

Dialogical Communication in the Qur'an: A Thematic-Hermeneutic Study of *Hiwār* Verses in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the concept of *hiwār* (dialogue) in the Qur'an through the perspective of *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by M. Quraish Shihab. The main issue addressed is the decline of communication ethics in the modern era and how the principles of Qur'anic dialogue can serve as a reference for building harmonious communication. Using a thematic-hermeneutic approach, this study seeks to describe the forms, principles, and functions of *hiwār* based on verses containing dialogue, such as those in QS. al-Kahfi, al-Mujadalah, Ali Imran, Ghafir, al-Hajj, and al-Syura. The method employed is a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach through direct analysis of *Tafsir al-Mishbah* and other supporting references. The results of the study indicate that dialogue in the Qur'an is rational, ethical, and solution-oriented; it emphasizes the importance of knowledge, humility, and the prohibition of baseless debate. Furthermore, the concept of *ushul marji'iyah*—adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah—emerges as a fundamental principle in resolving differences. These findings affirm that the dialogue method from the perspective of *Tafsir al-Mishbah* is relevant for application in contemporary social and digital communication to prevent conflict and strengthen the value of brotherhood. This study contributes to the formulation of an applicable framework for Qur'anic communication ethics, emphasizing that *hiwār* is not merely theological in nature but also possesses a social dimension relevant to addressing the communication crisis in the modern era, particularly within the digital space, which is prone to conflict and disinformation. This makes this study relevant not only for academic research but also for the development of more inclusive and harmonious communication practices.

Keywords: *Communication ethics, Hiwār, Qur'anic communication, Tafsir al-Mishbah*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji konsep *hiwār* (dialog) dalam al-Qur'an melalui perspektif *Tafsir al-Mishbah* karya M. Quraish Shihab. Masalah utama yang diangkat adalah lemahnya etika komunikasi di era modern dan bagaimana prinsip dialog Qur'ani dapat menjadi rujukan untuk membangun komunikasi yang harmonis. Menggunakan pendekatan tematik-hermeneutik, penelitian berupaya mendeskripsikan bentuk, prinsip, dan fungsi *hiwār* berdasarkan ayat-ayat yang memuat dialog, seperti dalam QS. al-Kahfi, al-Mujadalah, Ali Imran, Ghafir, al-Hajj, dan al-Syura. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif secara deskriptif-analitis melalui kajian langsung terhadap *Tafsir al-Mishbah* serta referensi pendukung lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *hiwār* dalam al-Qur'an bersifat rasional, etis, dan solutif; menekankan pentingnya pengetahuan, kerendahan hati, serta larangan debat tanpa dasar. Selain itu, konsep *ushul marji'iyah*—berpegang pada al-Qur'an dan Sunnah—muncul sebagai prinsip fundamental dalam penyelesaian perbedaan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa metode dialog perspektif *Tafsir al-Mishbah* relevan diterapkan dalam komunikasi sosial dan digital masa kini untuk mencegah konflik dan menguatkan nilai persaudaraan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam merumuskan kerangka etika komunikasi Qur'ani yang aplikatif, dengan menegaskan bahwa *hiwār* tidak hanya bersifat teologis, tetapi juga memiliki dimensi sosial yang relevan untuk menjawab krisis komunikasi di era modern, khususnya dalam ruang digital yang rentan konflik dan disinformasi. Hal

ini menjadikan penelitian ini relevan tidak hanya bagi kajian akademik, tetapi juga bagi pengembangan praktik komunikasi yang lebih inklusif dan harmonis.

Kata Kunci: *Etika komunikasi, Hiwār, Komunikasi Qur’ani, Tafsir al-Misbbab*

Introduction

As social beings, humans cannot be separated from interaction and communication with others.¹ From birth, human interaction plays a fundamental role in sustaining life. In everyday life, individuals continuously rely on communication across various aspects of existence.² Social interaction itself involves the process of message exchange between communicators and recipients in order to achieve specific purposes. This process reflects the essential nature of humans as social beings who are constantly engaged in relationships and the dynamics of daily life.³

Communication requires a set of norms to ensure that interactions remain within the boundaries of proper conduct and ethics.⁴ In Islam, these principles are comprehensively regulated, encompassing various aspects of life, including modes of communication, survival, and the establishment of social norms.⁵ In the context of interpersonal communication, Islam emphasizes the importance of noble character (*akhlak*) as the primary foundation in conveying messages.⁶ However, rapid technological advancements have brought about ambivalent effects. On the one hand, they facilitate and accelerate communication; on the other hand, they also create space for the degradation of linguistic ethics. Emerging phenomena indicate that some Muslims tend to neglect principles of polite communication, as reflected in the widespread use of unethical language such as insults, mockery, and other negative expressions.⁷ This condition poses a serious concern, particularly for younger generations who are in the formative stages of character and value development. Gradually, communication grounded in noble ethics is becoming marginalized, while the use of inappropriate language is increasingly normalized in everyday life.⁸

¹ Wolfgang Schöll, “The socio-emotional basis of human interaction and communication: How we construct our social world”, *Sage Journals* 52, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018412466607>.

