

Social and Moral Criticism in Satirical Verses: Analysis Using the *Maudhū'i* and Linguistic Approaches

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Abstract

The recurring phenomenon of social deviance and moral degradation in society confirms the relevance of studying verses in the Qur'an that contain social criticism in the form of satire. This article aims to analyze social and moral criticism in satirical verses of the Qur'an using a *maudhū'i* (thematic) approach and linguistic analysis (rhetoric, pragmatics, and critical discourse). This is a qualitative study analyzing four representative surahs, al-Ma'ūn (107:1–7), al-Mutaffifīn (83:1–3), al-Humazah (104:1–9), and al-Munāfiqūn (63:1–3), selected based on their rhetorical power in criticizing deviant behavior. The results show that the Qur'an uses rhetorical devices such as irony, repetition, contrast, and labeling to shame hypocritical, materialistic, and anti-social behavior; for example, Surah al-Ma'ūn emphasizes the contrast between ritual piety and social negligence, while Surah al-Mutaffifīn criticizes economic injustice through irony. These findings show that Qur'anic satire not only functions as a moral admonition, but also as an instrument of social discourse that builds collective awareness of justice, caring, communication ethics, and spiritual integrity. This study enriches thematic exegesis by offering a linguistic perspective on reading the function of Qur'anic satire an approach that has been relatively rare in previous studies.

Keywords: *Maudhū'i* exegesis; Morality; Qur'anic linguistics; Satire; Social criticism

Abstrak:

Fenomena penyimpangan sosial dan degradasi moral yang terus berulang dalam masyarakat menegaskan relevansi kajian terhadap ayat-ayat al-Qur'an yang mengandung kritik sosial melalui bentuk sindiran. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis kritik sosial-moral dalam ayat-ayat sindiran al-Qur'an dengan menggunakan pendekatan *maudhū'i* (tematik) dan analisis linguistik (retorika, pragmatik, dan wacana kritis). Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan menganalisis empat surah representatif—al-Ma'ūn (107:1–7), al-Mutaffifīn (83:1–3), al-Humazah (104:1–9), dan al-Munāfiqūn (63:1–3)—yang dipilih berdasarkan kekuatan retorikanya dalam mengkritik perilaku menyimpang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Qur'an menggunakan perangkat retoris seperti ironi, pengulangan, kontras, dan *labeling* untuk mempermalukan perilaku munafik, materialistik, dan antisosial; misalnya, Surah al-Ma'ūn menegaskan kontras antara kesalehan ritual dan kelalaian sosial, sementara Surah al-Mutaffifīn mengkritik ketidakadilan ekonomi melalui ironi. Temuan ini memperlihatkan bahwa sindiran Qur'ani tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai teguran moral, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen wacana sosial yang membangun kesadaran kolektif tentang keadilan, kepedulian, etika komunikasi, dan integritas spiritual. Penelitian ini memperkaya studi tafsir tematik dengan menawarkan perspektif linguistik dalam membaca fungsi sindiran al-Qur'an—suatu pendekatan yang relatif jarang digunakan dalam kajian sebelumnya.

Kata Kunci: Kritik sosial; Linguistik Qur'an; Moral; Sindiran; Tafsir *maudhū'i*

Introduction

The Qur'an is present not only as a theological holy book but also as a text of social criticism that corrects deviant behavior within society. In the context of Qur'anic rhetoric, satire functions not merely as a linguistic ornament but as a corrective strategy against moral deviation. Through satire, the Qur'an reveals the moral contradictions of individuals and societies in a subtle yet awareness-provoking manner.

The study of satire in the Qur'an can be found in several short and long surahs. Expressions such as "*fawaylun lil-muṣallīn*" (QS. al-Mā'ūn: 4), "*waylun lil-muṭaffiṣīn*" (QS. al-Muṭaffiṣīn: 1), "*waylun likulli humazatin lumazāb*" (QS. al-Humazah: 1), and "*nashbadu innaka la-rasūlullāh*" (QS. Al-Munafiqun: 1) can be categorized as forms of Qur'anic satire. This is because these verses contain structures of irony, semantic contradiction, and pragmatic functions that serve to correct deviant social behavior. Such criticism was not only relevant during the Prophet's time but remains contextual to this day.

