



Communication Ethics in Social Spaces in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44; A Review through Toshihiko Izutsu's Semantic Approach



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Abstract

This study seeks to analyse the concept of qaulan layyina in Qur'an Surah Ṭāhā [20]:44 through the application of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach, with the aim of elucidating the construction of communication ethics within the Qur'anic framework. The significance of this research lies in addressing the growing prevalence of aggressive communication in social and digital contexts, which necessitates an ethical foundation for communication that is pertinent to contemporary life. While previous scholarship has predominantly examined qaulan layyina from normative and textual perspectives, few studies have employed Izutsu's semantic analysis to explore this verse in relation to the Qur'anic worldview of communication. Utilising a qualitative methodology grounded in library research, this study analyses the basic, relational, synchronic-diachronic, and semantic field meanings of the term qaulan layyina. The findings indicate that qaulan layyina denotes not only 'gentle speech' at a lexical level but also functions as a central concept within the Qur'anic communication system, linking communicative actions, methods of message delivery, and the objective of the listener's moral transformation. This concept is associated with related terms such as qaulan ḥasanān, qaulan ma'rūfan, qaulan karīman, and qaulan sadīdan, collectively constituting a system of communication ethics that emphasises gentleness, truthfulness, respect, and persuasion in contemporary social interactions. These results suggest that qaulan layyina may serve as a normative foundation for da'wah practices, education, digital media, and the cultivation of courteous, persuasive, and constructive social relations. This study contributes to the enrichment of semantic tafsir scholarship and offers a Qur'anic communication model of relevance to modern society.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konsep qaulan layyina dalam QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 melalui pendekatan semantik Toshihiko Izutsu untuk memahami konstruksi etika komunikasi dalam Al-Qur'an. Kajian ini penting karena meningkatnya praktik komunikasi agresif di ruang sosial dan digital menuntut hadirnya landasan etis komunikasi yang relevan dengan kehidupan modern. Penelitian terdahulu umumnya membahas qaulan layyina secara normatif dan tekstual, namun belum banyak yang mengkaji ayat tersebut melalui analisis semantik Izutsu serta menghubungkannya dengan worldview Qur'ani tentang komunikasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan menganalisis makna dasar, relasional, sinkronik-diakronik, dan medan semantik kata qaulan layyina. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa qaulan layyina tidak hanya bermakna perkataan lembut secara leksikal, tetapi juga merupakan konsep inti dalam sistem komunikasi Qur'ani yang menghubungkan tindakan komunikasi, metode penyampaian pesan, dan tujuan transformasi moral pendengar. Konsep ini berelasi dengan istilah qaulan ḥasanān, qaulan ma'rūfan, qaulan karīman, dan qaulan sadīdan sehingga membentuk sistem etika komunikasi yang menekankan kelembutan, kebenaran, penghormatan, dan persuasi dalam interaksi sosial kontemporer. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa qaulan layyina dapat dijadikan landasan normatif bagi praktik dakwah, pendidikan, media digital, dan hubungan sosial yang santun, persuasif, serta konstruktif. Penelitian ini berkontribusi memperkaya kajian tafsir semantik sekaligus menawarkan model komunikasi Qur'ani yang relevan bagi masyarakat modern.

Keywords:

Communication ethics; Qaulan layyina; Toshihiko Izutsu's semantics; QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44; Qur'anic communication

Kata kunci:

Etika komunikasi; Qaulan layyina; Semantik Toshihiko Izutsu; QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44; Komunikasi Qur'ani

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Introduction

The social phenomena characteristic of the digital era reveals an increasing prevalence of negative communication practices within the public sphere, encompassing both social media platforms and broader social interactions.¹ The evolution of the digital public sphere, facilitated by advancements in communication technology, permits individuals to express their opinions openly; however, this freedom is frequently accompanied by the emergence of behaviours such as trolling, cyberbullying,² and various forms of online harassment, which exploit social media to mock, intimidate, or humiliate particular individuals or groups.³ Furthermore, the algorithmic logic underpinning social media platforms, which tends to prioritise content that elicits strong emotions such as anger, controversy, and conflict, exacerbates the dissemination of aggressive rhetoric, resulting in digital spaces often becoming arenas of contentious debate characterised by personal attacks and the delegitimisation of others.⁴

Comparable phenomena are observable in public discourse and contemporary political communication, where provocative language, personal sarcasm, and confrontational strategies are commonly employed to attract public attention and garner support, thereby reinforcing social polarisation within society.⁵ Consequently, the phenomenon of aggressive communication in the modern era should not be understood solely as a decline in individual morality but must also be considered in relation to the transformation of the digital public sphere, the algorithmic mechanisms of social media, and the dynamics of contemporary political communication that shape modes of

¹ Ilzam Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani et al., “An Analytical Study of Qur’anic Tafsir: Interpretation of Qur’anic Verses on Moral Education,” *Anjasmoro: Islamic Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 2 (March 27, 2025): 95–105, <https://doi.org/10.69965/anjasmoro.v2i2.122>. In this context, the term “widespread” denotes the growing prevalence of aggressive language, including verbal insults, hateful remarks, and personal attacks, across diverse public forums.

² Gary W. Giumetti and Robin M. Kowalski, “Cyberbullying via Social Media and Well-Being,” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 45 (June 2022): 101314, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2022.101314>.

³ Ruhul Musakif, Dita Verolyna, and Intan Kurnia Syaputri, “Perilaku Cyberbullying Terhadap Public Figure Di Sosial Media (Studi Kasus Pada Akun Gosip Media Sosial Instagram Lambe Turah)” (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup., 2024), <https://e-theses.iaincurup.ac.id/6733/>. Research conducted by Ruhul Musakif, Dita Verolyna, and Intan Kurnia Syaputri identifies a form of cyberbullying on Instagram manifesting within the comment sections of gossip accounts that discuss public figures such as Ria Ricis and Aurel Hermansyah. In these comment sections, numerous social media users engage in mockery, insults, and sarcastic remarks directed at the personal lives and physical appearances of the aforementioned celebrities. Such expressions can be classified as forms of flaming and harassment, characterised by the use of aggressive language in digital environments to attack or humiliate individuals. This behaviour has the potential to inflict psychological harm on victims, including feelings of shame, emotional distress, and diminished self-confidence.