² Neil Selwyn, “Apart from technology: understanding people’s non-use of information and communication technologies in everyday life”, *Technology in Society* 25, no. 1 (2003), 99-116. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-791X\(02\)00062-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-791X(02)00062-3).

³ Thomas Luckmann, “On Social Interaction and the Communicative Construction of Personal Identity, Knowledge and Reality”, *Sage Journals* 29, no. 2 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840607087260>.

⁴ Daniel J. Gifford, “Communication of Legal Standards: Policy Development and Effective Conduct Regulation”, *Cornell Law Review* 56, no. 1 (1970).

⁵ Amal Ibrahim Abd El-Fattah Khalil, “The Islamic Perspective of Interpersonal Communication”, *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2016), 22-37. <https://doi.org/10.15640/jisc.v4n2a3>.

⁶ Yudhy Widya Kusumo, Mariana Mariana, “Manajemen Komunikasi Islam: Prinsip, Konsep, dan Relevansi di Era Modern”, *Journal of Islamic Management* 5, no. 1 (2025), 29–54. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jim.v5i1.1961>.

⁷ Yasser Muda Lubis, “Ujaran Kebencian di Era Digital (Perspektif Etika Komunikasi Al-Qur’an Dan Solusinya)”, *Busyro : Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam* 6, no. 1 (2024), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.55352/kpi.v6i1.1126>.

⁸ Timothy Phillips, Philip Smith, “Everyday Incivility: Towards a Benchmark,” *The Sociological Review* 51, no. 3 (2003): 329–345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00420>.

Therefore, contextually relevant solutions aligned with contemporary developments are necessary, while maintaining adherence to the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources of guidance. The concept of ideal Islamic communication, which emphasizes inclusive social interaction without discrimination—whether based on socioeconomic status such as wealth and poverty or other distinctions such as honor and position—has been widely discussed. In communication practice, professionalism and the control of negative prejudice toward others remain essential principles.⁹ Furthermore, the Qur'an also regulates prohibited forms of communication, such as secret conversations (*al-najwā*), as addressed in several chapters, including QS. an-Nisā', at-Taubah, and al-Isrā'.¹⁰

Several previous studies have highlighted the theme of dialogical communication in the Qur'an. For instance, some studies focus on the concept of dialogical methods (*al-hiwār*, *al-jadal*, and *ḥujaj*) within Islamic epistemology and the ethics of dialogue;¹¹ others analyze the forms of *hiwār* (dialogue) in fostering interreligious harmony;¹² while additional research examines various terms related to discussion in the Qur'an, including *al-hiwār*.¹³ There are also studies that explore the ethics of dialogue according to Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi in *Adab al-Hiwār fi al-Islam* and their application in active learning within educational settings.¹⁴

Most studies on *al-hiwār* (dialogue) have elaborated on its forms, principles, and functions. However, analytical studies that examine this concept through *Tafsir al-Mishbah* remain limited, despite the fact that this exegesis represents a contemporary approach relevant to modern developments. Its strengths include the author's deep understanding of the socio-historical context of Indonesian society, detailed linguistic explanations of Qur'anic verses that provide comprehensive thematic insights, the use of an *adabi ijtimā'i* approach that connects the Qur'anic message of guidance with social realities, and an emphasis on religious moderation that reinforces interfaith tolerance.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how *Tafsir al-Mishbah* interprets *hiwār* verses in the Qur'an, thereby offering a richer perspective on the application of Qur'anic dialogical communication in both everyday life and contemporary digital communication contexts. Theoretically, this study contributes to enriching the field of

⁹ Halimatussa'diah Halimatussa'diah, "Etika Komunikasi Islam Dalam Al-Qur'an Surat 'Abasa Ayat 1-10," *Jurnal An-Nasyr: Jurnal Dakwah Dalam Mata Tinta* 8, no. 2 (2021): 147–59, <https://doi.org/10.54621/jn.v8i2.142>.

¹⁰ Salamah Noorhidayati Maziyatul Hikmah, Teguh Teguh, "Makna Al-Najwa Dalam Al-Qur'an : Studi Komparatif Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Al-Mishbah," *KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2022): 161–84.

¹¹ Hasan Bakti Nasution dan Roeslaini, "Metode Dialogis Dalam Epistemologi Islam" Universitas Islam Negeri Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, 2021.

¹² Nasrudin, "Bentuk Komunikasi dalam Menciptakan Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama (Kajian Fenomenologi di Desa Pembakulan Kecamatan Batang Alai Timur Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Tengah)" Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023.

¹³ Eko Zulfikar, "Etika Diskusi Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an", *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 20, no. 1 (2019): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2019.2001-01>.