Previous studies have discussed *tafsir maudhū'i* as a systematic method for understanding Qur'anic themes,¹ as well as Qur'anic rhetoric studies that highlight the styles of irony, sarcasm, and metaphor.² However, the integration between *tafsir maudhū'i* and linguistics in analyzing the function of Qur'anic satire as social-moral criticism has rarely been explored. This article seeks to fill that gap. Several studies related to verses of satire include "*Analisis Kinayah, Pembagian Dan Contohnya Di Dalam Al-Qur'an*," written by Nurul Khaidah, Wulan Destrici, and Fahri Marpaung,³ and "*Analisis Kinayah dalam Al-Qur'an tentang Kecurangan Takaran dan Timbangan: Telaah Balaghah Bayān pada Q.S. Al-Muṭaffiṣīn: 1–3, Q.S. Hud: 84–85, dan Q.S. Asy-Syu'ara: 181–183*," written by Aliffia Shinta Ghofrainy Putri, Asri Rismawati, and Adynnaras Setiawan.⁴

Previous studies have highlighted aspects of *maudhū'i* interpretation that facilitate the exploration of social themes in the Qur'an,⁵ as well as linguistic studies that examine rhetorical devices, including irony⁶ and sarcasm in certain verses.⁷ However, studies that

¹ Nashruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), 55–57.

² Abuisaac, S. R. S., "Rhetorics of Ironic Discourse of the Qur'an," *Quranica: International Journal of Quranic Research*, 12, no. 2 (2020): 1–22, <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/quranica/article/view/24618>.

³ Nurul Khaidah dkk., "Analisis Kinayah, Pembagian Dan Contohnya Di Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Alfatih: Jurnal Tafsir al-Qur'an dan Hadith*, 1, no. 3 (2025), <https://journal.salahuddinalayyubi.com/index.php/ALJT/article/view/407>.

⁴ Aliffia Shinta Ghofrainy Putri dkk., "Analisis Kinayah dalam Al Qur'an tentang Kecurangan Takaran dan Timbangan: Telaah Balaghoh Bayan pada Q.S. Al Muthafifin ayat 1-3, Q.S. Hud : 84-85, dan Q.S. Asy - Syuara : 181-183," *J-KPI: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 1, no. 2 (2025), <https://journal.irsyad.org/index.php/J-KPI/article/view/45>.

⁵ Zakiyah E, "Maudhui's Tafsir Method in the Qur'an and Hadith on Maqasid Syariah for Economic Welfare in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Economics and Philanthropy*, 5, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.21111/jiep.v5i4.8289>.

⁶ Azam, "The Irony Approach in the Qur'an: Mustansir Mir's Perspective," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v5i1.1318>.

⁷ Abuisaac, S. R. S., "Rhetorics of Ironic Discourse of the Qur'an."

integrate the *maudhū'i* approach with linguistic analysis in examining the function of satire as social and moral criticism are still relatively limited.

Previous studies on *maudhū'i* interpretation have generally focused more on normative themes such as justice, poverty, and hypocrisy without highlighting how the Qur'an conveys them rhetorically through satire. Meanwhile, linguistic research on the Qur'an has mostly examined stylistic aspects or *balāghah* in general, but rarely combined them with a thematic interpretation approach. As a result, Qur'anic satire as a form of social-moral criticism has not received adequate attention, even though this rhetorical device has the power to gently but effectively rebuke and shame deviant behavior. In addition, most studies still focus on the classical context and have not yet linked verses of satire to contemporary social phenomena, such as economic injustice, corrupt practices, hate speech, and political hypocrisy. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by integrating the *maudhū'i* approach and linguistic analysis in interpreting the function of satire in the Qur'an as social and moral criticism that is relevant throughout the ages.

This study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing four surahs: al-Ma'ūn (107:1–7), al-Mutaffifin (83:1–3), al-Humazah (104:1–9), and al-Munāfiqūn (63:1–3), which demonstrate rhetorical power in criticizing individual and social behavior. Through a combination of *maudhū'i* and linguistic approaches, this article seeks to answer the questions: How does the Qur'an convey social and moral criticism through satire, and what are its linguistic and thematic implications? This study contributes to the development of a more applicable thematic interpretation and enriches the linguistic analysis of religious texts. In addition to its theoretical relevance, this research also has significant practical contributions to modern society that can be used as an educational foundation in Islamic character education, especially in instilling the values of empathy, honesty, and social responsibility. It can also be applied in the fields of *da'wah* and religious communication, namely as a strategy for delivering moral messages that are more persuasive and contextual.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because the objects of study are the texts of the Qur'an and *tafsir* literature, so the analysis is conducted on written sources rather than field data. As emphasized in the study of thematic exegesis methodology, library research allows researchers to compile verses related to a theme, then relate them to the social context and supporting literature to gain a comprehensive understanding.⁸

The analysis was conducted in two main stages. *First*, the *maudhū'i* (thematic) approach, which involved compiling Qur'anic verses containing satire, then grouping these verses into socio-moral themes such as mockery of revelation, hypocrisy, arrogance, and economic exploitation. This step is in line with the systematic practice of *maudhū'i*

⁸ Dinni Nazhifah dan Fatimah Isyti Karimah, "Hakikat Tafsir Maudhu'i dalam al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*, 1, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i3.13033>.