⁴ Nabila Hilyatunisa, “Algorithms of Social Media As Agents of Social Dynamics: Polarization, Popularity, and Public Participation in Indonesia,” *Smart: Journal of Media Communication and Social Dynamics* 1, no. 1 (2026): 24–42.

⁵ Rizki Amana, “Heboh Rocky Gerung Dimaki Silfester Matutina, Politisi PDIP Murka Hingga Nyaris Adu Jotos,” *tvonenews.com*, 2024, <https://www.tvonenews.com/berita/nasional/243043-heboh-rocky-gerung-dimaki-silfester-matutina-politisi-pdip-murka-hingga-nyaris-adu-jotos>. The emergence of aggressive rhetoric within the public sphere frequently incites conflict and exacerbates social polarization, especially during debates or open discussions. These dynamics are particularly apparent in contemporary political communication, where certain political figures or actors often utilise harsh, provocative, and occasionally insulting language directed at opponents or individuals holding divergent views. Such communicative practices contravene the ethical standards of public discourse, as they prioritise personal attacks over the reasoned exchange of ideas.

interaction and argumentation. Notably, the Qur'an, in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44, emphasises the importance of ethical communication by advocating for the use of good, polite, and gentle speech in interpersonal interactions.⁶

Regarding QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 and the significance of upholding communication ethics, both classical and contemporary mufassirūn have offered profound interpretations. Ibn Kathīr elucidates that QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 imparts a crucial lesson on communication ethics, specifically the importance of delivering messages with gentleness and compassion.⁷ This interpretation is further supported by Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, who asserts that Allah revealed QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 to underscore the necessity of proper ethics in social interactions, particularly through gentle speech, thereby facilitating the acceptance of messages of goodness and advice.⁸ Similarly, contemporary mufassirūn such as Sayyid Quṭb highlight the urgency of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44, contending that gentle speech neither incites arrogance nor pride in sinning; rather, it functions to remind and caution individuals against tyrannical conduct.⁹ Consistent with this perspective, Muhammad Quraish Shihab concludes that communication should fundamentally be conducted with gentleness to ensure that the message is effectively received by its audience.¹⁰

The message conveyed in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 has not yet been fully internalised by contemporary Muslim society. This is attributable to the fact that existing interpretations do not entirely reflect the needs of twenty-first-century Muslims, whose socio-religious contexts are becoming increasingly rapid and complex. Proponents of contextual interpretation contend that the broader context of modern society differs markedly from that of the classical Islamic period. Consequently, new interpretations of Qur'anic texts that are pertinent to current developments are necessary to elucidate how the principle of good speech may be applied within contemporary social, cultural, and media spheres.¹¹

Research pertaining to QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 is not entirely novel. Numerous prior studies have employed diverse methodologies and approaches. For example, the study by Najhan Dzulhusna et al. demonstrates that Islam emphasises the importance of gentle communication, particularly within the familial context between parents and children. This approach is advocated to foster a comfortable atmosphere, encourage mutual listening, and promote harmony within the family.¹² Additionally, research conducted by Ismatullah provides a detailed exposition of Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy's interpretation of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44,

⁶ In QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 44 the text elucidates the appropriate manner of communication through the use of gentle language, aiming to promote harmony and peace, reflect commendable moral character, facilitate understanding, serve as a substitute for charitable acts, and eradicate feelings of hostility.

⁷ Imaduddin Abul Fida' Ismail bin Umar bin Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir* (Egypt: Dar Toyyibah, 1990). 842.

⁸ Abu Laits Nashr bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim As-Samarqandi, *Tafsir As-Samarqandi Jilid 2* (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Ilmiyah, 1971). 344.

⁹ Sayyid Quṭb, *Tafsir Fi Zhilal Al-Qur'an Jilid 8* (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Al-Syaruq, 1967). 406.

¹⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Jilid 8* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002). 306-307.

¹¹ M.K. Ridwan, "Metodologi Penafsiran Kontekstual; Analisis Gagasan Dan Prinsip Kunci Penafsiran Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (June 15, 2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v1i1.1-22>.

¹² Najhan Dzulhusna, Nunung Nurhasanah, and Yuda Nur Suherman, "Qaulan Sadida, Qaulan Ma'rufa, Qaulan Baligha, Qaulan Maysura, Qaulan Layyina Dan Qaulan Karima Itu Sebagai Landasan Etika Komunikasi Dalam Dakwah," *Journal Of Islamic Social Science And Communication (JISSC) DIKSI* 1, no. 02 (2022): 76–84, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54801/jisscdiksi.v1i02.114>.

elucidating that in this verse Allah commands Prophet Moses and Prophet Aaron to confront Pharaoh and engage him in debate with strong arguments, as Pharaoh had transgressed by claiming divinity for himself. In interpreting *qaulan layyina*, Hasbi underscores that gentleness in speech is not confined merely to a soft tone but also encompasses the manner in which such speech is received by the interlocutor and leaves a profound impression upon the soul (in the context of Pharaoh), notably through the use of appealing and moving language.¹³ Furthermore, Ahmad Zain's study applies the concept of *qaulan layyina* within the family domain. According to him, the implementation of this concept aims to establish effective family communication while simultaneously serving as a means of instilling moral and religious values. The application of *qaulan layyina* is also considered capable of influencing the social attitudes of family members, including honesty, discipline, politeness, and other commendable behaviours. Moreover, this concept contributes to the prevention of familial conflicts, as the Qur'an provides clear guidance regarding the importance of establishing ideal communication patterns within the family environment.¹⁴

To date, no research has been identified that applies Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach to the analysis of the verse QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44, while simultaneously situating it within contemporary contexts. This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a semantic analysis of the term *qaulan layyina*, which serves as the primary focus of the investigation. Two principal research questions guide this inquiry: first, what is the meaning of the term *qaulan layyina* according to Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic framework for the Qur'an? Second, how can the interpretation and contextualisation of *qaulan layyina* be understood within the social dynamics of modern society? Broadly, this study aims to enhance the understanding of Islamic intellectual heritage and to provide guidance for fostering ethical conduct and appropriate social attitudes. More specifically, it aspires to contribute to the enrichment of Qur'anic and tafsir studies and to serve as a significant reference for the advancement of contextual tafsir scholarship in the contemporary era.