¹⁴ Moh. Erfan Maulana, Abuddin Nata dan Bahrudin, "Analisis Implementasi Adab Berdialog Menurut Muhammad Sayyid Thanthawi Melalui Pembelajaran Siswa Aktif Di Sekolah" Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, 01 Februari 2021.

thematic Qur'anic exegesis by proposing an integrative conceptual framework of Qur'anic dialogical communication, particularly through the synthesis of *hiwār* principles and the *adabī ijtima'ī* approach. Furthermore, it expands the discourse on Islamic communication by positioning tafsir as a normative foundation for developing a contextual theory of communication ethics. Practically, this study proposes a dialogical communication model that can be implemented across various domains of interaction—interpersonal, social, and digital—emphasizing rationality, ethical conduct, and solution-oriented engagement. This model is expected to serve as a reference for fostering more courteous, inclusive, and constructive communication patterns, as well as contributing to conflict reduction and the strengthening of social cohesion in increasingly pluralistic and digitalized societies.

To obtain comprehensive insights, this study employs a qualitative method based on library research with a thematic-hermeneutic approach. The data sources consist of primary and secondary materials. The primary data are derived from *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, while the secondary data include books, journal articles, and relevant online literature. Data analysis is conducted by collecting Qur'anic verses related to da'wah, categorizing them under the theme of *al-hiwār*, and analyzing them using a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis focuses on describing the forms, principles, and functions of *hiwār* based on dialogical verses found in several chapters, including al-Kahf, al-Mujādalah, Āli 'Imrān, Ghāfir, al-Ḥajj, and al-Shūrā.

Results and Discussion

The Meaning and Contextual Identification of *Hiwār* (Dialogue) in the Study of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*

Linguistically, *hiwār* means dialogue. Etymologically, the term derives from the root (ḥ-w-r), which conveys the meaning of “return.” According to Ibn Manzur, *hiwār* refers to *al-rujū'*, namely a process of returning to the original point or reference of discussion.¹⁵ Terminologically, *hiwār* is defined as a form of verbal interaction involving the exchange of ideas, arguments, and perspectives among individuals with the aim of achieving mutual understanding, clarifying meaning, and discovering truth.¹⁶

Conceptually, therefore, *hiwār* is not merely ordinary conversation but a two-way communication process grounded in ethical, rational, and constructive values. Its primary objective is to foster mutual understanding and strengthen social bonds rather than to assert dominance or prove superiority.¹⁷ In the Islamic context, *hiwār* serves as an effective means of communication and a tool for social reconciliation, rooted in Qur'anic communication

¹⁵ Manzhilr dalam jurnal Hasan Bakti Nasution dan Roeslani, “Metode Dialogis Dalam Epistemologi Islam” Universitas Islam Negeri Medan Sumatera Utara Indonesia, 10 November 2021, 4.

¹⁶ Hasan Bakti Nasution and Roeslaini Roeslaini, “Metode Dialogis Dalam Epistemologi Islam,” *AR-RASYID: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021): 61–69.

¹⁷ Rosniar Rosniar, “Prinsip Komunikasi Islam Tentang Dialog (Kajian Kepustakaan Terhadap Komunikasi Interpribadi),” *Al-Din: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial Keagamaan* 4, no. 1 (2019): 142–55, <https://doi.org/10.35673/ajdsk.v5i2.601>.

ethics such as *qaulan sadīdan* (truthful speech), *qaulan layyīnan* (gentle speech), *qaulan ma'rūfīan* (appropriate speech), and *qaulan karīmīan* (noble speech).¹⁸

Furthermore, within the Islamic perspective, *hiwār* is understood as a process of seeking truth (*ṭalab al-ḥaqq*), rather than a space for domination or self-justification. Its fundamental aim is to achieve shared understanding (*al-fahm al-mushtarak*), clarify the subject of discussion, and minimize misunderstandings arising from differences in perspectives, backgrounds, or intellectual capacities. Consequently, *hiwār* requires intellectual honesty, consistency between knowledge and expression, and a willingness to refer to authoritative sources when necessary.¹⁹

In social life, *hiwār* functions as an instrument of reconciliation and social cohesion. Islam views dialogue as a means to maintain human relationships (*ḥabl min al-nās*), mitigate conflicts, and build harmonious coexistence within diverse societies. Thus, *hiwār* can be understood as a dialogical communication process oriented toward truth, understanding, and public benefit, conducted within the framework of Qur'anic ethics and spiritual awareness.²⁰ Practically, *hiwār* represents an interaction between two or more individuals aimed at achieving mutual agreement. In everyday contexts, it takes the form of discussions centered on shared themes within a group. This approach prioritizes the exchange of ideas over disputation, enabling constructive knowledge-sharing processes that ultimately generate new understandings.

The Qur'an contains numerous verses that reflect the practice of *hiwār* (dialogue) involving God, angels, prophets, and human beings. In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, M. Quraish Shihab classifies Qur'anic dialogue as a method of communication and education that is both argumentative and imbued with wisdom.²¹ This approach demonstrates that dialogue in the Qur'an functions not merely as a medium of message transmission but also as a means of shaping understanding and ethical awareness in human interaction.