interpretation in examining the themes of the Qur'an.⁹ Second, linguistic analysis is conducted to deepen understanding by examining semantic aspects (lexical meaning and connotations of satirical terms), pragmatics (the function of satirical speech in the context of communication), and stylistics (rhetorical patterns such as irony, satire, and parallelism). This linguistic approach has been widely used in contemporary research on the style of the Qur'an, including in studies of irony and its translation.¹⁰

The primary data sources in this study are the text of the Qur'an (in Arabic and its translation) and classical tafsir books (e.g., *Tafsir al-Tabarī*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathīr*) as well as contemporary ones (such as *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by M. Quraish Shihab). Secondary data was obtained from books, national and international journal articles, and previous studies related to Qur'anic linguistics and thematic tafsir. The research instrument was the researcher himself as a critical reader, with data collection techniques in the form of examination, recording, and classification of literature. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as per the qualitative analysis model commonly used in tafsir and linguistics studies.¹¹

Using this method, the study seeks to find the relevance of social and moral criticism in satirical verses to contemporary phenomena, as well as to explain the linguistic mechanisms that reinforce Qur'anic messages.

Results and Discussion

The *Maudhū'i* and Linguistic Approaches to Studying Satirical Verses

The *maudhū'i* or thematic interpretation approach is a method that compiles verses from the Qur'an based on specific themes, then analyzes them comprehensively to obtain a complete picture of the Qur'an's stance on the issue being studied.¹² This method was developed in response to the limitations of *tahlīlī* (*analytical*) interpretation, which interprets verses sequentially, making it difficult to capture the Qur'anic message within a single major theme.¹³ In the context of this study, the *maudhū'i* approach was used to examine verses containing elements of satire or social criticism, so that verses scattered throughout various chapters could be collected within a single analytical framework. However, researchers using the *maudhū'i* approach, which is an interpretation that explains several verses of the Qur'an

⁹ Imam Muslim Amin, et al., "Tafsir Maudhu'i: Menelisik Sejarah, Metode, dan Signifikansinya dalam Pemikiran Tafsir Kontemporer," *JSIM: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan*, 5, no. 6 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntaximperatif.v5i6.569>.

¹⁰ Abuisaac, S. R. S., "Emotiveness and Translational Equivalence of Irony," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, advance online publication, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1806905>; Ali Albashir Mohammed Alhaj, "The Translatability of Some Qur'anic Verbal Irony into English: A Comparative Stylistic and Pragmatic Analytical Study," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 9, no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijael.v.9n.5p.11>.

¹¹ Matthew B. Miles dkk., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3 (Sage: Singapura, 2014).

¹² Abdul Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2017), 97.

¹³ 'Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawī, *al-Bidayah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawdū'i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mawdū'iyyah* (Kairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1994), 15–16.

on a particular title or theme, do not examine verses one by one, but rather take a specific theme.¹⁴

The strength of the *maudhū'i* approach lies in its ability to provide a holistic perspective. By compiling all verses that contain elements of satire, researchers can trace patterns, consistency, and variations in Qur'anic rhetoric in conveying social and moral criticism.¹⁵ For example, satire against disbelievers, hypocrites, or groups who are negligent of the signs of Allah's power often appears in a repetitive form, even though it is scattered throughout different chapters. With this approach, the unity of the message can be captured more completely and avoid thematic fragmentation.

In addition, the *maudhū'i* method also helps researchers identify thematic hierarchies: starting from general themes (satire on human arrogance), sub-themes (satire on hypocrisy, insincerity, or intellectual negligence), to specific linguistic expressions.¹⁶ Thus, the research is not only descriptive, but also offers a more systematic thematic classification. However, this approach has challenges. First, the subjectivity of verse selection: not all mufassir agree on whether a verse is satirical or not. Second, the potential reduction of historical context: if researchers only collect verses thematically without considering *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the meaning of satire can lose its historical nuance. Therefore, ideal *maudhū'i* interpretation must still pay attention to the context in which the verse was revealed and classical interpretations as a point of verification.¹⁷

The *maudhū'i* approach in contemporary development is widely used in Qur'anic studies because it is considered relevant to the needs of modern society, which wants to understand certain issues thematically, including socio-moral issues.¹⁸ Thus, the application of this method in the study of satirical verses is not only beneficial for the development of academic interpretation, but also contributes practically to Islamic education, *da'wah*, and religious literacy that is more contextual.

Meanwhile, the linguistic approach in Qur'anic studies focuses on language as the primary gateway to understanding the divine message. In the context of satirical verses, linguistic analysis centers on the rhetorical structure, stylistics, and pragmatic functions of the Qur'an's language. The linguistic approach to the Qur'an has developed significantly over

¹⁴ Fauzan dkk., "Metode Tafsir Maudu'i (Tematic): Kajian Ayat Ekologi," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan al-Hadits*, 13, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v13i2.4168>.