This study utilises a qualitative methodology, adopting a library research approach that involves the collection, examination, and analysis of various literary sources pertinent to the research theme, including tafsir texts, academic monographs, and scholarly articles.¹⁵ The principal aim of this research is to investigate and elucidate the meaning of the term *qaulan layyina* in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 through semantic analysis employing Toshihiko Izutsu's framework.¹⁶ By means of this approach, the study endeavours to trace the semantic network associated with the term in order to attain a more profound understanding of the concept of gentle communication from a Qur'anic perspective.

¹³ A M Ismatulloh, "Etika Berkomunikasi Dalam Al-Qur'an Analisis Penafsiran Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqi Dalam Tafsir An-Nur," *Lentera*, 2017, 29.

¹⁴ Ahmad Zain Samoto, "Metode Komunikasi Yang Ideal Dalam Pendidikan Keluarga Menurut Al-Qur'an," *Andragogi Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 1 (2021).

¹⁵ Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka Dan Studi Lapangan," *Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung* 5 (2020).

¹⁶ Ilzam Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani, Mukhsin Mukhsin, and Muhammad Fahmi Shihab, "Toshihiko Izutsu's Approach to the Qur'an: A Semantic Analysis of the Term Ghuluw and Its Contextualization," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 4, no. 3 (2024): 179–93, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v4i3.40636>.

Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic theory fundamentally comprises several key stages. The first involves identifying the focal word alongside its related keywords. The second stage entails analysing meaning through sentence context (syntagmatic analysis) and examining semantic relations with synonyms or antonyms (paradigmatic analysis). The third stage consists of conducting diachronic studies to trace the evolution of meaning from the pre-Islamic period to the present, as well as synchronic studies to comprehend meaning within a specific temporal framework. The fourth stage involves formulating the Qur'anic concept of the term to construct a Qur'anic worldview applicable to life.¹⁷ To ensure that the discussion remains comprehensive and pertinent to contemporary circumstances, this study also adopts a contextual approach, situating the findings within evolving social realities so that the results are not merely theoretical but also applicable to social and religious life.¹⁸

Results and Discussion

The Application of Toshihiko Izutsu's Semantic Theory to QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44

This discussion centres on the examination of the term *qaulan layyina* as the core concept of Qur'an Surah Ṭāhā [20]: 44, which encapsulates the principle of ethical communication within the Qur'anic text. The verse underscores the significance of employing gentle, polite, and wise speech, even when engaging with individuals who are obstinate and resistant to the truth. Consequently, this study aims to explore the semantic nuances of *qaulan layyina* and to elucidate its relevance in fostering courteous, balanced, and effective communication practices, particularly within the context of social interactions in contemporary society.

a. **The fundamental meaning of the term *Qaulan Layyina***

The basic meaning denotes the original and fundamental sense attributed to a word prior to any expansion or semantic shift resulting from contextual, cultural, or historical influences. This meaning is inherently lexical and can typically be ascertained through etymological analysis and examination of the word's usage outside the Qur'anic text, particularly within the Arabic language. Comprehending the basic meaning represents a crucial preliminary step in elucidating key Qur'anic concepts, as it allows scholars to differentiate between the general meanings employed in everyday language and the specific meanings within the revelatory context. Consequently, the basic meaning serves as the foundational element of semantic analysis aimed at revealing the deeper conceptual dimensions of a Qur'anic term.¹⁹

Etymologically, the term *qaulan* originates from the root *qāla-yaqūlu-qawlan*, which lexically signifies speech, utterance, or statement.²⁰ Similarly, the term *layyina* derives from the root *layyana-yulayyinu-talyīnan*,²¹ conveying the meanings of

¹⁷ Toshihiko Izutsu, "God and Man in the Qur'an," *Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust*, 2002, 11-40.

¹⁸ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Taylor & Francis, 2005). Abdullah Saeed elucidates in his book that the interpretation of the Qur'an must consider both the historical context in which the verses were revealed and contemporary social realities, ensuring that the universal values of the Qur'an remain pertinent and applicable in modern life.

¹⁹ Izutsu, "God and Man in the Qur'an, 7."

²⁰ A.W. Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 2018), 405.

²¹ Iman Saiful Mu'minin, *Kamus Ilmu Nahwu & Sharaf Edisi Kedua* (Amzah, 2022) 168.

softening, gentling, or rendering something flexible.²² Consequently, the lexical combination of these two terms may be interpreted as speech delivered in a gentle or non-harsh manner. However, within the semantic framework of the Qur'an, this interpretation does not exist in isolation; rather, it constitutes part of a broader conceptual network pertaining to the ethics of speech and communicative patterns within the context of revelation.²³ The concept of *qaulan layyina* can be understood as an integral element of the Qur'anic worldview regarding human communication. This term signifies that, within the Qur'an, the transmission of a message pertains not only to the veracity of its content but also to the manner in which it is conveyed. This manner is intertwined with ethical principles that inform the structure of social relations from the Qur'anic standpoint.

**b. Relational Meaning
Syntagmatic Analysis**

Syntagmatic analysis is a methodological approach designed to ascertain the meaning of a word by examining the words that precede and follow it.²⁴ This approach facilitates an understanding of a word's meaning not solely in lexical terms but also in relation to sentence structure and contextual usage.²⁵ In the present study, syntagmatic analysis is utilised to demonstrate how the term *qaulan layyina* acquires a more specific meaning through its association with the words that surround it within the Qur'anic verse. Notable expressions exhibiting a syntagmatic relationship with *qaulan layyina* include *fa-qūlā lahū* (the preceding phrase) and *yatadhakkaru aw yakshshā* (the following phrase).

