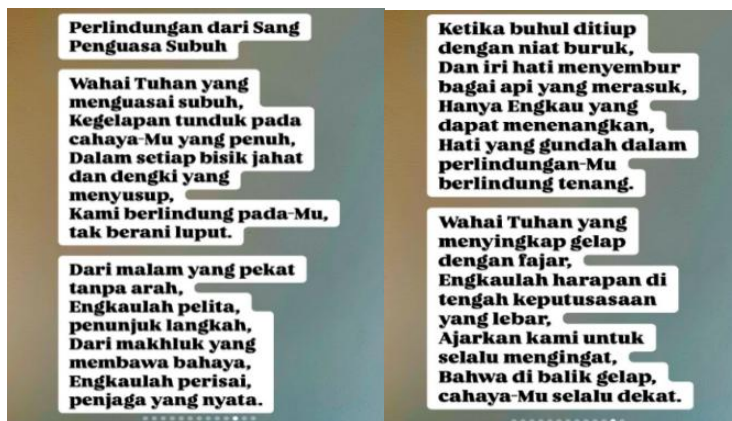
**Figure 8. The third to eighth slides of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.**

The evaluation in this narrative is achieved through reflective moments that emerge when Lila attends the Sūrah al-Falaq interpretation class again. The teacher elucidates each verse, which Lila then reflects on in a personal manner. The interpretation of the text is not solely textual, but is also imbued with symbolic significance, such as the notion of dawn as a representation of hope and transformation. Each explanation of a verse is followed by a process of internalisation by the main character, rendering this evaluation not only a constituent of the narrative but also an educational instrument for the reader.

As illustrated in slides nine to twelve, the protagonist, Lila, experiences a shift in perspective, leading to an emergence from her state of depression (see, figure 9).







Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFB8j8ovZks/?igsh=MXA3Zmw0Z3VhYng5ZW==>

**Figure 9. The ninth to twelfth slides of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.**

The resolution of this narrative is characterised by a transformation in the primary character's disposition and actions. The central character, Lila, derives spiritual significance from Sūrah al-Falaq, which motivates her to embark on a new phase of life with renewed fervour. The music she produces not only reflects her personal journey but also serves as a source of inspiration for her fans and others who have experienced periods of despair similar to her own struggles. Lila's return to the public stage is indicative not only of a career revival but also of a spiritual awakening.

In the concluding slide, Nadirsyah Hosen expressed his aspiration that the interpretation conveyed within the narrative he presented would prove beneficial to its audience.



Source:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFB8j8ovZks/?igsh=MXA3Zmw0Z3VhYng5ZW==>

**Figure 10. The thirteenth slide of the interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq.**

The coda appears on the last slide and in the caption when Nadirsyah Hosen draws readers back from the realm of fiction to the realm of reality, specifically their own lives (see, figure 10). Implicitly, he conveys that what readers can also experience the characters experience in their daily lives. Thus, the story can serve as a lesson for readers. The story is not only a medium of interpretation, but also a reflection of actual social dynamics. The closing poem, written by the character Lila, serves as an artistic and spiritual conclusion, tying the entire narrative back to the main message of Sūrah al-Falaq: protection from Allah against all forms of evil, both visible and hidden.

## Discussion

### Narrative Tafsīr in the Digital Sphere: A Netnographic Study of Audience Reception and Interaction

This section describes audience response patterns to story-based interpretations of the Qur'an published through the Instagram account @nadirsyahhosen\_official, focusing on



audience engagement dynamics and the process of constructing religious meaning in the digital public sphere.<sup>25</sup>

## 1. Emotional-Spiritual

The first dimension identified in this analysis is the emotional-spiritual dimension, as reflected in the audience's comments that not only respond to the literal meaning of the verses but also reveal the depth of affection and personal religious experiences triggered by Gus Nadir's narrative interpretation. In this study, the emotional-spiritual dimension is understood as a form of audience engagement that combines affective responses with religious experiences, in line with the concept of religious experience, which asserts that religiosity is not only cognitive or doctrinal in nature but also involves emotions, existential reflection, and a sense of connection with the transcendent.<sup>26</sup> At this point, narrative transportation theory provides a relevant explanatory framework, namely that audience engagement in stories, through imagination, emotion, and focus of attention, contributes to the internalization of meaning, the strengthening of beliefs, and the formation of positive assessments of the authoritative figures who convey the interpretations, regardless of whether the narratives are understood as fact or fiction.<sup>27</sup>

This connection is clearly evident in the emotional expressions in the comments section. Expressions such as "Reading this in the afternoon makes me cry, thank goodness I'm at home...", "Mrebesmili 😞," or "Your writing relates to my problems today 😞" show a strong emotional resonance

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<sup>25</sup>Julia Müller and Thomas N. Friemel, "Dynamics of Digital Media Use in Religious Communities—A Theoretical Model," *Religions* 15, no. 7 (June 2024): 762, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070762>.