¹⁵ Syaeful Rokim dan Rumba Triana, "Tafsir Maudhū'i: Asas dan Langkah Penelitian Tafsir Tematik," *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 6, no. 2 (2021): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v6i02.2057>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Naufal Hakim dan Abd. Kholid, "Reposisi Dialektis Tafsir Lughawi: Pergeseran Integratif Pendekatan Linguistik Dalam Wacana Tafsir Kontemporer," *QOF: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 6, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v6i2.275>.

¹⁷ Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'an* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986).

¹⁸ Dede Rosyada, "A Contextual Method of Interpreting The Qur'an: A Search For The Compatibility Of Islam And Modernity," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS 2017)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, vol. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.2991/icqhs-17.2018.1>.

the past few decades. Qur'anic linguistic studies are no longer limited to grammatical and classical *balaghah* aspects but have expanded into the fields of semantics, pragmatics, and stylistics, which explore meaning, speech context, and the rhetorical beauty of the sacred text. This approach allows for a deeper analysis of the communicative function and social message of the Qur'an, including the understanding of verses that carry satirical nuances.¹⁹ Several studies have shown that semantic and pragmatic analyses of the Qur'an play an important role in uncovering implied meanings, speech acts, and rhetorical irony that form part of the Qur'an's communicative strategy.²⁰ This approach is essential because satire is a form of communication that relies not only on lexical meaning but also contains implicit intent conveyed through irony, hyperbole, or rhetorical questions.²¹

Stylistically, the Qur'an employs variations in diction, repetition, and sentence construction that produce a tone of mockery or moral correction toward certain groups. For instance, verses depicting the behavior of hypocrites often use subtle irony—stating something outwardly but intending the opposite meaning.²² Stylistic analysis helps reveal how word choice, rhythm, and linguistic style construct a strong satirical tone within the text.

From a pragmatic perspective, Qur'anic satire can be analyzed through speech act theory and Gricean implicature. Rhetorical questions used in many verses serve not to seek answers but to criticize, mock, or make the audience aware of their mistakes.²³ Thus, the pragmatic approach can uncover hidden communicative intentions that are not always explicitly stated in the text.

Meanwhile, discourse analysis shows that satire often emerges through the relationship between verses. Textual cohesion, the use of discourse markers, and the arrangement of information sequence create rhetorical effects that emphasize the contradiction between human claims and the reality presented by Allah. By reading satirical verses within their discursive sequence, researchers can grasp the Qur'an's persuasive strategy, which appeals not only to the cognitive but also to the affective dimension.²⁴

The linguistic approach also emphasizes the challenges of translation. Many studies show that nuances of irony and sarcasm in the Qur'an are often lost when translated into other languages.²⁵ This highlights the importance of direct analysis of the Arabic text, taking into account the cultural context and classical Arabic rhetoric as the original medium of revelation. Thus, the linguistic approach not only examines the structural aspects of language

¹⁹ Hussein Abdul Raof, *New Horizons in Qur'anic Linguistics: A Syntactic, Semantic and Stylistic Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315670911>.

²⁰ Abuisaac, S. R. S., "Rhetorics of Ironic Discourse of the Qur'an," 1–22.

²¹ Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 87.

²² Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'an*.

²³ Abuisaac, S. R. S., "Rhetorics of Ironic Discourse of the Qur'an," 23–45.

²⁴ Rosyada, "A Contextual Method of Interpreting The Qur'an: A Search For The Compatibility Of Islam And Modernity."

²⁵ Muhammad Maan Mamdouh dan Muhammed Ibrahim Hamood, "Translating Sarcasm in Some Quranic Verses into English: Calling Hell as Guidance and Shelter," *British Journal of English Linguistics*, 9, no. 4 (2021): 20–33, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3901127.

but also uncovers the rhetorical and social functions of satirical verses. The integration of stylistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis contributes significantly to understanding the role of satire as a means of social and moral critique in the Qur'an.²⁶

Analyzing Qur'anic verses that contain satire requires a combination of macro and micro approaches: the *maudhū'i* (thematic exegesis) approach provides a framework for collecting and organizing the corpus of verses based on topic or communicative function, while the linguistic approach offers analytical access to the level of language stylistics, pragmatics, and discourse structure that realizes the satirical effect.²⁷ This combination allows for an interpretation that is both representative (encompassing all relevant verses) and hermeneutic-textual (reading rhetorical strategies within each verse).²⁸

Satirical Verses in the Qur'an

In the context of this study, satirical verses refer to Qur'anic passages that use indirect language (*kinayah*), irony, or sarcasm to deliver moral admonition and social critique without explicitly naming the subject. Such linguistic forms are known in *balaghah* studies as *uslūb al-taḥqīr*, *uslūb al-sukhrijah*, and *kinayah* speech styles intended to disgrace reprehensible behavior through refined yet pointed expressions.²⁹

