

## **Beyond Commands and Prohibitions: The Significance of Non-Normative Verses in the Structure of the Qur'anic Message**

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### **Abstrak**

Kajian tafsir al-Qur'an selama ini cenderung menempatkan ayat-ayat normatif yang memuat perintah dan larangan sebagai pusat perhatian, terutama dalam konteks hukum Islam. Akibatnya, ayat-ayat al-Qur'an yang tidak secara eksplisit mengandung muatan normatif sering kali diposisikan sebagai pelengkap dan belum dikaji secara sistematis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi ayat-ayat non-normatif dalam al-Qur'an, menganalisis penafsiran para mufassir terhadap ayat-ayat tersebut, serta menjelaskan fungsi dan signifikansinya dalam struktur pesan wahyu. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif berbasis kepustakaan dengan pendekatan tafsir tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ayat-ayat non-normatif memiliki fungsi strategis dalam membentuk kesadaran keimanan, memperkuat ketahanan batin, dan membangun orientasi etis pembaca melalui mekanisme naratif dan reflektif. Ayat-ayat tersebut bekerja secara regulatif tidak melalui instruksi hukum yang eksplisit, melainkan melalui internalisasi nilai dan pembiasaan cara pandang terhadap realitas. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kebermaknaan wahyu tidak ditentukan semata oleh kandungan normatifnya, melainkan juga oleh daya transformasi ayat-ayat non-normatif dalam membentuk manusia beriman secara utuh. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya studi tafsir al-Qur'an dengan menawarkan pembacaan yang lebih holistik dan kontekstual terhadap keragaman gaya komunikasi wahyu.

**Kata Kunci:** *Ayat non-normatif, Tafsir tematik, Kisah al-Qur'an, Pesan keimanan*

### **Abstract**

Qur'anic exegesis has predominantly emphasized normative verses containing commands and prohibitions, particularly in the context of Islamic law. As a result, non-normative verses those expressed through narratives, descriptions, and reflective discourse have often received limited attention as independent objects of study. This research aims to identify non-normative verses in the Qur'an, examine how classical and contemporary exegetes interpret these verses, and analyze their functions and significance within the structure of Qur'anic revelation. This study employs a qualitative library-based research method using a thematic (*maudhu'i*) tafsir approach. The findings reveal that non-normative verses play a strategic role in shaping faith consciousness, strengthening inner resilience, and constructing ethical orientations through narrative and reflective mechanisms. Rather than functioning through explicit legal prescriptions, these verses exert a regulatory influence by facilitating the internalization of values and framing the reader's perception of reality. This study argues that the significance

of Qur'anic revelation cannot be reduced to its normative content alone, as non-normative verses possess a substantial transformative capacity in shaping holistic religious consciousness. Consequently, this research contributes to Qur'anic studies by promoting a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the diverse modes of Qur'anic communication.

**Keywords:** *Non-normative verses, Thematic tafsir, Qur'anic narratives, religious meanin*

## INTRODUCTION

A study of the Qur'an shows that this revealed text contains various forms of messages, ranging from normative provisions to reflective narratives. In Islamic studies, attention to the Qur'an is often more focused on verses that contain normative content in the form of commands and prohibitions, especially those related to the laws of worship and social transactions.<sup>1</sup> This approach is important; however, it indirectly causes Qur'anic verses that do not explicitly contain commands and prohibitions to receive less attention as independent objects of study.<sup>2</sup>

The Qur'an itself affirms that the function of revelation is not limited to conveying laws, but also as guidance and lessons for humankind, as stated in the word of Allah SWT in QS. Yusuf [12]: 111: *"Indeed, in their stories there is a lesson for those of understanding. The Qur'an is not a fabricated tale, but a confirmation of what came before it and a detailed explanation of all things, and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe."* This verse shows that the stories in the Qur'an are not presented in the form of normative instructions, but rather as a means of reflection and taking lessons (*'ibrah*).<sup>3</sup> This indicates that the religious message in the Qur'an is also constructed through narratives and descriptions, not merely through commands and prohibitions.