<sup>26</sup>Emmanuel-Lugard Nduka dan John McGuire, "The Effective Use of New Media in Disseminating Evangelical Messages Among Catholic College Students," *Journal of Media and Religion* 16, no. 3 (Juli 2017): 93–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2017.1361707>.

<sup>27</sup>Melanie C. Green dan Timothy C. Brock, "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 5 (November 2000): 701–210, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>.

between readers and the interpretation. This intensity is further emphasized by emotive symbols such as emojis, for example, “❤️ ❤️ ❤️” or “MasyaAllah TabārakAllāh. Stay healthy, Gus Kami 🥰❤️.” In fact, some comments are reflective and prayerful, such as “This is real in my life. This interpretation makes me even more convinced that ‘only to You do I seek refuge and complain’ 🙏” or “Allāhumma yā Allāh, open my heart to Your knowledge... lā ilāha illa anta, subhānaka innī kuntu minadz-zālimīn.” These expressions affirm that narrative-based interpretations can serve as a medium that triggers deep and ongoing spiritual internalization.

Not only expressing personal affection, but some comments also relate interpretive messages to the realities of everyday life. For example, the statement “This is what I’ve been thinking about lately, how complex and exhausting the world of work is, but the money earned is not directly proportional to the struggle. Thank you, Gus Prof, for enlightening us. Looking forward to your next post ❤️” shows how interpretive narratives are not merely a source of religious information, but serve as a transformative medium that helps individuals reconstruct meaning in dynamic life situations.<sup>28</sup>

Some of the comments above not only confirm the findings of scholars who view social media as a medium for mediating spiritual experiences,<sup>29</sup> but also show how this function operates specifically in the context of narrative-based interpretations of the Qur’an on Instagram. In media and religion studies, social media is often understood as a space that allows religious emotions, such as gratitude, emotion, and awe, to emerge as affective

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<sup>28</sup> Crystal L. Park dan Susan Folkman, “Meaning in the Context of Stress and Coping,” *Review of General Psychology* 1, no. 2 (Juni 1997): 115–44, <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.1.2.115>.

<sup>29</sup> Pamela Jo Brubaker dan Michel M. Haigh, “The Religious Facebook Experience: Uses and Gratifications of Faith-Based Content,” *Social Media + Society* 3, no. 2 (April 2017): 2056305117703723, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117703723>.

responses to the pressures and uncertainties of contemporary life.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Epistemic-Authoritative

Comments in this category acknowledge Gus Nadir's scientific expertise and the significance of his story-based interpretations in offering novel insights or enhancing readers' perspectives, including those with a religious or Islamic educational background. It is important to note that media and content produced by religious actors can function as "religious media," a medium that not only disseminates information but also constructs and reproduces religious authority.<sup>31</sup>

In this context, Nadirsyah Hosen's digital interpretation not only presents religious interpretations but also serves as an epistemic reference, strengthening beliefs and providing scientific legitimacy for the audience. This is reflected in comments such as "*MashaAllah Gus... even though I have often listened to studies on Sūrah An-Naas, this time I found a different perspective...*" which shows that his interpretive narrative continues to provide new insights even though readers are already familiar with previous interpretive discourses.

Similar appreciation is evident in several other comments, such as: "*MasyaAllah... please continue your studies on the Qur'an, Professor, it is truly enlightening, especially for someone like me who is lacking in knowledge,*" "*Masyaallah... thank you for the enlightenment, Gus... tabek,*" "*Thank you for the enlightenment, Gus Nadir... Alhamdulillah, my knowledge has*

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<sup>30</sup>Sophie H. Janicke dan Srividya Ramasubramanian, "Spiritual Media Experiences, Trait Transcendence, and Enjoyment of Popular Films," *Journal of Media and Religion* 16, no. 2 (April 2017): 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2017.1311122>.