According to Al-Saidi, irony in the Qur'an is a stylistic strategy that presents a contrast between literal meaning and communicative intent, thereby producing a profound moral critique without resorting to direct condemnation.³⁰ Meanwhile, Abdul Raof asserts that this style of language is part of Qur'anic stylistics, which combines semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical aspects to build the persuasive power of revelation.³¹ Thus, the term "satirical verses" in this study is understood as verses that contain corrective and moral messages through implicit, ironic, or symbolic linguistic forms that linguistically aim to raise ethical and social awareness in listeners and readers.

1. QS. al-Ma'ün (107:1–7): Criticism of Worship Without Social Morals³²

Surah al-Ma'ün satirizes people who are diligent in worship but neglect social values. The verse "*fawāylun lil-muṣallīn*" (woe to those who pray) is a shocking irony, because prayer is usually synonymous with goodness. However, this satire is directed at those who

²⁶ Mohammad Amin Hawamdeh dan Kais Amer Kadhim, "Parenthetical Cohesive Explicitness: A Linguistic Approach for a Modified Translation of the Quranic Text," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4, no. 5 (2015): 152–59, <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.5p.161>.

²⁷ Muhammad Adib dkk., "Metodologi Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Antropomorfisme: Studi Analisis Linguistik Atas Tafsir Al-Munir Karya Wahbah Al-Zuhaili," *Al-Misykah: Jurnal Studi Al-qur'an dan Tafsir*, 2, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.19109/almisykah.v2i1.9053>.

²⁸ Rokim dan Triana, "Tafsir Maudhū'i: Asas dan Langkah Penelitian Tafsir Tematik."

²⁹ Khaidah dkk., "Analisis Kinayah, Pembagian Dan Contohnya Di Dalam Al-Qur'an," 45–59.

³⁰ A. A. Al-Saidi, "Irony in the Qur'an: A Stylistic Analysis," *Arab World English Journal*, 2, no. 4 (2011), <https://awej.org/announcements/>.

³¹ Raof, *New Horizons in Qur'anic Linguistics: A Syntactic, Semantic and Stylistic Analysis*.

³² L. Ibnuurusd Al Hafied dan Samsahudi, "Etika Sosial dalam Al-Qur'an: Perspektif Ibnu Khaldun dan Kritik terhadap Pandangan Karl Marx tentang Agama," *Kartika: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 5, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.59240/kjsk.v5i1.163>.

pray only as a formality without social concern.³³ The word al-Ma‘ūn refers to small acts of assistance, such as giving water, a needle, or other simple necessities, but refusing to do so is described as despicable behavior.³⁴

According to Ibn Kathīr, this satire is aimed at the hypocrites of Quraish who pray only to be seen by others, but do not care about social values.³⁵ From a modern perspective, this verse refers to formalistic religious practices that have lost their social substance, relevant to the contemporary phenomenon of religious rituals that are separated from public moral commitment.³⁶

Linguistically, this form of satire appears in ironic diction (waylun) and rhetorical contradiction: worshiping but ignoring social morals.³⁷ Thus, this verse teaches that ritual worship that has no social implications will lose its meaning. The Qur’anic criticism in this surah can be applied to modern phenomena such as corruption committed by religious elites or the individualistic attitudes of urban communities that forget social solidarity.³⁸

2. QS. al-Mutaffifīn (83:1–3): Criticism of Economic Fraud³⁹

This verse opens with the repeated threat “waylun lil-muṭaffifīn” (woe to those who cheat), demonstrating the rhetorical function of repetition to emphasize the seriousness of social sin.⁴⁰ The satire is directed at merchants who cheat on weights: taking more when buying, but giving less when selling.

This verse criticizes those who cheat in weights and measures. The word “al-Mutaffifīn” itself is a form of satire, because lexically it means people who take a small profit but harm others. The rhetorical structure of this verse displays irony: they are very meticulous when demanding their rights, but cheat when giving rights to others.

³³ Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin Jarir ath-Thabary, *Jami’ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001).

³⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah: Kesan, Pesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur’ān*, Vol. 13 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002).

³⁵ Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-Adzīm*, ed. oleh Muhammad Husein Syamsuddin, Juz 5 (Dar al Kutub al Ilmiyah, 1998).

³⁶ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’ān: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (New York, 2006).

³⁷ Hishomudin Ahmad dan Norfarhana Ahmad Ghafar, “Stylistic Variation and Linguistic Strategies in Quranic Discourse: A Rhetorical, Phonetic, and Translational Analysis,” *International Journal of Research And Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* IX, no. IV (2025), <https://doi.org/DOI:%2520https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400426>.