Most Qur'anic verses also appear in the form of stories, descriptions of nature, consolation, and reflections on human life.<sup>4</sup> These verses do not always function as a basis for legal rulings, but play an important role in shaping faith awareness,

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<sup>1</sup> Siti Rokan Hasibuan, Jaka Ghianovan, Abil Ash Dialektika Pendekatan Normatif dan Kontekstual dalam Penafsiran Rezeki: Studi Komparatif Tafsir An-Nur dan Al-Misbah terhadap Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 168 dan 172", *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 27, no. 1 (2025), 27-37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v27i1.29412>.

<sup>2</sup> Najihah Nasir, et al., "Kajian tafsir tematik di Malaysia: Sorotan literatur tahun 2019 sehingga 2023: Research on thematic exegesis in Malaysia: A literature review from 2019 to 2023," *al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues* 8, no. 2 (2023): 1132-45, <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v8i2.396>.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Bastari, "Pesan-Pesan Al-Qur'an Untuk Ulul Albab: Studi Tematik Dengan Pendekatan Munasabah", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (September 1, 2024): 589-606. <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v4i2.24480>.

<sup>4</sup> Wardatun Nadhiroh, "Memahami Narasi Kisah al-Qur'an dengan Narrative Criticism (Studi atas Kajian A.H. Johns)", *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2013), 213-238. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiu.v12i2.690>.

strengthening the spiritual dimension, and building the reader's ethical perspective toward the reality of life.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the message of the Qur'an is conveyed not only through normative instructions, but also through non-normative narratives and descriptions. The concept of interpreting verses that are not explicitly in the form of commands has gained attention in contemporary tafsir studies that emphasize contextuality rather than mere textuality.<sup>6</sup>

This is conveyed in QS. Ali Imran [3]: 190, where the verse emphasizes the reflective dimension: *"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those of understanding."* This verse does not explicitly contain legal commands or prohibitions, but directs humans to engage in intellectual and spiritual reflection on cosmic phenomena as signs (*āyāt*) of God's greatness.<sup>7</sup> Classical as well as contemporary tafsir studies have in fact discussed such verses; however, their discussions are generally scattered and not thematically classified as non-normative verses.

Several previous studies have also not explicitly addressed the discussion of non-normative verses in the Qur'an. Studies of Qur'anic verses have largely focused on the normative dimension related to law, commands, and prohibitions. However, some earlier studies have touched upon other aspects of the Qur'an, particularly those related to the narrative, literary, and reflective dimensions of the revealed text. One study on this aspect was conducted by Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah through his work *al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. In this study, Khalafallah emphasizes that the stories in the Qur'an are not always intended as literal historical reports, but rather as rhetorical means to convey moral and theological messages to the reader.<sup>8</sup>

The approach to the narrative dimension of the Qur'an was later developed by several Western scholars through methods of literary criticism and narrative criticism. One of them is Anthony H. Johns, who examined the narrative structure of the Qur'an using a narrative criticism approach. According to Johns, Qur'anic stories function not only as religious tales, but also as rhetorical devices that possess certain narrative structures, such as dialogue, conflict, and resolution, aimed at instilling moral and spiritual messages in the reader. Thus, narrative in the Qur'an

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<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Hizba Aulia, et al., "Qur'anic Tadabbur Models for Enhancing Students Character and Spiritual Awareness", *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 14, no. 1 (2025), 133-156. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v14i1.1497>.

<sup>6</sup> Agung Nugroho Reformis Santono, et al., "Penafsiran Al-Qur'an: Mencari Keseimbangan Antara Teks dan Konteks dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Nusantara* 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v10i2.839>.

<sup>7</sup> Eko Zulfikar, *Karakteristik Ulul Albab: Menuju Kepribadian Islami di Era Disrupsi Digital* (Bogor: Guepedia, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah, *Al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1953).

constitutes part of the communicative strategy of revelation to shape faith consciousness and the ethical orientation of humankind.<sup>9</sup>

Studies on Qur'anic narratives show that story structure, character roles, and narrative flow have important functions in conveying the message of revelation persuasively. These narratives not only provide information about the past, but also construct a theological framework that encourages humans to draw moral lessons from the events described.<sup>10</sup> In addition, some modern scholars have examined the function of Qur'anic stories within the framework of the communication of revelation and the formation of religious consciousness. Fazlur Rahman, for instance, emphasizes that the message of the Qur'an is conveyed not only through legal verses, but also through narratives and theological reflections that shape the overall moral vision of the Qur'an. In his view, Qur'anic stories function as a means of moral education that instills values of faith and ethics in human beings.<sup>11</sup>

Although these various studies have examined the narrative, literary, and rhetorical dimensions of the Qur'an, most of them do not explicitly discuss the category of non-normative verses as a thematic concept in tafsir studies. Therefore, research on non-normative verses in the Qur'an still has broad scope, particularly to explain how narrative, descriptive, and reflective verses function in shaping faith consciousness and the ethical orientation of readers without relying on explicit legal instructions.