<sup>31</sup> Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook* 6, no. 1 (Juni 2008): 9–26, [https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9_1); Miski Miski dan Ali Hamdan, "Posting Hadis dan Kesalehan Digital: Mengurai Fenomena Keberagamaan Generasi Milenial," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 11, no. 2 (Desember 2021): 283–306, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2021.11.2.283-306>.

increased. *May Allah always bless Gus Nadir. Aamiin,*” and *“MashaAllah... jazakallahu khairan, Prof., it serves as a reminder for myself. Barakallahu fiik, Prof.”*The choice of words such as *“knowledge,” “enlightenment,”* and *“reminder for myself”* confirms the attribution of scientific authority as well as the legitimacy that the audience attaches to the figure of Gus Nadir. Furthermore, prayers such as *“May Allah always bless Gus Nadir”* or *“Jazakallahu khairan Prof, barakallahu fiik”* can be read not merely as verbal rituals but as symbolic affirmations of scientific authority produced and reproduced in the digital landscape. Digital engagement in the form of appreciation, prayers, and recognition of authority towards Nadirsyah Hosen, as seen in the comments section, shows the emergence of new religious practices mediated by digital space. Recognition of Gus Nadir’s authority through comments and prayers demonstrates that religious authority is now built not only through formal institutions or face-to-face relationships, but also through repeated and affective digital interactions.

### 3. The Social-Communitarian

The social-communitarian dimension in the digital realm is the emotional connection and sense of belonging that are collectively built through virtual interactions, arising from digital mediatization that shifts the socio-religious landscape by blurring geographical and temporal boundaries and giving rise to decentralized transnational religious networks. Digital media is defined as an active medium that not only conveys information, but also redefines religious social connection practices while reconstructing the space for interaction.<sup>32</sup> In the context of religious communities, digital public spaces are understood as a forum for participation, the negotiation of meaning, and the formation of collective identity through the practice of sharing

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<sup>32</sup>André Jansson, “Mediatization and Social Space: Reconstructing Mediatization for the Transmedia Age: A. Jansson,” *Communication Theory* 23, no. 3 (Agustus 2013): 279–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12015>; Tim Hutchings, “Contemporary Religious Community and The Online Church,” *Information, Communication & Society* 14, no. 8 (Desember 2011): 1118–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.591410>.

and selecting content, resulting in online communities that are dynamic and interactive, with members playing dual roles as both producers and consumers of religious narratives.<sup>33</sup>

In this framework, Nadirsyah Hosen's (also known as Gus Nadir) Instagram account serves as a medium for disseminating interpretations of the Qur'an and for facilitating social cohesion and reinforcing the identity of the Islamic community in the virtual realm. A close analysis of the comment section reveals that audience interaction extends beyond mere responding to content, serving as a conduit for the internalisation of social bonds that fortify collective solidarity. The following comments were proffered:

- *"Permission to save your knowledge and insights, Prof."*
- *"Permission to save and share, please. 🙏❤️"*
- *"Have a good retreat, Gus. May your stories truly touch hearts and the heavens."*
- *"Have a good rest, Prof. May you always be healthy. 🙏🙏"*
- *"Faithfully waiting for your next post, Kyai."*
- *"I will miss you."*
- *"See you soon, Ustad, insha 'Allah, and thank you 🙏🙏."*
- *"Don't be gone too long, Gus Prof... I still want to keep learning. Stay healthy, Gus Prof... Aamiin."*
- *"Htr Nhn, Gus Prof. 🙏🙏🍷🍀 Mabruuk...! Aamiin yaa Rabb... 🙏🙏"*
- *"Keep up the good work, Prof @nadirsyahhosen\_official. May you always be blessed and successful."*
- *"MasyaAlloh TabarokAlloh. May Gus Nadir always be showered with the love of Gusti Alloh. Aamiin 🙏🙏"*

It demonstrates dimensions of appreciation, prayer, and moral support that function as symbolic rituals in maintaining community solidarity. These affective expressions not only

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<sup>33</sup>Brubaker dan Haigh, "The Religious Facebook Experience"; Muhammad Zuhri Abu Nawas dkk., "Motif dan Identitas Keagamaan dalam Persebaran Meme Hadis Tashabbuh di Media Sosial," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 12, no. 2 (Desember 2022): 261–81, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2022.12.2.261-281>.

enliven a sense of co-presence in virtual spaces but also reinforce social bonds in the absence of physical encounters. Lexical choices such as “faithfully wait,” “don’t be away too long,” and “may you always be blessed and successful” reflect a collective intention to sustain relationships with the community’s central figure. Thus, social media functions not merely as a medium for the dissemination of religious information but also as an arena for the production and negotiation of affective ties that underpin enduring religious attachment.