³⁸ Almujahid, “Solusi Al-Qur’ān dalam Pemberantasan Korupsi,” *At-Tahfidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’ān dan Tafsir*, 1, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.53649/at-tahfidz.v1i02.431>.

³⁹ Junet Kaswoto dkk., “Tafsir Ekonomi: Pencegahan Kecurangan dengan Pendekatan Teori Fraud Triangle dalam Perspektif Tafsir Jalalain,” *JIEI: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam*, 11, no. 1 (2025), <https://jurnal.stie-aas.ac.id/index.php/jei/article/view/16934>.

⁴⁰ Mia Dwi Setiawahyu dan Yusrizal Efendi, “Kecurangan dalam Jual Beli Menurut Al-Qur’ān Perspektif Tafsir Al-Munir,” *Lathaif: Literasi Tafsir, Hadis dan Filologi*, 1, no. 1 (2022), <http://dx.doi.org/10.31958/lathaif.v1i1.5746>.

Al-Ṭabarī⁴¹ explains that this verse was revealed in relation to fraudulent trading practices in Medina. Ibn Kathīr⁴² explains that this verse was revealed in response to the fraudulent practices of some Medina merchants. Linguistically, the Qur'an's style of satire here uses semantic contrast: "when receiving, they demand full measure, but when giving, they reduce it." This contrast produces a sharp social criticism effect. Meanwhile, the diction *yuzīnūna* (reduce) and *yastawfūn* (demand full measure) form an irony that reveals injustice. This confirms that the use of oppositional diction in the Qur'an is an effective stylistic strategy for exposing hypocritical or contradictory behavior.⁴³ This satire is not only applicable in the context of classical trade, but is also relevant to practices of corruption, economic manipulation, and abuse of power in the modern era.⁴⁴

3. QS. al-Humazah (104:1–9): Criticism of Arrogance and Destructive Behavior

Surah al-Humazah begins with a harsh satire against "kulli humazatin lumazah" (every slanderer and backbiter). The words *humazah* and *lumazah* show a form of phonetic repetition that reinforces the tone of mockery. This verse satirizes the behavior of belittling others, accumulating wealth, and feeling immortal with one's riches. The Qur'an's satire here is very explicit, using sound repetition (*humazah–lumazah*) to emphasize the bad character.⁴⁵ Pragmatically, this form of satire attacks social behaviors such as gossip, slander, and belittling others.

Ibn 'Āshūr⁴⁶ interprets *humazah* as verbal criticism, while *lumazah* means criticism through gestures or actions. The linguistic style of this verse displays phonetic parallelism that serves to sharpen the criticism. Meanwhile, according to al-Zamakhsharī, the mention of *al-ḥuṭamah* (destructive fire) is a hyperbolic metaphor for hell, which serves to humiliate the arrogant.⁴⁷ Linguistically, the use of harsh diction, repetition, and metaphors demonstrates the beauty and assertiveness of the Qur'anic style.⁴⁸

This satire contains a moral lesson that consumptive, arrogant, and critical behavior are social ills that destroy the order of society. The Qur'an's criticism remains relevant to today's digital culture, where "*humazah*" can take the form of hate speech or cyberbullying

⁴¹ ath-Thabary, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an*.

⁴² Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Adzim*.

⁴³ Raof, *New Horizons in Qur'anic Linguistics: A Syntactic, Semantic and Stylistic Analysis*.

⁴⁴ Hulliyatus Saniyah, "The Response of The Qur'an and Bible to Acts of Corruption: A Comparative Study and Its Societal Impact," *Irfana: Journal of Religious Studies*, 1, no. 2 (2025), <https://journals.aimrc.com/irfana/article/view/99>.

⁴⁵ Nur Syazana Adam dan Syed Hadzrullah Syed Omar, "Terapi Sifat Sombong Menurut Teori Spiritual al-Ghazali dan al-Muhasibi," *BITARA: International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences*, 6, no. 1 (2023), <https://bitarajournal.com/index.php/bitarajournal/article/view/345>.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Thohir Ibnu Asyur, *Tafsir at-Tahrir wa at-Tanvir* (Tunisia: *Jami' huku' al-thob'I Mahfudhah*, 1984).

⁴⁷ Al-Zamakhsyari, *Tafsir Al-Kasyyaf* (Beirut: Dar al-Marefah, 2009).

⁴⁸ Al-Saïdi, "Irony in the Qur'an: A Stylistic Analysis," 45–62.

on social media, as well as identity politics. This shows that this verse serves as an ethical reference in developing Islamic digital literacy.⁴⁹

4. QS. al-Munāfiqūn (63:1–3): Criticism of Hypocrisy and Lies⁵⁰

This verse opens with a description of the hypocrites who say, “*nashhadu innaka larasūlullah*” (we testify that you are truly the Rasulullah), but Allah affirms that they are lying. The satire is directed at paradoxical behavior: noble words but false intentions.