In syntagmatic analysis, the meaning of *qaulan layyina* in QS. Tāhā [20]:44 cannot be comprehended in isolation; rather, it must be analysed in relation to the surrounding phrases, specifically *fa-qūlā lahū* and *yatadhakkaru aw yakshshā*. The phrase *fa-qūlā lahū* denotes the communicative act commanded by Allah to the Prophets Moses and Aaron to convey a message to Pharaoh.²⁶ In this context, *qaulan layyina* functions as the manner or strategy for delivering that message. In other words, the command to speak to Pharaoh highlights not only the content of the da'wah being conveyed but also the manner of its delivery, which must be conducted gently. The relationship between *fa-qūlā lahū* and *qaulan layyina* establishes a meaningful structure affirming that communication in Qur'anic da'wah is inseparable from the ethical dimension of speech.

The phrase *yatadhakkaru aw yakshshā* denotes the orientation or purpose of such communication. The two potential responses outlined in this verse—awareness (*yatadhakkaru*) or fear of Allah (*yakshshā*)—exemplify the anticipated effect of

²² Husein bin Muhammad Ad-Damaghani, *Qamus Al-Qur'an Aw Ishlah Al-Wujuh Wa An-Nazair Fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Al-'Ilmi, 1983) 381.

²³ Wahyu Hanafi Putra, *Linguistik Al-Qur'an: Membedah Makna Dalam Konvensi Bahasa*, ed. Febri Hijroh Mukhlis, 1st ed. (Indramayu: CV. Adanu Abimata, 2020), 27.

²⁴ Izutsu, "God and Man in the Qur'an, 7."

²⁵ Atif Khalil, "Remembering Toshihiko Izutsu: Linguist, Islamicist, Philosopher," in *Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation* (BRILL, 2022), 528–50, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004529038_027.

²⁶ Muhammad Fuad 'abd al Baqi, *Al Mu'jam Al Mufahras Li Alfazh Al Quran* (Рипол Классик, 1986).

conveying the message with gentleness.²⁷ Within this syntagmatic relationship, *qaulan layyinan* operates as a communicative strategy designed to create a space for reflection within the interlocutor. In other words, gentleness in delivering the message is conceptualised as a means of fostering moral awareness or eliciting fear of Allah within Pharaoh himself.²⁸

The interrelation among the three phrases (*fa-qūlā lahū*, *qaulan layyina*, and *yatazzakkaru aw yakhsyā*) reveals a coherent structure of meaning that exemplifies the Qur’anic communicative paradigm. The imperative to speak (*fa-qūlā-lahū*) underscores the act of da‘wah, while *qaulan layyina* delineates the manner in which the message is conveyed. Meanwhile, *yatazzakkaru aw yakhsyā* reflects the intended orientation towards transformation in the addressee. Consequently, within the Qur’anic semantic framework, *qaulan layyina* can be interpreted as an integral component of a da‘wah communication strategy that employs gentleness as a means to awaken awareness and elicit a moral response from the interlocutor.

Paradigmatic Analysis

Paradigmatic analysis involves examining a word or concept in relation to other words or concepts that are either synonymous or antonymous within the Qur’an. In the context of this study, such analysis is employed to trace vocabulary that exhibits semantic proximity or opposition to the term *qaulan layyina*, thereby enabling a more comprehensive mapping of its semantic field and facilitating a clearer understanding of how the Qur’an emphasises the value of gentle speech through its association with related terms.

Table 1. Synonyms and Antonyms of the Term Qaulan Layyina

No	Synonym	Antonym
1	The phrase <i>qawlan ḥasanan</i> (قَوْلًا حَسَنًا), which translates as good speech, appears in QS. Al-Isrā’ [17]:53. Additionally, the term <i>qawlan maysūran</i> (قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا), meaning appropriate or easy speech, is found in QS. Al-Isrā’ [17]:28.	The term <i>qawlan ghalīẓan</i> (قَوْلًا غَلِيظًا), which translates as harsh speech, appears in QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:63 and QS. Āli ‘Imrān [3]:159.
2	The term <i>qawlan ma’rūfan</i> (قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا), which translates as commendable speech, appears in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:263. Additionally, the term <i>qawlan sadīdan</i> (قَوْلًا سَادِدًا), meaning truthful speech, is found in QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:9.	The term <i>qawl az-zūr</i> (قَوْلَ الزُّورِ), which translates as false speech, is found in QS. Al-Ḥajj [22]:30.

²⁷ Ibnu Husain Ahmad bin Faris Zakariya, “Mu’jam Muqayis Al-Lughah Jilid 4,” *Dar Al-Fikr*, 1987, 47.

²⁸ Muhammad Ibnu Makram Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan Al-‘Arab* (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Eiha Al-Tourath Al-Arabi, 1985), 52.

3	The term <i>qawlan karīman</i> (قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا), which translates as noble speech, appears in QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:23. Additionally, the term <i>qawlan balīghan</i> (قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا), meaning effective speech, is found in QS. An-Nisā' [4]:63.	The term <i>qawlan fazzān</i> (قَوْلًا فَظًّا), which translates as hurtful speech, is found in QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:159.
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Based on an analysis of vocabulary within the Qur'an, the concept of *qaulan layyina* exhibits a paradigmatic relationship with several other terms that delineate communication ethics from a Qur'anic perspective, including *qaulan ḥasanān*, *qaulan maysūran*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan karīman*, and *qaulan balīghan*. Collectively, these terms constitute a semantic field that underscores the significance of the quality of speech in human interaction. Although these terms share semantic proximity, each possesses distinct conceptual nuances contingent upon its contextual usage within the Qur'an. Specifically, *qaulan ḥasanān* emphasises speech that is good and comforting in general social interactions (QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:53), whereas *qaulan maysūran* denotes words that are easy to comprehend and do not impose a burden on others, particularly in circumstances where an individual is unable to fulfil another's request (QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:28). In contrast, *qaulan ma'rūfan* pertains to speech that is appropriate and conforms to social norms, especially in sensitive contexts such as providing assistance or engaging with vulnerable groups (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:263). Moreover, *qaulan sadīdan* highlights the importance of honesty and accuracy in speech (QS. An-Nisā' [4]:9), *qaulan karīman* conveys the notion of showing profound respect towards the interlocutor, particularly within the parent-child relationship (QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:23), while *qaulan balīghan* refers to speech that is effective, emotionally resonant, and capable of exerting moral influence upon the listener (QS. An-Nisā' [4]:63).