1. *Hiwār* (dialogue) as a means of debate between arrogant disbelief and faith that offers guidance, as described in QS. al-Kahfī [18]: 34–37:

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا. وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا. وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُودْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا. قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاكَ رَجُلًا

“And he possessed great wealth; so he said to his friend as they were conversing: “My wealth is greater than yours, and my followers are more powerful. “And he entered his garden while he was unaware of it; he said: “I think this will never perish, and I do not believe the Day of Judgment will

¹⁸ Issa Khan et al., “A Critical Appraisal of Interreligious Dialogue in Islam,” *Sage Open* 10, no. 4 (October 2020): 2158244020970560, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020970560>.

¹⁹ Muhammad Ersa Syauqy et al., “Interfaith Dialogue Perspektif Islam Dan Kristen: Analisis Konseptual Dan Perannya Sebagai Tali Pengikat Kebhinekaan Di Indonesia,” *Online Terakreditasi Nasional. SK* 16, no. 2 (2025): 137–61.

²⁰ Handika Fajar, et al., “Pengaruh Dialog Interreligius Dalam Mencegah Konflik Sosial,” *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 6, no. 1 (2023): 51–59.

²¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Jilid 8* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

come, and if I were to be returned to my Lord, I would surely find a better place than this.” His friend said to him as he responded: ‘Have you disbelieved in the One who created you from dust, then from a drop of semen, and then made you a fully formed man?’”

In *Tafsir al-Misbah*, Shihab explains that this figure represents a disbeliever who articulates his views with arrogance toward his believing companion. In contrast, the المؤمن responds in a reflective and argumentative manner, questioning such disbelief by reminding him of the human origin—from dust and a drop of semen—until becoming a fully formed human being. The term *yuhāwirubu* (يُحَاوِرُهُ), as explained in the tafsir, derives from the root *hāra-yahūru*, meaning “to return,” indicating a dialogical exchange in which one statement is responded to by another, forming a reciprocal interaction. In this context, the disbeliever presents his views arrogantly, while the believer responds with constructive advice and moral admonition²²

The interpretation in *Tafsir al-Misbah* demonstrates how the Qur’an presents *hivār* as both an argumentative and educational method between parties holding different worldviews. This narrative is not merely a moral story but symbolizes the tension between material arrogance and spiritual consciousness, expressed through dialogical engagement.²³ Thus, the dialogue reflects an interaction between a believer and a disbeliever, where differing viewpoints are addressed through an ethical approach. The believer’s method of delivering advice in a gentle and respectful manner illustrates that even when confronting arrogance or erroneous perspectives, communication should remain grounded in wisdom and courtesy. Such an approach enhances the likelihood of acceptance and encourages reflective awareness in the interlocutor.

2. *Hivār* (dialogue) as intimate communication (which God hears) emphasizes full attention in dialogue

Hivār is not limited to group discussions but can also occur between two individuals. A notable example is the dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad and Khaulah bint Tha‘labah, as recorded in QS. al-Mujādalah [58]: 1:

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوِرَكُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

“Indeed, Allah has heard the words of the woman who argued with you about her husband and complained to Allah, even though Allah was listening to your conversation. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing and All-Seeing.”

In *Tafsir al-Misbah*, the verse describes the complaint of a woman identified in several narrations as Khaulah bint Tha‘labah, who experienced the practice of *zihār* from her husband, Aws ibn al-Ṣāmit. Shihab interprets this verse as depicting a *hivār* (dialogue)

²² Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, Jilid 8.

²³ Muhtarul Alif, “Dialog Lintas Agama Dalam Al-Quran: Analisis Term Ahl Al-Kitab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah,” *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Tafsir* 8, no. 1 SE-Articles (June 2023): 75–99, <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v8i1.7135>.

between Khaulah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The preservation of this dialogue in the Qur’an underscores the significance of two-way communication in Islam. The verse highlights the importance of dialogue as a means of problem-solving. Khaulah’s complaint was met with a thoughtful and responsive attitude from the Prophet, indicating that *hivār* requires not only appropriate content but also ethical modes of expression. The term *tujādiluka* (تُجَادِلُكَ) reflects a form of dialogue characterized by rational argumentation conveyed in a respectful manner.²⁴

Furthermore, Ahmad Qusyairi Suhail identifies three primary ethical principles within Qur’anic *hivār*. *First*, propriety (*adab*) in speech, as demonstrated by Khaulah’s respectful manner without raising her voice or blaming others. *Second*, rational argumentation, evident in her logical presentation of the injustice she experienced. *Third*, a spiritual dimension, reflected in her reliance on God, as she not only addressed her concerns to the Prophet but also sought divine assistance.²⁵

Thus, these two examples illustrate the diverse functions of *hivār* in the Qur’an. In the first case, *hivār* serves as a medium for education and the reinforcement of faith, while in the second, it represents a form of communication imbued with devotional value. This variation highlights the flexibility and depth of the concept of *hivār* within the Qur’anic framework.