This study seeks to fill that gap by identifying and analyzing the function of non-normative verses in the structure of the Qur'anic message through a thematic tafsir approach. By employing this approach, the study identifies forms of non-normative verses, analyzes the interpretations of mufassirun regarding these verses, and explains their function and significance in conveying messages of faith. This study is expected to contribute to enriching perspectives in Qur'anic tafsir studies and to affirm that the meaningfulness of revelation is not limited solely to its normative aspects.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative research employing a library research approach. The primary data sources used are non-normative verses, such as narrative verses, descriptions of natural phenomena, consolatory passages, and reflections on life. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources include tafsir works, books, and scholarly

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<sup>9</sup> Anthony H. Johns, "Narrative Structure in the Qur'an," in *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. G. R. Hawting dan Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Nadhiroh, "Memahami Narasi Kisah al-Qur'an dengan Narrative Criticism (Studi atas Kajian A.H. Johns)".

<sup>11</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

journal articles relevant to the discussion. The approach used is thematic tafsir (*tafsir maudhu'i*), which involves collecting verses that share similar themes and then analyzing them comprehensively to identify patterns of meaning and the messages they contain. This approach is used to identify the characteristics of non-normative verses while also explaining their function and significance within the structure of the Qur'anic message.<sup>12</sup>

Data collection is conducted through documentation techniques by tracing, recording, and classifying Qur'anic verses along with the interpretations of relevant mufassirun. These verses are then grouped based on thematic categories, such as narrative verses, cosmological descriptive verses, and reflective verses, to facilitate the analysis process. Data analysis employs a descriptive-analytical method through several stages: grouping non-normative verses based on themes; examining the interpretations of mufassirun from various classical and contemporary tafsir works; and drawing conclusions regarding the function and significance of non-normative verses in conveying the Qur'anic message of faith. Through this method, it is expected that a more comprehensive understanding can be obtained regarding the position and role of non-normative verses in the Qur'an as well as their contribution to the development of thematic tafsir studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Identification of Non-Normative Verses in the Qur'an

Based on a thematic examination of Qur'anic verses, it is found that a significant number of verses do not directly contain normative content in the form of commands (*amr*) or prohibitions (*nahy*). These verses appear in various forms, such as stories of the prophets and past communities, descriptions of natural phenomena, expressions of consolation, depictions of the reality of the hereafter, and reflections on the existential condition of human beings. Structurally, these verses are not intended to establish practical legal rulings, but rather to convey messages of faith through narrative and descriptive approaches.<sup>13</sup>

Although they do not contain explicit legal provisions, these verses possess pedagogical and spiritual functions, namely shaping faith consciousness, building ethical orientation, and instilling moral values through processes of reflection and internalization of meaning by the reader. Thus, the regulation of values in the Qur'an can be understood as encompassing not only legal norms but also narrative and rhetorical structures that influence how humans understand reality, history, and

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<sup>12</sup> Abdul Hayy al-Farmawi, *Al-Bidayah fi al-Tafsir al-Maudhu'i* (Mesir: Dirasat Manhajiyah Maudu'iyah, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

their relationship with God.<sup>14</sup> Several non-normative verses in the Qur'an can be represented in the following table:

No	Non-Normative Verse Categories	Examples of Quranic Verses	Verse Themes
1	Verses about the stories of the prophets and previous nations (Qaṣaṣ)	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30-39	The story of Adam's creation
		QS. al-A'raf [7]: 59-64	The story of Prophet Noah
		QS. Hud [11]: 69-76	The story of the Prophet Abraham
		QS. Yusuf [12]: 3-101	The story of the Prophet Yusuf
		QS. al-Qashash [28]: 3-43	The story of the Prophet Moses
2	Verses describing natural phenomena (cosmological)	QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 190-191	Alternation of night and day
		QS. ar-Rum [30]: 20-25	Signs of Allah's power in nature
		QS. an-Nahl [16]: 10-18	Rain, plants and natural sustenance
		QS. al-Ghashiyah [88]: 17-20	Camels, sky, mountains and earth
3	Verses describing the creation of man	QS. al-Mu'minun [23]: 12-14	Stages of human creation
		QS. al-Hajj [22]: 5	The process of human development
		QS. al-Insan [76]: 2	Humans from a drop of semen
4	Verses of consolation ( <i>tasliyah</i> )	QS. ad-Duha [93]: 1-5	Allah does not abandon the Prophet
		QS. al-Insyirah [94]: 5-6	Ease after hardship
		QS. Yunus [10]: 65	Prohibition of grieving over opponents
5	Verses of existential reflection	QS. al-Hasyr [59]: 21	The mountain will bow to the Koran
		QS. Qaf [50]: 16	Allah is closer than the jugular vein
		QS. ad-Dzariyat [51]: 20-21	God's sign in humans
6	Verses describing the Last Day	QS. az-Zalزالah [99]: 1-8	Earth shaking on the Day of Judgment
		QS. at-Takwir [81]: 1-14	A picture of the destruction of the cosmos
		QS. al-Qari'ah [101]: 1-11	Human condition on the Day of Judgment

**Table 1.** Representation of non-normative verses in the Qur'an

<sup>14</sup> Mohamad Zaenal Arifin, Ahmad Bahrul Hikam, Nurkholis, "Fil-Jawab-Natijah as An Alternative Framework for Legal Interpretation of Quranic Narrative Verses: The Perspective of Izz al-Din Ibn Abd Al-Salam", *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 10, no. 2 (2026), 272-296. <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v10i2.12389>.

The table shows that non-normative verses appear in various forms of revelatory communication. Some Qur'anic verses take the form of narratives of religious history, while others consist of cosmological descriptions, spiritual consolation, or existential reflections on human life. Although they do not contain direct legal instructions, these verses still possess an indirect regulative function, namely shaping faith consciousness, instilling moral values, and constructing a religious worldview toward reality.

### Interpretation of the Representation of Non-Normative Verses in the Qur'an

One representative example of non-normative verses can be found in the narratives of the prophets, as mentioned in QS. Hud [11]: 120:

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"And all that We relate to you of the stories of the messengers is that by which We make firm your heart; and in this there has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for the believers."

According to al-Ṭabarī, this verse emphasizes the function of the stories of the messengers as a means of *tathbīt al-fu'ād* (strengthening the heart) of the Prophet Muhammad in facing the rejection of his mission, rather than as a basis for establishing legal norms.<sup>15</sup> Explicitly, this verse shows that the Qur'an recognizes the function of narrative as an instrument for shaping faith consciousness, not merely as a medium for conveying law. The phrase *li-nuthabbita bihi fu'ādak* (to make firm your heart) indicates the affective orientation of revelation, namely strengthening the psychological condition of the Prophet Muhammad in the face of the pressures of da'wah.<sup>16</sup>

This verse is important because it affirms that part of revelation was sent not to regulate human legal actions, but to manage the inner condition and emotional state of the recipient of revelation. In this context, narrative verses function as a form of spiritual therapy, a dimension that cannot be explained solely through a normative legal approach. This kind of narrative analysis is also supported by contemporary studies showing that Qur'anic stories contain moral, structural, and affective messages that go beyond mere normative law.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in QS. Yusuf [12]: 3, the story of Prophet Yusuf is described as *ahsan al-qaṣaṣ* (the best of stories):<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Muhamad Muhamad, Edwin Rewira, Tegar Brian Baskoro, "Contemporary Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis: A Comparative Epistemological Analysis of Non-Exegetical Works", *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 9, no. 4 (2025), 572-592. <https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnalnu.v9i4.635>.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan fi Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*, vol. 5 (Dar Al-Ma'rifah, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Nadhiroh, "Memahami Narasi Kisah al-Qur'an dengan Narrative Criticism".

<sup>18</sup> Abu al-Fida' Muhammad Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar Thayyibah, 1999).

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

"We relate to you the best of stories through what We have revealed to you of this Qur'an, although before it you were among those who were unaware."