#### **4. Educational-Pragmatic**

The educational-pragmatic concept in this context refers to the function of digital interpretation as a learning tool that conveys not only textual meaning but also adapts its presentation to the practical needs of the audience, particularly in formal education.

In practice, Gus Nadir’s digital interpretation demonstrates how interpretive narratives can serve as pragmatic teaching instruments. Audience testimonials provide empirical evidence, for example, comments such as “MI (madrasah ibtidaiyah) lessons for grades 2 and 3, prof. Therefore, this protective sūrah is repeated in two semesters. Thanks, prof.” “I am an Islamic religion teacher at an elementary school... Prof’s interpretation is very helpful. The language is light and easy to understand.” show the role of this interpretation as an applicable learning resource.

This phenomenon aligns with the growing dynamics of interpretation in Indonesia, characterized by the emergence of models that specifically target certain audiences and are presented through a pragmatic approach. For example, there are interpretations designed for children, using simple language and structure appropriate to their level of understanding. The presence of these models indicates an evolution in interpretation, from mere theological texts to effective social instruments supporting education and da‘wah in the modern era.

More broadly, this educational-pragmatic approach to digital interpretation is a manifestation of contextual interpretation that seeks to adapt the Qur’an’s message to the challenges of education and communication in today’s world. This approach

not only facilitates the internalization of religious values but also responds to socio-cultural dynamics that increasingly emphasize the effectiveness and relevance of religious messages in the digital realm. Digital engagement, as interpreted through the educational-pragmatic framework developed by Nadirsyah Hosen, reveals a significant shift in the religious practices and social dynamics of Indonesian Muslims. First, in the realm of religious practice, this form of interpretation serves as a learning tool that expands access to Islamic knowledge in an interactive way. The communicative and contextual presentation of interpretation allows the values of the Qur'an to be internalized through a participatory learning process, even outside of formal education. Islamic educational institutions can integrate story-based digital interpretations into their educational and da'wah programs by making them reflective teaching materials and training teachers and da'wah workers to convey the messages of the Qur'an in a narrative, contextual, and relevant manner, thereby enhancing their relevance to modern life.

### **Narrative Hermeneutics and Digital Religious Authority: Nadirsyah Hosen's Tafsīr Against Textualism**

Digitalization has triggered a shift in religious authority from the dominance of traditional clerics to new figures in the digital space. Instant access to religious knowledge through social media, blogs, and websites has encouraged the public, especially Generation Z, to prefer online sources, thereby shifting the legitimacy of traditional clerics as the primary reference in the public sphere. This transformation has given rise to the phenomenon of digital clerics who use online platforms as their primary medium for preaching and interpretation, employing a more communicative, interactive, and contextual style. Conversely, clerics who do not adapt to the digital ecosystem risk being marginalized due to their limited reach and visibility. In the Indonesian context, this shift is reinforced by low digital literacy among some scholars, disparities in the public's ability to critically utilize digital media, and a growing tendency to seek



instant religious solutions, which has the potential to create biases in understanding.<sup>34</sup>

Responding to these dynamics, Hosen criticized the religious approach that promotes the slogan “return to the Qur’an and Hadith” in a textually literal manner without adequate mediation through interpretive tools. According to him, this pattern risks giving rise to superficial understanding and fostering interpretations that are detached from the established epistemological framework of Islam. This criticism is not intended as a rejection of the spirit of purifying teachings, but rather as a warning about the ideological and social risks that arise when sacred texts are presented in the digital space without strict methodological discipline.<sup>35</sup>

The shift of religious authority in the digital space, as marked by the weakening dominance of traditional scholars and the strengthening of online religious figures, requires a reformulation of scientific legitimacy that is based not only on popularity but also on methodological depth. In this context, Nadirsyah Hosen emphasizes that although the Qur’an and Hadith are the primary sources of Islamic teachings, nearly all the principles and rules that apply in Islamic tradition are the result of interpretive constructions developed over a long historical process. Therefore, contemporary scholars are not only required to understand the text normatively but also to select relevant principles and adapt them to current social dynamics through methodological interpretation practices rooted in Islamic intellectual heritage.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Moh. Nor Ichwan, Mustaqim Pabbajah, dan Faizal Amin, “Digitization of Religious Tafsir: The Fading of Indonesian Ulama Authority in Post Truth Era,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (September 2024): 320–45, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5545>.