Among these various concepts, *qaulan layyina* occupies a more specific position as it emphasises the dimension of gentleness in the manner of conveying a message, particularly when addressing individuals who are harsh or hold authority, as exemplified in the dialogue between Prophet Moses, Prophet Aaron, and Pharaoh in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44. Unlike other terms that highlight aspects of goodness, propriety, truthfulness, or respect, *qaulan layyina* places greater emphasis on a persuasive and non-confrontational communication strategy, thereby facilitating the emergence of moral awareness within the interlocutor.

In addition to synonymic relations, the concept of *qaulan layyina* can also be comprehended through its semantic opposition to several expressions denoting negative forms of communication, such as *qaulan ghalīẓan* and *qaulan fazzān*, which signify harsh and rude speech (QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:159), as well as *qawl az-zūr*, referring to false speech or false testimony (QS. Al-Ḥajj [22]:30). The presence of these contrasting terms illustrates that the Qur'an establishes a value system that distinctly differentiates between speech that ethically fosters social relations and speech that undermines them. Within this semantic framework, *qaulan layyina* may thus be regarded as a fundamental component within the network of Qur'anic

communication concepts, positioning gentleness in speech as an ethical strategy for conveying the message of truth.

It may therefore be concluded that the paradigmatic analysis of *qaulan layyina* and its associated terms reveals not only linguistic aspects but also ethical and spiritual dimensions within communicative practices. The Qur'an underscores that gentle, courteous, and respectful speech has the capacity to soften hearts, mitigate conflict, and create opportunities for constructive dialogue, even when addressing those who oppose the truth. Conversely, harsh, hurtful, or deceitful speech can undermine social relations, incite hostility, and foreclose opportunities for persuasive communication in the process of conveying the truth.

c. Synchronic and Diachronic Semantics

Pre-Qur'anic Period

The social and cultural framework of the pre-Qur'anic period can be elucidated through an analysis of the vocabulary employed by various groups within ancient Arab society. These groups include the Bedouin tribes, whose language reflected a nomadic worldview; caravan communities, which were oriented towards trade; and religious terminologies shaped by Jewish and Christian traditions present in the Arabian Peninsula.²⁹ For the ancient Arabs, poetry represented the most significant cultural achievement. Their poems often recounted themes of love and war, expressions of group solidarity, and denunciations of their adversaries.³⁰ With respect to tracing the pre-Qur'anic meaning, the term *qaulan layyina* does not appear in the pre-Qur'anic period. However, this expression is found in modern literary works, notably in the poetry of Ahmad Shawqi. In this context, the term lacks a religious connotation and is instead used metaphorically to denote something that is logically or practically difficult to achieve.

يَحْكُونَ أَنَّ رَجُلًا كُرْدِيًّا، كَانَ عَظِيمَ الْجِسْمِ هَمَشَرِيًّا، وَكَانَ يُلْقِي الرُّعْبَ فِي الْقُلُوبِ، بِكَثْرَةِ السِّلَاحِ فِي الْجَبُوبِ
وَيُنْفِزُ الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى، وَيُرْعِبُ الْكِبَارَ وَالصِّغَارَا، وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ هُنَاكَ وَهْنَا، يَصِيحُ بِالنَّاسِ أَنَا أَنَا أَنَا، نَمَى حَدِيثُهُ إِلَى
صَبِيٍّ، صَغِيرِ جِسْمٍ بَطَلٍ قَوِيٍّ، لَا يَعْرِفُ النَّاسُ لَهُ الْقُوَّةَ، وَلَيْسَ مِمَّنْ يَدْعُونَ الْقُوَّةَ، فَقَالَ لِلْقَوْمِ سَادِرِيكُمْ بِهِ فَتَعَلَّمُونَ
صِدْقَهُ مِنْ كَذِبِهِ، وَسَارَ نَحْوَ الْهَمَشَرِيِّ فِي عَجَلٍ، وَالنَّاسُ مِمَّا سَيِّكُونَ فِي وَجَلٍ، وَمَدَّ نَحْوَهُ يَمِينًا قَاسِيَهُ، بِضَرْبَةٍ كَادَتْ
تَكُونُ الْقَاضِيَهُ، فَلَمْ يُحْزِكْ سَاكِنًا وَلَا إِرْتَبَكَ، وَلَا انْتَهَى عَن زَعْمِهِ وَلَا تَرَكَ، بَلْ قَالَ لِلْغَالِبِ قَوْلًا لَبِنًا، الْآنَ صِرْنَا اثْنَيْنِ
أَنْتَ وَأَنَا

It is recounted that there was a Kurdish man of immense stature and extraordinary strength who instilled fear among the populace due to the numerous weapons he bore. He intimidated all individuals, regardless of whether they were Jewish or Christian, young or old. Whenever he passed through a locality, he would arrogantly proclaim, "I! I! I!" The tale of this man eventually reached a small child of slight build, yet endowed with courage and strength beyond that of many. This child was not one to boast of his power. He then declared to the people, "I will reveal to you who he truly is, so that you may discern truth

²⁹ Zulhamdani Zulhamdani, "Interaksi Al-Qur'an Dengan Tradisi Pra-Quranik: Kritik Atas Pemikiran Abraham Geiger Terhadap Imitatif Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Tafseer* 5, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24252/jt.v5i1.7317>.

³⁰ Yusak Tanasyah and Andreas Bayu Krisdiantoro, "Dunia Perjanjian Baru" (Moriah Press, 2023) 27.

from falsehood.” Without hesitation, he approached the large man, while the onlookers awaited the outcome with apprehension. The man then delivered a powerful blow, nearly a decisive strike; however, the small child neither flinched nor exhibited fear. He neither withdrew his words nor retreated. Instead, he addressed the man calmly, stating, “Now the two of us are here: you and I.”