The attribution of the predicate "the best" to a story indicates that the quality and significance of revelation are not solely measured by the level of its legal normativity, but also by the strength of its narrative in effectively conveying messages of faith.<sup>19</sup> By positioning the story as a primary medium of revelation, this verse affirms that narrative holds an important epistemological status within the structure of Qur'anic communication. Contemporary narrative studies demonstrate how the structure of Qur'anic stories can be understood through literary and narrative approaches that pay attention to storytelling elements and narrative motifs within these verses.<sup>20</sup>

Ibn Kathir, in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, interprets narrative verses with an emphasis on strengthening historical reports and the moral messages contained within them. In his interpretation of QS. Yusuf [12]: 3, for example, Ibn Kathir explains the predicate *ahsan al-qaṣaṣ* as indicating the beauty of the narrative composition, the completeness of events, and the abundance of lessons of faith that can be drawn from the life of Prophet Yusuf. His interpretive focus lies on exemplary character, patience, and wisdom in facing trials, without reducing it to specific legal principles of fiqh.<sup>21</sup> This shows that within the classical tafsir tradition, non-normative verses have from the outset been understood as a means of conveying values and spiritual wisdom, rather than as a basis for legal normativity.

M. Quraish Shihab, through *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, interprets the verse by positioning the story of Prophet Yusuf as a narrative model that educates readers through empathy and inner reflection, rather than through normative instruction. The predicate *ahsan al-qaṣaṣ* is understood as an affirmation that the quality of revelation is not always measured by its level of legal normativity, but by the strength of its narrative in conveying meaning and shaping moral consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

Methodologically, this verse challenges the tendency in tafsir studies to assess the importance of a verse based on its contribution to the formation of Islamic law. The story of Yusuf does not offer explicit legal instructions; rather, it presents a

<sup>19</sup> Ryan Radjendra, "Internalisasi Filosofis Kisah Terpuji Nabi Muhammad Saw dalam Menumbuhkan Akhlak Mulia", *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 4 (2025), 312-320.

<sup>20</sup> Nuzul Fitriansyah, "Literary Tafsir and Qur'anic Narratives: Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafullāh and A.H. Johns in Comparative Perspective", *Basmala: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith* 1, no. 2 (2025), 115-139. <https://doi.org/10.24260/basmala.1.2.123>.

<sup>21</sup> Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim*, vol. 4.

<sup>22</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 9 (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002)

complex model of patience in the face of suffering, the management of family and social conflict, and the dynamics of power grounded in moral integrity. All of these messages are conveyed through a continuous narrative flow, not through normative commands or prohibitions.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the use of narrative in the story of Yusuf shows that the Qur'an adopts a pedagogical strategy that is persuasive and reflective. Readers are not directly instructed to obey specific rules, but are invited to internalize values through empathy with the characters and events in the story. Thus, this verse demonstrates that non-normative verses possess significant transformative power in shaping the ethical and spiritual consciousness of the reader, while also affirming the importance of a thematic tafsir approach in uncovering the narrative function of revelation, which is often marginalized in normative-legal studies.

In addition to individual prophetic stories, non-normative verses are also found in collective narratives about oppressed communities, as in QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 5-6:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ. وَنَمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ

*"And We intended to favor those who were oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and to make them inheritors, and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers through them that which they had feared."*

Al-Ṭabarī understands this verse as an announcement of divine will and *sunnatullāh* in the history of oppression and liberation, rather than as a prescriptive normative instruction.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the verse reveals the socio-theological dimension of non-normative verses. It is not intended as a direct instruction for the oppressed to undertake specific actions, but rather as a divine statement about the direction of history and God's justice. The narrative of the oppressed (*al-mustad'afin*) functions to build a structural awareness that power is not a final reality, but part of the dynamics of divine will. In this way, the verse operates at an ideological and theological level, shaping the horizon of hope and the ethical orientation of the reader, without requiring the formulation of commands or prohibitions.<sup>25</sup>

These three verses demonstrate that non-normative verses cannot be understood as "neutral" or "mere stories." On the contrary, these verses possess a regulative force that operates implicitly through the internalization of values, the formation of inner attitudes, and the framing of perspectives toward reality. In this

<sup>23</sup> Rahman, *Islam & Modernity*.

<sup>24</sup> Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan fi Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*, vol. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Rahman, *Islam & Modernity*.

context, the regulative function of revelation does not always appear in the form of positive law, but also in the formation of moral and spiritual consciousness.