<sup>35</sup> Nadirsyah Hosen, “Challenging Traditional Islamic Authority: The Impact of Social Media in Indonesia,” *Proceedings of International Conference on Da’wa and Communication* 1, no. 1 (November 2019): 84–100, <https://doi.org/10.15642/icondac.v1i1.280>.

<sup>36</sup> Nadirsyah Hosen, *When ‘Back to the Qur’an and Hadith’ Is No Longer Enough*, 1 ed. (London: Routledge, 2023), 21.

Hosen then translated this epistemological position into his preaching and interpretation practices on social media, particularly through his Instagram account, by combining traditional scholarly authority with digital communication skills. Instead of presenting interpretations as rigid, normative expositions, Hosen developed a narrative-reflective approach that facilitates understanding among lay audiences while also serving as a counter-discourse to the conservative and radical religious narratives that often emerge in digital spaces. In this context, his interpretations of QS. al-Falaq and QS. al-Nās demonstrates a strategy of repositioning the authority of the ulama, namely by integrating classical exegetical references and storytelling-based contextualization, so that the values of moderation can be articulated persuasively and relevantly to a digital audience.

The story-based interpretation model developed by Nadirsyah Hosen can thus be understood as a critical response to the tendency toward overly textual and rigid interpretation, which often distances the Qur'an from the reality of people lived experiences. Through a dialogical and empathetic narrative approach, divine messages are presented in a humanistic, emotional, and contextual manner, thereby bridging the sacred text with the spiritual experiences of modern Muslims, especially among urban communities. In this way, the Qur'an is no longer positioned solely as a source of legal legitimacy but as a source of moral inspiration and inner healing relevant to the complexities of contemporary life.

This phenomenon shows that digital space not only reproduces religious discourse but also reconstructs the hierarchy of authority. The consumption of new media enables a process of reframing, in which religious legitimacy is no longer entirely determined by the transmission of tradition or by formal scientific institutions, but by religious actors' ability to manage the visibility, interactivity, and resonance of messages in digital space. In this context, the narrative strategy developed by Hosen functions in two ways: on the one hand, it maintains the continuity of classical interpretive epistemology, and on the other hand, it actively intervenes in the mechanisms of religious

authority distribution by shifting them from an exclusive and hierarchical pattern to a more participatory and dialogical model.

The implications of this shift are clearly evident in Hosen's interpretation of QS. al-Falaq and QS. al-Nās, which represents a strategic effort to reaffirm the role of traditional scholars as knowledge brokers in the digital socio-religious arena. Hosen's success in packaging scholarly authority in a format that aligns with the platform's logic demonstrates that the Islamic intellectual tradition has not lost its adaptability amid the intensity of digital discourse competition. On the contrary, through their mastery of the medium and contextual narratives, traditional scholars not only survive but also play an active role in shaping the direction of public debate and articulating a religious vision relevant to the demands of the times.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that Nadirsyah Hosen's Instagram-based interpretation of Sūrah al-Falaq and al-Nās employs a coherent narrative hermeneutic structure that integrates orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. This narrative form serves as an interpretive instrument, enhancing clarity, emotional resonance, and contextual relevance for digital audiences. Audience responses reveal four dominant modes of reception, namely emotional-spiritual, epistemic-authoritative, social-communitarian, and educational-pragmatic, demonstrating that narrative-based tafsīr not only conveys meaning but also reinforces interpretive authority and fosters participatory religious engagement in digital spaces.

Methodologically, the study is limited by its focus on a single interpreter, two sūrahs, and one social media platform. The qualitative design, while suitable for depth, restricts generalizability and does not capture the full diversity of digital tafsīr practices or the broader theological and ideological variations that may emerge across different interpreters, audiences, or platforms. The reliance on publicly visible comments also limits insight into silent or passive forms of audience reception.

Future research should expand the corpus to include multiple interpreters, platforms, and thematic domains to map the

wider ecology of digital Qur'anic interpretation. Longitudinal studies could examine how narrative-based tafsīr shapes digital religious communities over time, while comparative analyses may clarify how different narrative strategies construct or contest religious authority. In practice, the findings highlight the potential of storytelling as an effective da'wah model for enhancing accessibility and engagement, and, theoretically, they underscore the need to reconceptualize narrative as a central hermeneutic tool in contemporary digital Qur'anic studies.

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