This poem delineates the contrast between arrogance derived from physical might and genuine strength rooted in steadfastness, courage, and self-discipline. The opening passage introduces a large Kurdish man, heavily armed and inclined to intimidate all—whether Jews, Christians, the elderly, or the young—while incessantly boasting with arrogant exclamations of “I, I, I!” This character, portrayed as embodying pride and arrogance, is subsequently confronted by a markedly different figure: a small, slight child who possesses a strength unrecognised by others. Unlike the Kurdish man, the child does not depend on threats or violence but instead exemplifies courage, composure, and resolve.

The climax of the poem occurs when the child confronts a direct threat in the form of a blow that nearly proves fatal. Despite this, he remains resolute and fearless, responding with gentleness through the expression, “Now the two of us are here: you and I.” This statement suggests that true strength does not reside in physical size, weaponry, or boastful shouting, but rather in courage of the heart, composure of mind, and the capacity to face violence without succumbing to fear. Fundamentally, the poem functions as a critique of arrogance and violence, whilst simultaneously extolling steadfastness and moral courage.

From the perspective of Qur’anic communication ethics, the attitude of the young child in the poem exemplifies the concept of *qaulan layyina*, which entails speaking gently and without provocation, as prescribed in Qur’an, Surah Ṭāhā [20]:44. When faced with threats from the arrogant and intimidating Kurdish man, the child refrains from responding with anger or violence, instead offering a simple yet composed statement: “Now the two of us are here: you and I.” This expression illustrates that courage need not be expressed through aggression; rather, it may be conveyed through a resolute character tempered by gentleness in speech. Consequently, the poem not only critiques arrogance rooted in physical strength but also underscores that moral fortitude and self-restraint—embodied in the principle of *qaulan layyina*—represent a superior form of courage.

Qur’anic Period

The Qur’anic period represents the principal phase for analysing the meanings of key terms as they are employed directly in the Qur’an at the time of its revelation. The primary focus at this stage is to examine the contexts of the verses containing these terms, to explore the relationships among vocabularies within the Qur’anic semantic field, and to identify any shifts or reaffirmations of meaning in comparison with their pre-Qur’anic usage.³¹ QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 is attributed to the Makkan period, specifically the early phase of the Prophet Muhammad’s da‘wah in Makkah prior to the Hijrah. The defining features of this period include a focus on *tawhīd*, the establishment of

³¹ Izutsu, “Relasi Tuhan Dan Manusia: Pendekatan Semantik Terhadap Al-Qur’an, Terj, 12.”

faith, and the inculcation of moral values, all conveyed through language designed to resonate emotionally and spiritually with the audience.³² In QS. Tāhā [20]:44, the concept of *qaulan layyina* is presented within the context of Allah's command to Prophet Moses and Prophet Aaron as they confront Pharaoh, a ruler characterised by absolute authority and opposition to the truth.³³ Within the verse's structure, *qaulan layyina* functions not merely as an ethical recommendation for speech but as an integral component of a communicative framework that links the act of da'wah (*fa-qūlā lahū*), the method of message delivery (*qaulan layyina*), and the intended outcome of transformation in the addressee (*yatazzakkaru aw yakhsyā*). This conceptual relationship illustrates that, within the Qur'anic semantic system, the efficacy of communication depends not only on the veracity of the message but also on the manner of its delivery, which facilitates the emergence of awareness within the listener.³⁴

In addition to exemplifying the attribute of gentle communication, QS. Tāhā [20]:44 also embodies the principle of hikmah in the articulation of truth, as similarly emphasised in QS. An-Nahl [16]:125. Allah's directive to Prophets Moses and Aaron to address Pharaoh with gentleness, despite his tyranny and arrogance, affirms that gentleness should not be construed as a sign of weakness but rather as an effective strategy to facilitate receptivity. From a psychological perspective, the employment of amicable language, calm intonation, and a non-threatening demeanour can diminish resistance from the interlocutor, thereby creating an opportunity for the message of da'wah to be heard and duly considered. Within the context of the Makkan period, this verse functioned as a crucial guideline for the early Muslim community and continues to hold relevance for Muslims across all eras, emphasising that the success of da'wah depends not solely on the strength of argumentation but also on the moral maturity of the communicator.³⁵

This analysis reveals that the concept of *qaulan layyina* not only denotes an exhortation to speak gently but also embodies the Qur'anic worldview, which integrates ethical, psychological, and social dimensions within communicative practices. In the narrative of Moses and Pharaoh, gentleness in speech functions as a communicative strategy intended to foster moral awareness among those in positions of power. This demonstrates that, within the Qur'anic framework, ethical communication is integral to the process of human transformation.

Post-Qur'anic Period

The post-Qur'anic period refers to the phase following the revelation during which the meanings of key Qur'anic terms were examined, interpreted, developed, and employed within various Islamic intellectual traditions, including ḥadīth, tafsir,

³² Abdussalam Muhammad Harun, *Tahdzib Sirah Ibnu Hisyam*, ed. Shofura Muhammad Zuhda and Aminah Sholihah (Solo: Al-Qowam, 2015).

³³ Abi al-Hasan ALi Ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi Al-Nisaburi, *Asbab Nuzul Al-Qur'an Ali Bin Ahmad Al Wahidi* (Banten: Dinamika Barkah Utama, 2009), 204.

³⁴ Jalaluddin Abi Abdurrahman Al-Suyuti, *Asbab Nuzul As-Suyuti* (Beirut - Lebanon: Al-Saqafiyah, 2002), 2-4.