From the perspective of tafsir studies, this meaning reveals the limitations of a normative-legalistic approach that tends to center the meaning of the Qur'an on verses of commands and prohibitions. Such an approach risks reducing the complexity of the message of revelation and neglecting the communicative dimension of the Qur'an as a text that speaks to humanity through various modes of language: narrative, descriptive, and reflective. Therefore, non-normative verses should be understood as part of the Qur'an's rhetorical strategy in shaping fully realized believers, not merely as legal subjects.

Conceptually, this analysis affirms that the meaningfulness of Qur'anic verses is not identical with their normativity. Non-normative verses, in fact, play a fundamental role in bridging revelation with human existential experience, at the personal, social, and historical levels. Therefore, the classification and systematic study of non-normative verses through thematic tafsir constitute a methodological necessity in contemporary Qur'anic studies.

### **Functions and Significance of Non-Normative Verses in the Qur'anic Message**

Non-normative verses in the Qur'an play a significant role in constructing the overall structure of the message of revelation. Although they do not directly contain commands (*amr*) or prohibitions (*nahy*), these verses still have important functions in shaping faith consciousness, moral orientation, and the human perspective on reality. In many cases, the message of the Qur'an is not always conveyed through explicit legal instructions, but also through narratives, descriptions, and reflections that engage the rational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human beings.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, non-normative verses can be understood as an integral part of the Qur'an's communicative strategy in instilling values of faith and ethics more profoundly.

*First*, non-normative verses function as a means of forming theological consciousness. Through descriptions of the creation of the universe, the process of human creation, and the order of the cosmos, the Qur'an invites humans to reflect on the signs of God's greatness. Such verses do not directly command humans to believe, but instead encourage intellectual reflection that ultimately fosters awareness of the existence and power of Allah. This reflective approach shows that the Qur'an employs not only normative language but also cosmological and

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<sup>26</sup> Salman Faris, "Exploring the Divine Message: Quranic Studies in The Context of Islamic Scholarship", *Dirasah: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023), 111-125.

contemplative argumentation to strengthen human belief.<sup>27</sup> This approach aligns with the view of Fazlur Rahman, who emphasizes that the Qur'an shapes faith through the internalization of moral values and ethical awareness, rather than merely through formal-legal compliance.<sup>28</sup> In this framework, faith is not formed solely through formal obedience, but through the internalization of meaning that emerges from reflective consciousness.

*Second*, non-normative verses have an educational and moral function through narrative. The stories of the prophets and past communities found throughout various surahs do not merely convey historical events, but also contain moral messages that can serve as lessons for the reader.<sup>29</sup> Through these stories, the Qur'an illustrates various forms of obedience, patience, rejection of truth, and the consequences of human actions.<sup>30</sup> These Qur'anic narratives function as an effective medium of moral education, as ethical values are conveyed through the experiences of characters and narrative plots that are easily understood and internalized.<sup>31</sup>

*Third*, non-normative verses function as psychological and spiritual reinforcement for believers. Some verses in the Qur'an were revealed to provide consolation to the Prophet Muhammad and his followers when facing pressure, rejection, or difficulties in da'wah. These expressions of consolation affirm that Allah is always with His servants and that every hardship is followed by ease.<sup>32</sup> Through such messages, the Qur'an not only regulates human behavior, but also builds inner resilience and spiritual optimism in facing the challenges of life.

*Fourth*, non-normative verses function to develop human existential awareness. Some Qur'anic verses describe the nature of life, death, and the hereafter in reflective and symbolic language. Descriptions of the destruction of the cosmos on the Day of Judgment, the condition of humans in the afterlife, and the limitations of worldly life encourage humans to reflect on the purpose of their creation.<sup>33</sup> Such verses play an important role in shaping human life orientation so that it is not

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<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Fiqih Cholidi, *Kosmologi Dalam Al-Qur'an: Formulasi Konsep Etikasantis (Analisis the Study Quran)*, (Tesis: Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Rahman, *Major Themes of The Qur'an*.

<sup>29</sup> Asyiqin Ab Halim, "Qur'anic Stories in Introducing Messages and Values: An Analysis On The Story Of Prophet Yusuf A.S.", *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 11, no. 1 (2016), 59–66.

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Fawwaz Bin Muhammad Yusoff, "Narrative Pedagogy for Spiritual Empowerment: A Typological Figuration of Qaṣaṣ in the Quran", *Rahmatan Lil Alamain: Journal of Peace Education and Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2023), 51-60.