Al-Ṭabarī interprets the hypocrites' oath as a shield to cover up their political falsehood.⁵¹ Al-Rāzī⁵² interprets this satire as directed at the hypocritical elite of Medina who used false oaths to gain social legitimacy. In a modern context, this verse can be read as a criticism of the politicization of religion and transactional political practices. Esack,⁵³ in *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, shows that the Qur'an consistently criticizes forms of socio-political hypocrisy that oppress weak groups, so this verse can be used as the basis for Islamic political ethics with integrity.

Linguistically, the use of the phrase *innahum lakażibūn* (they are indeed liars) with the emphasis on the particles *lam* and *inna* explicitly confirms their lies. This irony is a form of sharp Qur'anic satire.⁵⁴ This criticism remains relevant to the contemporary world, where political hypocrisy, manipulation of information, and abuse of religion for worldly interests have become global social problems.⁵⁵

The four surahs above show that Qur'anic satire is not merely a reproach, but a means of da'wah and moral education. Thematically (*maudhū'i*), these verses consistently rebuke social inequality, economic fraud, destructive arrogance, and hypocrisy. Linguistically, Qur'anic satire is manifested in the diction found in the words *waylun*, *humazah*, *lumazah*, *al-Ma'un*; metaphors shown in *al-ḥuṭamah* for hellfire; irony shown in the meaning of prayer but forgetting society; false oaths; repetition of the word *waylun* and rhetorical style found in oppositional diction, hyperbole, and phonetics.

The combination of *maudhū'i* and linguistic approaches shows that Qur'anic satire is a persuasive, aesthetic, and effective da'wah strategy. It criticizes and educates, building individual and social moral awareness.

⁴⁹ Moh. Bakir, “Solusi Al-Qur'an terhadap Ujaran Kebencian (Pendekatan Maṣlahah Najmuddin al-Tufi),” *Al-Fanar: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 2, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33511/alfanar.v2n1.75-92>.

⁵⁰ Ghofari Sulton dkk., “Karakteristik Orang-orang Munafik dalam Surat Al-Munafiqun (Studi Tafsir Ibnu Katsir),” *Hamalatul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an*, 5, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.37985/hq.v5i2.17>.

⁵¹ ath-Thabary, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an*.

⁵² Fakhruddin ar-Rāzī, *Mafatih Al-Gaib* (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr, 1981).

⁵³ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity (Against Oppression*, 1997).

⁵⁴ Hussein Abdul Raof, *Qur'anic Stylistics: A Linguistic Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁵⁵ Fadl, K. A. E., *Reasoning with God: Reclaiming Shari'ah in the Modern Age* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

Linguistic Analysis of Satirical Verses

The following table lists verses that explicitly discuss linguistic satire and its functions:

No	Surah/ Verse	Linguistic Form	Example of Qur'anic Text	Analysis and Function of Satire
1	al-Ma'ūn (107:1–7)	Irony & Contrasting Diction	أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِاللَّهِينَ ... فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُنْصَرِينَ (Do you know those who deny religion? ... Woe to those who pray)	Irony: people who pray diligently are mocked for neglecting the social meaning of worship. The word “prayer” is used paradoxically to mock worship behavior that is devoid of social value. ⁵⁶
2	al- Mutaffifin (83:1–3)	Repetition & Direct Satire	وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُنْكَفِفينَ (Woe to those who cheat)	The repetition of “waylun” emphasizes harsh criticism. The satire is directed at perpetrators of economic fraud, with repetition of structure to reinforce the rhetorical effect. ⁵⁷
3	al- Humazah (104:1–9)	Metaphors & Hyperbole	وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَّةٍ لُّفَّةٍ ... كَلَّا لَّيُبَدِّلَنَّ فِي أَخْطَمَةٍ (Woe to every slanderer and backbiter... he will be thrown into al-Huṭamah)	The metaphor “al-Huṭamah” (the destroying fire) satirizes greed and arrogance. The hyperbolic style reinforces the image of torment as a moral consequence. ⁵⁸
4	al- Munāfiqūn (63:1–3)	Irony & Symbolism	إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشَهُدُ إِنَّكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ... اتَّخِذُوا أَعْمَالَنَا جُنَاحَةً (When the hypocrites come to you, they say, “We bear witness that you are truly the Messenger of Allah...” They use their oaths as a shield)	Irony: a profession of faith that is actually used as a tool of deception. Symbolic: “an oath as a shield” satirizes the hypocritical way of hiding falsehood behind words. ⁵⁹

Table 1: The Function of Satirical Verses

⁵⁶ ar-Râzî, *Mafatib Al-Gaib*.