No	Comparative Aspects	QS. al-Kahfi ([8]: 34–37)	QS. al-Mujadalah [58]: 1
1	Context of the <i>hivār</i>	A dialogue between an arrogant unbeliever and a believer offering advice	The conversation between Khaulah bint Tsa’labah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which was heard directly by Allah
2	Participants in the <i>hivār</i>	Two individuals with differing worldviews (disbelief vs. faith)	Socially vulnerable individuals in the presence of the Prophet Muhammad, witnessed by Allah
3	Purpose of the <i>hivār</i>	Arguments and advice to help people recognize their arrogance and disbelief	Voicing grievances and seeking spiritual and social justice
4	Nature of the Dialogue	Argumentative, educational, and confrontational in terms of values	Intimate, persuasive, and courteous
5	Speaker’s Attitude	The unbelievers: arrogant and haughty; the believers: advising and rational	Polite, humble, and non-judgmental
6	Key Terms	يُحَاوِرُهُ (yuhāwiruhu) – two-way dialogue	تَحَاوِرُكُمْا and تُجَادِلُكَ – an argumentative, two-way dialogue
7	Foundation of the Argument	Awareness of God and the origins of human creation	Rationality, propriety, and reliance on God

²⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Jilid 14* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

²⁵ Ahmad Qusyairi Suhail, “Qur’anic Foundations for Dialogue with Others,” *Darul Hikmah: Jurnal Penelitian Tafsir Dan Hadits* 10, no. 2 SE-Artikel (September 2024): 96–108, <https://doi.org/10.61086/jstiudh.v10i2.67>.

8	Core Values Emphasized	The conflict between worldly pride and faith	God’s full attention to honest and truthful dialogue
9	Message of the Qur’an	<i>Hiwār</i> as a means of education and fostering religious faith	<i>Hiwār</i> as a form of communication that is considered an act of worship
10	Perspective of the <i>Tafsir al-Mishbah</i>	<i>Hiwār</i> is not merely a moral tale, but a symbol of the conflict of life's values	<i>Hiwār</i> highlights the importance of ethical two-way communication in Islam

Table 1. The Context of *hiwār* in the Qur’an

Comprehensively, *hiwār* (dialogue) can be understood from conceptual, theological, and practical dimensions within the perspective of the Qur’an and *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. It is not merely ordinary conversation but a two-way communication process rooted in the notion of “return” (*rujū*).²⁶ This meaning implies that dialogue is a reciprocal process involving mutual complementarity, correction, and the restoration of discourse toward truth. Thus, *hiwār* is not synonymous with debate aimed at winning arguments, but rather a form of verbal interaction intended to achieve mutual understanding, clarify meaning, and seek truth in an ethical and rational manner. This underscores that dialogue in Islam embodies ethical, rational, and constructive values, and is therefore bound by moral responsibility rather than being value-neutral.²⁷

In this context, *hiwār* serves as a strategic instrument for fostering mutual understanding, strengthening brotherhood, and promoting social reconciliation. This aligns with Qur’anic communication principles such as *qaulan sadīdan* (truthful speech), *qaulan layyīnan* (gentle speech), *qaulan ma’rūfan* (appropriate speech), and *qaulan karīman* (noble speech). In this regard, the ethical dimension of communication in the Qur’an serves as the foundation for building social cohesion and mutual understanding through dialogue. In QS. al-Kahf [18]: 34–37, *hiwār* is presented as an argumentative-educative method reflecting the tension between worldly arrogance and spiritual consciousness.

Furthermore, *Tafsir al-Mishbah* emphasizes the essence of *hiwār* as reciprocal communication, in which a viewpoint is not left unchallenged but is responded to and refined. Meanwhile, QS. al-Mujādalah [58]: 1 introduces another dimension of *hiwār* as a form of intimate, empathetic, and justice-oriented communication. The dialogue between Khaulah bint Tha’labah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) illustrates that *hiwār* does not necessarily occur between socially equal parties; rather, it provides a space for marginalized voices to be heard and for justice to be realized.

Principles of *Hiwār* (Dialogue) in the Perspective of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*

The preceding discussion demonstrates that *hiwār* constitutes a form of dialogue or interaction involving the exchange of opinions and arguments. Within the Qur’anic context,

²⁶ Alfriani, et al., “Qur’anic-Based Character Education : Ethical Communication in the Digital Era” 3 (2025): 97–104.

²⁷ Nur Aflizah, Salsabillah Putri, and Tuti Andriani, “Konsep Dan Etika Komunikasi Pendidikan Di Dalam Al-Qur’an,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 8, no. 1 (2024): 3138–50.

hivār is understood as a method of communication for conveying messages of truth. M. Quraish Shihab emphasizes that the Qur'an not only commands belief and worship but also encourages the use of reason through critical thinking, questioning, and engaging in dialogue in a proper and respectful manner. Based on *Tafsir al-Misbab*, several fundamental principles of *hivār* can be identified.