<sup>31</sup> Mohammad Ismail Labib Balakhi, Muhammad Naeem Jalily, "Qur'anic Stories: Objectives, Characteristics, And Wisdom of Their Repetition", *Peshawar Islamicus* 14 no. 1 (2023), 46–68. <https://zenodo.org/record/8242680>.

<sup>32</sup> Eko Zulfikar, Ahmad Zainal Abidin, "Etika berdakwah di era Industri 4.0 (Tinjauan dalam normativitas al-Qur'an dan hadis)", *Jurnal Dakwah* 20, no. 1 (2019), 93-126.

<sup>33</sup> Andy Hadiyanto, Umi Khumairoh, "Makna Simbolik Ayat-Ayat tentang Kiamat dan Kebangkitan dalam Al-Qur'an", *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2018), 187–212. <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.002.2.06>

confined to a purely worldly perspective, but instead embraces a broader eschatological awareness.

Thus, the existence of non-normative verses shows that the message of the Qur'an is not only legal-formal, but also communicative and transformative. These verses operate through mechanisms of reflection, narrative, and description to deeply shape faith consciousness and moral orientation. This affirms that the power of the Qur'anic message lies not only in its normative content, but also in its ability to shape human perspectives, consciousness, and religious experience through diverse modes of revelatory communication.

### **Implications of Non-Normative Verses for Tafsir Studies**

The existence of non-normative verses in the Qur'an has important implications for the development of Qur'anic tafsir studies. Thus far, some tafsir studies have tended to place normative verses—especially those related to law, commands, and prohibitions—as the primary focus of attention. This orientation is closely linked to the influence of the fiqh-based tafsir tradition, which positions the Qur'an as the main source for the formulation of Islamic law. As a result, verses that do not directly contain normative provisions are often treated as supplementary or receive less attention in tafsir analysis.<sup>34</sup> In fact, when viewed as a whole, the structure of the Qur'anic message shows that revelation does not speak only in the form of legal regulation, but also through various other modes of communication such as narrative, description, reflection, and consolation. Therefore, recognizing the existence of non-normative verses opens new space for the development of more comprehensive approaches in tafsir studies.

The study of non-normative verses implies an expansion of methodological perspectives in Qur'anic tafsir. Their presence requires interpreters not only to employ legal or normative approaches, but also to utilize other approaches capable of explaining the narrative, rhetorical, and symbolic functions of these verses. A literary approach, for instance, can be used to understand the structure of stories in the narratives of the prophets, the use of metaphors, and the dynamics of dialogue within the Qur'anic text.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, a hermeneutical approach can help uncover symbolic meanings and reflective messages contained in cosmological descriptions or eschatological depictions in the Qur'an.<sup>36</sup> Thus, tafsir studies are no longer

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Weiss, "Interpretation in Islamic Law: The Theory of Ijtihād", *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 26, no. 2 (1978), 199-212. <https://doi.org/10.2307/839668>.

<sup>35</sup> Nuzul Fitriansyah, "Literary Discourse on Quranic Studies: A Historical Study on The Model of Literary Interpretation to The Quran", *Thaqafiyat: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban Dan Informasi Islam* 21, no. 2 (2023), 121-135. <https://doi.org/10.14421/taq.2022.21202>.

<sup>36</sup> Victoria S. Harrison, "Hermeneutics, religious language and the Qur'an", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 3 (2010), 207-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2010.487682>.

confined to legal analysis but develop into a multidisciplinary field that integrates linguistic, literary, theological, and philosophical perspectives.

Non-normative verses are often scattered across different surahs and do not always have direct chronological or thematic connections within a single sequence of verses. Therefore, the thematic approach becomes an effective method for collecting verses that share similar messages and analyzing them comprehensively to identify broader patterns of meaning. Through this approach, narrative, descriptive, and reflective verses can be understood as part of an interconnected network of messages. This shows that the Qur'anic message is not always conveyed through direct commands, but also through the internalization of values constructed through narrative and reflection.

Furthermore, with a more holistic understanding of the function of the revealed text, the existence of non-normative verses demonstrates that the Qur'an employs diverse communication strategies to convey messages of faith. Some verses speak in clear and firm legal terms, while others adopt persuasive approaches through stories, parables, and descriptions of nature. This diversity of communicative strategies indicates that the Qur'an functions not only as a book of law, but also as a guide that directs human beings intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.<sup>37</sup> By understanding this diversity of expression, tafsir studies can offer a more comprehensive picture of how the Qur'an shapes human religious consciousness.