³⁵ Rahmadinal Rahmadinal, "Tingkatan Intelektual Manusia Dalam QS An-Nahl (16): 125" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2017).

literary works, and the scholarship of Muslim thinkers. During this stage, the meanings of terms frequently underwent processes of expansion, restriction, or conceptual enrichment, reflecting developments in Islamic theology, law, philosophy, and Sufism. Analysis of this period elucidates how the Muslim community's understanding of Qur'anic terminology has continued to evolve in response to historical and cultural contexts, while also revealing the relationship between the original Qur'anic meanings and the interpretative constructions formulated by subsequent generations.³⁶

Within tafsir literature, the concept of *qaulan layyina* in QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 is predominantly interpreted as an injunction to convey the truth in a gentle and non-provocative manner.³⁷ For example, al-Tabari understands this phrase as a directive for Prophet Moses and Prophet Aaron to employ refined and mild speech when delivering da'wah to Pharaoh, with the aim of fostering awareness or fear of Allah within him.³⁸ A comparable interpretation is also evident in the tafsir of Ibn Kathir, who underscores that gentleness in speech constitutes a da'wah method endorsed by the Qur'an, even when addressing tyrannical rulers.³⁹ From this standpoint, *qaulan layyina* is conceived as a communicative strategy designed to avoid direct confrontation, thereby facilitating the acceptance of the message of truth.

Beyond the tafsir perspective, this concept is further substantiated within the ḥadīth tradition, which underscores the significance of gentleness in social interactions. One prophetic tradition states, "Indeed, gentleness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything except that it disgraces it" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim).⁴⁰ Within the framework of Islamic ethics, such traditions illustrate that gentleness (*rifq*) constitutes a fundamental principle in communication and human relations. Consequently, the concept of *qaulan layyina* is understood not merely as a directive within the narrative of Moses and Pharaoh, but also as an integral component of a broader moral principle within Islamic teachings.

Building upon this textual foundation, Muslim scholars and religious authorities in the post-prophetic era subsequently actualised the principle of *qaulan layyina* within socio-religious practices. The value of gentleness in speech was manifested in various forms, including persuasive methods of da'wah, dialogical approaches to conflict resolution, and the tradition of consultation (*musyawarah*) in decision-making.⁴¹

³⁶ Siti Fahimah, "Al-Quran dan Semantik Toshihiko Izutsu," *Jurnal Al-Fanar* 3, no. 2 (August 31, 2020): 113–32, <https://doi.org/10.33511/alfanar.v3n2.113-132>.

³⁷ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Jilid 8*, 319-321.

³⁸ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy Al-Qur'ān*, 1954, 167.

³⁹ Ibnu Katsir, *Terjemah Tafsir Ibnu Katsir* (Jakarta: Jabal, 2007), 294–296.

⁴⁰ In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitab al-Birr wa al-Ṣilah wa al-Ādāb*, hadis no. 2594.

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، قَالَا: حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، عَنِ أَبِي وَإِلٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ قَالَ فَإِنَّ الرِّفْقَ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَطُ إِلاَّ زَانَهُ، وَلَا نُزِعَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَطُ إِلاَّ شَانَهُ.

The narration was transmitted to us by Qutaibah ibn Sa'ud and Zuhair ibn Harb, both of whom reported that Jarir conveyed from al-A'mash, who in turn received it from Abu Wa'il, from Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, who related that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective."

⁴¹ Siti Mukzizat, "Inklusivitas Dakwah Islam Dalam Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Perspektif Al-Qur'an" (Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, 2025).

Consequently, the concept of *qaulan layyina* came to be understood not merely as an element of the Qur’anic narrative concerning Moses and Pharaoh, but also evolved into a fundamental principle of communication ethics, consistently upheld in da‘wah practices and social interactions among Muslims throughout history.

Islamic history illustrates that the concept of *qaulan layyina* was instrumental in the successful dissemination of Islam across various regions, particularly in the Nusantara, where da‘wah strategies predominantly emphasised exemplary conduct, politeness, and cultural adaptation.⁴² In the contemporary era, post-Qur’anic interpretations of this principle have extended into diverse domains such as education, politics, and the media, where gentle communication is regarded as an essential means to reduce polarization, prevent hate speech, and mitigate identity-based conflicts.⁴³ Consequently, it can be concluded that this verse holds not only normative significance at the time of its revelation but also serves as a timeless ethical guideline, capable of being incorporated into peaceful, inclusive, and trust-building approaches to socio-religious interaction.

d. Semantic Field

A semantic field comprises a set of words whose meanings are interrelated, collectively forming a conceptual network that reflects the Qur’anic worldview of reality. Each key term does not exist in isolation but is linked to other terms through relationships such as synonymy, antonymy, or thematic association, whereby the meaning of one term informs the interpretation of another.⁴⁴

Based on the analyses presented above, the semantic field of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 can be categorised into three principal clusters:

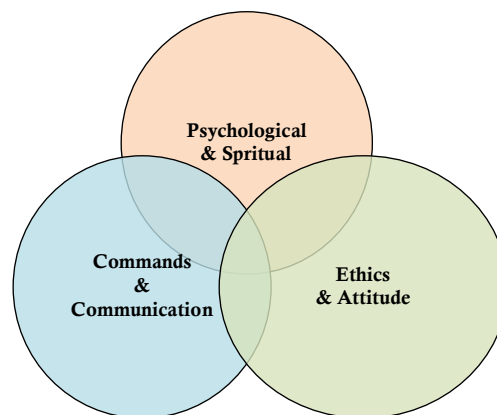


Figure 1. Semantic Field QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44

The semantic field of Qur’an, Sūrah Ṭāhā [20]:44, illustrates a model of communication that balances the firmness of the message with gentleness in its delivery, aiming ultimately to foster moral awareness and piety in the listener. This

⁴² Muslimin M and Hamidi Hamidi, *Komunikasi Dakwah Melalui Media Tradisional: Menghidupkan Kearifan Lokal Dalam Menyampaikan Pesan Dakwah*, ed. Septian R and Margaretha Dwi Lestari (Malang: PT. Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 2025).

⁴³ Qori Hajidah Arianti et al., “The Implementation of ‘Qaulan Layyina’ (QS. Taha: 44) by Preachers in the Q&A Program on Metro TV,” *Wasilatuna: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 8, no. 01 (April 11, 2025): 77–92, <https://doi.org/10.38073/wasilatuna.v8i01.1913>.