⁵⁷ Ahmad dan Ghafar, “Stylistic Variation and Linguistic Strategies in Quranic Discourse: A Rhetorical, Phonetic, and Translational Analysis”; Aminatuz Zahroh, “Repetisi Dalam Surah Al-Shu`Arâ: Kajian Stilistika Al-Qur`An” (Skripsi, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Anwar, 2022), <https://repo.staialanwar.ac.id/343/>.

⁵⁸ Abdur-Rahman bin Nashir As-Sa'di, *Tafsîr al-Karîm al-Râhîm fî Tafsîr Kâlâm al-Mannâن* (Riyadh: Dâr al-Salâm, 2000); Al-Sâidi, “Irony in the Qur'an: A Stylistic Analysis.”

⁵⁹ Raof, *Qur'anic Stylistics: A Linguistic Analysis*.

Satire as a Means of Preaching and Moral Education in the Qur'an

The Qur'an has a distinctive rhetorical style in conveying its message. One of them is by using satire (*uslūb al-sukhriyah wa al-taqqīr*) to reprimand deviant behavior, instill moral awareness, and strengthen the persuasive power of the divine message. Satire is not intended as empty mockery, but rather as a rhetorical strategy that touches the listener's psychology so that they reflect on their mistakes.

1. Satire as a Strategy for Preaching

Qur'anic satire is directed at groups that are difficult to reach with direct commands, such as hypocrites, oppressors, and rebels. For example, QS. al-Munāfiqūn [63:1–3] satirizes hypocrites who use false oaths as a shield. This ironic expression is not merely a condemnation, but a means of preaching to expose their falsehood and urge the community to be wary of deception.⁶⁰

2. Satire as Moral Education

The Qur'an educates its followers through satire that causes social shame for negative behavior. QS. al-Ma'ūn [107:1–7] satirizes people who are diligent in prayer but forget their social responsibilities, such as refusing to give small assistance (*al-ma'ūn*). This satire serves as moral education so that ritual worship is not separated from social concern.⁶¹

3. Satire to Raise Social Awareness

The Qur'an often uses satire to address destructive social behaviors, such as economic greed and oppression. QS. al-Mutaffifīn [83:1–3] satirizes merchants who cheat in their measurements and weights. With the repetition of the word “*waylun*” (woe), this verse creates a strong rhetorical effect, instilling collective awareness of the dangers of social fraud.⁶²

4. Satire as a Moral Warning and Threat

Qur'anic satire also functions as a moral threat conveyed symbolically and metaphorically. QS. al-Humazah [104:1–9] satirizes people who like to criticize, curse, and accumulate wealth. The threat of “*al-Huṭamah*” (destructive fire) is not only a description of punishment, but also a means of moral education so that humans avoid arrogance and behavior that demeans others.⁶³

The satirical verses in the Qur'an are an effective form of rhetorical preaching because they combine linguistic, psychological, and spiritual aspects. Satirical language creates a confrontational effect that makes listeners reflect on their mistakes without having

⁶⁰ Raof, *Qur'anic Stylistics: A Linguistic Analysis*.

⁶¹ Muhammad Nur, “Kritik Sosial Dalam Al-Ma‘ūn: Analisis Tematik,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 29, no. 2 (2021).

⁶² Ahmad dan Ghafar, “Stylistic Variation and Linguistic Strategies in Quranic Discourse: A Rhetorical, Phonetic, and Translational Analysis.”

⁶³ Al-Saïdi, “Irony in the Qur'an: A Stylistic Analysis.”

to face vulgar reproach. Thus, satire functions as a mechanism for internalizing moral values through a rhetorical and aesthetic approach.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The Qur'an uses satire not merely to criticize, but to educate, warn, and guide people. Through satire, the Qur'an builds moral awareness, criticizes deviant social behavior, and upholds the principle of justice. This makes Qur'anic satire a unique means of preaching, full of wisdom, and still relevant for moral education in modern society. This study shows that the Qur'an consistently uses satire as a rhetorical device to criticize deviant social and moral behavior. Through thematic (*maudhu'i*) and linguistic analysis, it was found that Surah al-Ma'ün (107:1–7), al-Mutaffifin (83:1–3), al-Humazah (104:1–9), and al-Munāfiqūn (63:1–3) display strategies of irony, repetition, contrast, and labeling in constructing moral messages. This Qur'anic satire functions not only as an individual rebuke, but also as a social discourse that exposes practices of economic injustice, demeaning communication, spiritual hypocrisy, and ritualism that is devoid of social value. Thus, the Qur'an presents a transhistorical socio-moral critique that remains relevant in addressing contemporary issues.

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⁶⁴ Hussein Abdul Raof, *Theological Approaches to Qur'anic Exegesis* (London: Routledge, 2018).

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