1. Understanding the Object of *Hivār*

One of the key methodological principles of constructive *hivār* is a proper understanding of the subject matter being discussed. Individuals engaged in dialogue are required to possess adequate knowledge of the topic at hand. An ideal *hivār* is grounded in knowledge, facts, and truth, rather than driven by personal desires, assumptions, or habitual tendencies.²⁸

According to Shihab, conflicts and misunderstandings in communication often arise due to a lack of comprehension of the discussion topic or engagement in matters beyond one's intellectual capacity. Therefore, individuals are not required to master all fields of knowledge, but rather to uphold intellectual honesty, speak within their area of competence, refer to authoritative sources when necessary, and remain open to revising their views when confronted with stronger arguments.²⁹ This principle is reflected in several Qur'anic verses that emphasize the importance of knowledge-based dialogue, including QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]: 66:

هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤَلَاءِ حَآجَجْتُمْ فِيمَآ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيمَآ لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“That’s just like you. You argue about what you know, but why do you argue (as well) about what you don’t know? Allah knows, but you do not.”

In *Tafsir al-Misbab*, Shihab highlights the Qur'anic criticism of certain groups among the Jews and Christians who engaged in disputes without adequate knowledge. However, the message conveyed by the verse is universal and applies to all people. It emphasizes that any form of discussion, debate, or argumentation must be grounded in objectivity and sound knowledge relevant to the subject matter.³⁰

Furthermore, this interpretation indicates that neglecting the principle of knowledge in dialogue leads to misunderstanding and conflict, whereas adherence to it fosters a healthy intellectual climate within society. In the long term, such a climate contributes to the development of a strong scholarly tradition and the emergence of intellectual figures, as evidenced in the history of Islamic civilization when knowledge-based values were upheld. From this perspective, one of the fundamental principles of *hivār* is the necessity of grounding dialogue in objectivity and scientific reasoning. Every statement must be

²⁸ Eko Zulfikar, “Etika Diskusi Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur’an”.

²⁹ Musaab A. Raheem Al-Khazaali, “Argumentation in the Glorious Qur’an: A Rhetorical Pragmatic Perspective,” *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah* 10, no. 2 SE-Articles (October 2024): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJAT122020-2>.

³⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Jilid 2* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

supported by accountable arguments and verifiable evidence. Additionally, discussions should be confined to areas within one's expertise, ensuring that dialogue remains substantive rather than speculative.

This principle is also aligned with QS. Ghāfir [40]: 56, which warns against engaging in disputes without knowledge:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ لَنْ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ إِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِالْغَيْبَةِ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“Indeed, those who dispute the verses of Allah without any evidence having come to them—there is nothing in their hearts but arrogance toward a goal they will never attain. So seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing.”

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Shihab interprets QS. Ghāfir [40]: 56 as a condemnation of those who dispute the verses of Allah without valid arguments or evidence. The verse emphasizes that such baseless argumentation does not reflect a genuine search for truth, but rather an expression of arrogance rooted in the human heart. This attitude not only obstructs one from accepting the truth but also reflects an underlying desire for dominance or authority, which ultimately will not be achieved.³¹ Furthermore, this interpretation demonstrates that argumentation devoid of knowledge leads to epistemological deviation and the deterioration of ethical communication. Intellectual arrogance becomes the primary factor driving individuals to reject the truth, even when clear evidence is presented.³² Therefore, the Qur'an instructs believers to seek refuge in Allah from such tendencies, as only through humility and intellectual honesty can one truly accept the truth.

In line with this, *hikmah* in the Qur'anic perspective requires knowledge as a fundamental prerequisite for engaging in dialogue and argumentation. The ability to refute or critique a viewpoint cannot rely solely on rhetoric, but must be supported by sufficient knowledge and accountable evidence. Thus, knowledge becomes the key element in maintaining the integrity of dialogue within the framework of truth and ethics. This principle is further reinforced in QS. al-Ḥajj [22]: 8, which criticizes those who argue without knowledge, guidance, or an enlightening scripture:

وَمَنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُنِيرٍ

“Among people, there are those who argue about God without knowledge, without guidance, and without a scripture (revelation) to enlighten them.”

In *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Shihab emphasizes that among humankind are those who dispute matters concerning God without grounding their arguments in valid knowledge derived from authoritative sources, whether transmitted directly or through written references. Moreover,

³¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Jilid 12* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

³² Dr Aiden P. Gregg, Nikhila Mahadevan, “Intellectual Arrogance and Intellectual Humility: An Evolutionary-Epistemological Account”, *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 42, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1177/009164711404200102>.

they lack reliance on rational and objective reasoning and do not refer to divine revelation as an illuminating scripture that should serve as guidance for life.³³

Comprehensively, the three verses discussed indicate that the object of *hivār* (dialogue) must be based on objective and scientific knowledge, accompanied by humility free from egocentric motives, and grounded in divine revelation and guidance. Therefore, in determining the subject of dialogue, individuals are not justified in debating matters beyond their knowledge. Ideal dialogue requires the ability to focus on topics that can be justified both scientifically and morally.³⁴

Furthermore, any form of communication that is not based on knowledge is considered blameworthy *hivār* from the Qur'anic perspective. According to the interpretation in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, Qur'anic *hivār* aims to cultivate a knowledge-based culture within society, promote intellectual openness, and foster an ethical scholarly tradition. Therefore, proper *hivār* can only be realized when it is oriented toward the pursuit of truth rather than the assertion of ego or the mere desire to win arguments.