In relation to the objectives of interpretation, a reorientation from merely establishing legal rulings toward the formation of ethical and spiritual consciousness becomes essential. Non-normative verses demonstrate that moral values in the Qur'an are not always conveyed in the form of explicit commands, but often emerge through illustrations, reflections, and the experiences of characters in Qur'anic narratives. For example, the stories of the prophets are not only intended to recount past events, but also to present models of patience, steadfast faith, and moral responsibility in facing various life trials.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Qur'anic interpretation needs to pay attention to the ethical and pedagogical dimensions embedded in these verses, so that tafsir produces not only legal understanding but also shapes the character and moral orientation of its readers.

In addition, non-normative verses have great potential to be connected with various contemporary issues, such as ecological awareness, human existential reflection, and the relationship between humans and the natural world. Qur'anic

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<sup>37</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan al-Qur'an: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 73.

<sup>38</sup> Siti Mabruroh, Imroatus Sholekah, Muhammad Farih, "Metode Kisah Qur'ani dalam Pendidikan Karakter: Analisis Tematik Ayat-Ayat Kisah", *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum* 4, no. 2 ((2026), 2016–2025. <https://doi.org/10.61104/alz.v4i2.4616>.

descriptions of natural phenomena, for example, can serve as a basis for developing ecological tafsir that emphasizes human responsibility for environmental sustainability.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, reflective verses about life and death can contribute to the development of philosophical tafsir that explores the meaning of human existence from the perspective of revelation. In this way, non-normative verses open broad space for dialogue between the Qur'anic text and ever-evolving social realities.

Non-normative verses also reinforce the understanding that the Qur'an possesses a high aesthetic and rhetorical dimension. Many of these verses are composed in highly beautiful language, rich in symbolism, and laden with metaphorical meaning. This rhetorical beauty functions not only as an aesthetic element, but also as a means to strengthen the persuasive power of the message of revelation upon the reader.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, tafsir studies need to give greater attention to the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an, as through these elements messages of faith are often conveyed more effectively.

In a broader sense, the study of non-normative verses demonstrates that the Qur'an conveys guidance not only through explicit legal norms, but also through various forms of communication that are narrative, descriptive, and reflective in nature. This has significant implications for the development of tafsir studies, as it calls for more comprehensive and multidimensional approaches in understanding the message of revelation. By taking into account the role of non-normative verses, tafsir studies can move toward a more holistic reading of the Qur'an, enabling a deeper grasp of its spiritual, moral, and theological messages.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study affirms that non-normative verses constitute an essential part of the overall structure of the Qur'anic message. Through a thematic tafsir approach, it demonstrates that verses in the form of narratives, descriptions, and reflections have strategic functions in shaping faith consciousness, strengthening the inner dimension of human beings, and constructing ethical orientations in perceiving the reality of life. The meaning and function of revelation cannot be understood solely from verses that contain commands and prohibitions, but also from those that operate through narrative and reflective approaches. Non-normative verses show that the Qur'an conveys messages of faith not only through explicit normative instructions, but also through persuasive and pedagogical communication strategies. The stories and descriptions presented in these verses function to

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<sup>39</sup> Abdul Mustaqim, *Tafsir Ekologi: Relasi Eko-Teologis Tuhan, Manusia dan alam*, (Mojokerto: Damai Banawa Semesta, 2024).

<sup>40</sup> Kate Zebiri, "Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur'an", *Journal of Quranic Studies* 5, no. 3 (2003), 95-120. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2003.5.2.95>.

strengthen the inner self, instill moral values, and implicitly shape the religious worldview of the reader.

Methodologically, this finding highlights the importance of developing a more comprehensive tafsir approach that is not limited to a purely legalistic dimension. The systematic classification and analysis of non-normative verses open opportunities for the development of more inclusive tafsir studies, which view the Qur'an not only as a text that regulates behavior through legal norms, but also as one that shapes spiritual, moral, and existential consciousness. With this perspective, tafsir studies are expected to provide a more holistic understanding of the Qur'anic message while remaining relevant in responding to the dynamics of contemporary life and religious experience.

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