2. Establishing a Shared Foundational Reference (*Uṣūl Marjī'īyyah*)

The concept of *uṣūl marjī'īyyah* consists of two interrelated terms with complementary meanings. The term *uṣūl* (أصول), the plural of *aṣl* (أصل), refers to foundations, principles, or fundamental bases. In an academic context, it denotes the essential framework upon which a system of thought is built. Meanwhile, *marjī'īyyah* (مرجعية), derived from the root *raja'a* (رجع), means “to return” or “to refer,” indicating an authoritative reference or source that serves as a primary point of guidance.³⁵

Terminologically, *uṣūl marjī'īyyah* refers to the principle of agreeing upon a set of foundational references recognized as the highest authority in reasoning, dialogue, legal determination, and conflict resolution. In Islam, these primary sources are the Qur'an as the divine revelation and the Sunnah (Prophetic traditions) as its practical elaboration. Together, they function as the ultimate *marjī'* (reference authority) for Muslims, particularly in addressing differences of opinion and value conflicts.³⁶ From the perspective of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, this principle is further reinforced in QS. al-Shūrā [42]: 10, which emphasizes that all disputes should ultimately be referred back to Allah as the highest source of truth:

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ يُدَلِّكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

³³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Jilid 9* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

³⁴ Stephen H. Linder, “An Inquiry into Dialogue, Its Challenges and Justification”, *International Journal of Public Administration* 24, no. 7-8 (2001), 651-678. <https://doi.org/10.1081/PAD-100104769>.

³⁵ Alfian Qodri Azizi, “Penggunaan Metode Kaidah Ushuliyah Dalam Memahami Nash Secara Tekstual Dan Kontekstual,” *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2020): 14–31, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jish.v5i1.5963>.

³⁶ Fauzi Saleh, “Hadith Ahkam and the Qualifications for Fiqh Development,” *El-Sunan: Journal of Hadith and Religious Studies* 2, no. 1 SE-Articles (April 2024): 46–55, <https://doi.org/10.22373/el-sunan.v2i1.5438>.

“Whatever you may dispute about, the decision rests with Allah. Such is Allah, my Lord. In Him alone do I place my trust, and to Him alone do I return.”

In the perspective of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, QS. al-Shūrā [42]: 10 emphasizes that matters agreed upon concerning God represent ultimate truth, while any form of dispute must be referred back to Allah as the highest authority. Such resolutions can be derived from the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. In line with this, Muhammad Husayn Thabathaba’i expands the concept of *ikhtilāf* (difference) to include both theological disputes—such as the tension between monotheism and polytheism—and matters related to worldly and social affairs.³⁷

Based on the interpretation in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, this verse serves as a normative foundation for the principle of *uṣūl marji’iyyah* in human life, particularly within the framework of Qur’anic *hivār* (dialogue). Within this framework, four primary functions of *uṣūl marji’iyyah* can be identified. *First*, as a point of convergence, preventing emotionally driven disputes by establishing a shared source of truth. *Second*, as a divine authority, guiding arguments and decisions to align with revealed values. *Third*, as an ethical regulator, restraining ego and personal desires to ensure that discussions remain fair, rational, and knowledge-based. *Fourth*, as a unifying force, preventing division by requiring all parties to submit to the same ultimate authority—Allah and Rasulullah.

Furthermore, the principles of *hivār* reflected in QS. Āli ‘Imrān, QS. Ghāfir, and QS. al-Ḥajj demonstrate complementary emphases in shaping the ethics of dialogue. The Qur’an explicitly prohibits forms of dialogue that deviate from these principles, including arguments without sound knowledge, ideological debates lacking evidence, and theological disputes without valid references. Therefore, Qur’anic *hivār* necessitates the integration of epistemological foundations, communicative ethics, and spiritual orientation. For greater clarity, these principles can be systematically presented in Table 2 on the principles of *hivār*.

No	Comparative Aspects	QS. Ali ‘Imran [3]: 66	QS. Ghafir [40]: 56	QS. al-Hajj [22]: 8
1	Focus of the Verse	The prohibition against debating matters one does not understand	Criticism of debates lacking evidence and authority	A depiction of people debating without knowledge, guidance, or revelation
2	The Form of Dialogue Under Criticism	Arguments lacking a clear scientific basis	Ideological debates without evidence	Theological debates without knowledge or references
3	The Root of the Problem	Ignorance regarding the subject of the discussion	Arrogance and personal ambition	Ignorance accompanied by arrogance
4	The Attitude of the Dialogue Participants	Discussing matters beyond one’s scientific expertise	Rejecting the truth for the sake of ego and power	Following one’s desires without the guidance of revelation

³⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Jilid 12* (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2002).

5	Evaluation of <i>Tafsir al-Misbab</i>	Discussions without scientific grounding lead to intellectual confusion	Debate without evidence reveals inner arrogance	A dialogue without revelation and guidance is a reprehensible dialogue
6	Ethical Values of Dialogue	Dialogue must be grounded in science and objectivity	Dialogue must be free from ego and ambition	Dialogue must be grounded in knowledge, common sense, and revelation
7	Educational Message	Promoting a culture of science in society	Rejecting destructive and emotional debates	Guiding people toward an enlightened dialogue
8	Implications for Qur'anic Dialogue	The subject of the dialogue must be clear and well-understood	Dialogue must not be used as a tool of arrogance	Dialogue must lead to divine truth

Table 2. The Principle of *hivār* in the Qur'an

The methodological principle of understanding the object of *hivār* asserts that constructive dialogue can only occur when participants possess a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. QS. Āli ‘Imrān [3]: 66 strongly criticizes debates conducted without a foundation of knowledge, as they not only generate misunderstandings but also undermine the intellectual order of society. Although the verse was revealed in the context of polemics between Jews and Christians, its normative message is universal. When internalized, this principle encourages the development of a scientific culture in which dialogue becomes a space for clarification and intellectual advancement rather than an arena for ego-driven contestation.³⁸

This principle is further reinforced by QS. Ghāfir [40]: 56 and QS. al-Ḥajj [22]: 8, both of which condemn argumentation devoid of evidence, guidance, and revelation. Such debates reflect inner arrogance and a desire for dominance, making them not only epistemologically flawed but also ethically blameworthy. Therefore, Qur'anic *hivār* must be conducted within a framework of intellectual humility and an awareness of human limitations. Collectively, these three verses establish a unified principle that the object of *hivār* must be clear, well-understood, and accountable both scientifically and morally. Dialogue that fails to meet these criteria can be classified as blameworthy *hivār*, as it distances individuals from divine truth. Conversely, proper *hivār* fosters a love for knowledge, cultivates objectivity, and serves as a means of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. Thus, the ultimate goal of *hivār* is not to win arguments but to transcend ego in pursuit of truth.

In addition, the method of establishing shared foundational references (*uṣūl marjī‘iyyah*) complements this principle by providing epistemological and theological grounding for Qur'anic dialogue. It emphasizes that dialogue does not occur in a vacuum but is anchored in authoritative sources, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah. QS. al-Shūrā [42]:

³⁸ Multilingual Academic Journal, “7” صاعملا عقاولا ءوض ف ي ةينآرق ةسارد هءءاوقو راوحلا سسأ ”، no. August (2022): 244–64.

10 affirms that all disputes—whether theological or worldly—must ultimately be referred back to Allah as the absolute source of truth.

Within the framework of *himpār*, *uṣūl marjī‘iyyah* functions as a balancing mechanism. Four primary functions can be identified: as a point of convergence, as divine authority, as an ethical regulator, and as a unifying force. These functions demonstrate that agreement on shared references prevents dialogue from devolving into emotional conflict or relativism.³⁹ By grounding dialogue in revelation, it becomes not only rational and just but also a means of preserving unity, as all parties submit to the same ultimate authority.⁴⁰ This underscores that differences of opinion in Islam need not lead to division, provided they are managed through *himpār* grounded in *uṣūl marjī‘iyyah*.

Furthermore, the consistency across QS. Āli ‘Imrān [3]: 66, Ghāfir [40]: 56, and al-Ḥajj [22]: 8 highlights a shared critique of knowledge-less dialogue, albeit with different emphases: ignorance of the subject, inner arrogance, and absence of divine guidance. Together, they lead to the ethical conclusion that proper *himpār* must be knowledge-based, free from ego, and grounded in divine guidance. This finding aligns with the studies of Firmansyah and Dayul Seven Putra, who emphasize that Qur’anic dialogue must embody ethical values and tolerance, and must not be driven by arrogance or egocentric motives.

Conclusion

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human life, and the Qur’an provides a set of ethical principles of *himpār* (dialogue) that can serve as a means to foster social harmony. Through the approach of *Tafsir al-Misbbah*, *himpār* can be understood as a form of two-way communication that is rational, ethical, and grounded in Qur’anic values such as *qaulan sadīdan* (truthful speech), *qaulan layyīnan* (gentle speech), *qaulan ma‘rūfan* (appropriate speech), and *qaulan karīman* (noble speech). Several Qur’anic verses, including those in QS. al-Kahf, al-Mujādalah, Āli ‘Imrān, Ghāfir, al-Ḥajj, and al-Shūrā, emphasize the importance of dialogue that is knowledge-based, grounded in humility, and free from baseless argumentation. These verses also highlight the necessity of *uṣūl marjī‘iyyah*, namely the Qur’an and the Sunnah, as primary references in resolving disputes. Therefore, this study concludes that the Qur’anic method of dialogue, as interpreted in *Tafsir al-Misbbah*, functions as a comprehensive guideline for developing dignified communication, preventing conflict, and strengthening the values of brotherhood in contemporary society. This framework is not only relevant in religious contexts but also significant in addressing the challenges of communication in the digital age, which is often characterized by polarization and misinformation.

³⁹ Abdullah Masud and Mohammad Elius, “The Qur’anic View of Interreligious Dialogue and Harmony,” September 2024.

⁴⁰ Vladimir Bakrac, “The Importance of Dialogue and Tolerance in a Plural Society”, *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research* 2, no. 2 (2015), 28.

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