⁴⁴ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*, 9.

verse presents a communication paradigm that encompasses linguistic, ethical, and psychological dimensions, ensuring that the message of truth is comprehended not only intellectually but also resonates emotionally with the recipient. Even when addressing a figure as antagonistic as Pharaoh, gentleness in speech is maintained as a deliberate and strategic approach. This indicates that, from the Qur'anic perspective, the efficacy of communication depends not solely on the content of the message but also on the manner of its delivery.

Within the semantic framework of the verse, the central concept of *qaulan layyina* is intimately linked to the communicative act prescribed by the phrase *fā-qūlā lahū* (speak to him) and its intended purpose, namely *yatazzakkaru aw yakhsyā* (so that he may take heed or fear [Allah]). This connection suggests that *qaulan layyina* operates as a mode of message delivery that bridges the act of da'wah with the potential to evoke a moral response from the interlocutor. Encircling this core concept are several additional terms that reinforce the ethical principles of communication in the Qur'an, including *qaulan ḥasanan*, *qaulan maysūran*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan karīman*, and *qaulan balīghan*. Each term highlights an ideal attribute of speech.⁴⁵

The construction of this semantic field suggests that the Qur'anic concept of communication extends beyond mere linguistic elements to encompass strategies for fostering broader human relationships. QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 illustrates that gentleness in speech serves as a communicative approach capable of touching the heart while simultaneously diminishing resistance from the interlocutor. Consequently, this verse offers a normative basis for ethical communication practices across diverse social contexts, including da'wah activities, education, and everyday social interactions, positioning gentleness as a fundamental principle for maintaining harmony and preventing conflict.

The Contextualisation of Qur'ān 20:44 within the Social Sphere

Contextualisation in Qur'anic studies fundamentally seeks to connect the normative message of the revealed text with the continually evolving social realities. In contemporary tafsir scholarship, contextualisation extends beyond merely reaffirming the moral values embedded within the verses; it endeavours to interpret these messages in relation to the social, cultural, and communicative dynamics characteristic of modern society.⁴⁶ In this manner, Qur'anic values are comprehended not only as normative teachings but also as

⁴⁵ *Qaulan ḥasanan* emphasises goodness and gentleness in speech; *qaulan maysūran* denotes words that are easily accepted and do not impose a burden on the interlocutor; while *qaulan ma'rūfan* refers to speech that is appropriate and conforms to prevailing social norms. Conversely, *qaulan sadīdan* underscores the importance of honesty and truthfulness in communication; *qaulan karīman* conveys respect and honour towards the interlocutor; and *qaulan balīghan* describes speech that is effective, clear, and capable of resonating with the listener's heart. Collectively, these six concepts illustrate that, within the Qur'anic value system, the quality of speech is assessed not solely by the content of the message but also by the manner of its delivery, which embodies ethics, propriety, and moral responsibility in communication.

⁴⁶ Ade Rosi Siti Zakiah, "Interpretasi Kontekstual Makna Qawwām Dalam Al-Qur'an QS. An-Nisa' 34; Aplikasi Hermeneutika Abdullah Saeed," *Al-Qudwah* 1, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 129, <https://doi.org/10.24014/alqudwah.v1i2.22972>.

ethical resources capable of offering guidance for the perpetually changing conditions of social life.⁴⁷

The contextualisation of QS. Tāhā [20]:44 within the social domain, particularly in the context of friendships, can be elucidated through the principle of *qaulan layyina* (gentle speech), which constitutes the central message of the verse. In this passage, Allah commands Prophet Moses and Prophet Aaron to address Pharaoh—an archetype of harshness and tyranny—with gentleness. This directive illustrates that, from a Qur’anic standpoint, the manner in which a message is conveyed is fundamental to establishing effective and meaningful communication. Given that even a figure as severe as Pharaoh is to be approached with gentleness, the application of this principle is arguably even more pertinent in everyday social interactions, including friendships.

Within the context of friendship, *qaulan layyina* may be understood as the practice of maintaining appropriate speech, respecting the feelings of friends, and refraining from hurtful or degrading remarks. Friendships frequently encompass differences in opinion, perspectives, and personal backgrounds. Without adherence to proper communicative ethics, such differences can readily result in misunderstandings and the deterioration of established relationships. Consequently, the principle of gentleness in speech operates as a social mechanism that sustains harmony within relationships while fostering a constructive environment for dialogue among friends.

The application of *qaulan layyina* within friendships is also evident in the manner in which advice or criticism is offered. In social contexts, friends are often the closest individuals to provide reminders and guidance to one another.⁴⁸ However, advice delivered in a harsh or judgmental manner may provoke resistance and create distance within the relationship. Conversely, when advice is communicated using gentle language, empathy, and respect for the recipient’s feelings, the message is more likely to be accepted.⁴⁹ In this respect, gentleness does not imply a diminution of firmness in conveying the truth; rather, it emphasises the method of delivery as a crucial element of effective communication.

The principle of *qaulan layyina* is similarly pertinent when addressing minor conflicts that commonly occur within friendships, such as misunderstandings, excessive joking, or differences in attitude. Employing gentle communication alongside self-restraint can alleviate emotional tension and create opportunities for mutual understanding. Conversely, harsh or emotionally charged language often exacerbates conflicts that might otherwise be resolved more judiciously.⁵⁰ Consequently, it can be asserted that gentleness in speech

⁴⁷ Ihsan Nurmansyah and Nur Rahma Dana, “Dialektika Tafsir Dan Kemajuan Pengetahuan Sidik Jari Dalam Al-Qur’an: Aplikasi Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed,” *Al-Qudwah* 2, no. 2 (August 19, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.24014/alqudwah.v2i2.29662>.

⁴⁸ Jimmy Malintang et al., “Inovasi Pembelajaran Holistik Pai Di Era Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Mengembangkan Kecerdasan Emosional Siswa,” *IMTIYAZ: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 3 (September 18, 2025): 770–87, <https://doi.org/10.46773/imtiyaz.v9i3.2593>.

⁴⁹ Muhammad Husni, Abdullah Abdullah, and Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang, “Nabi Muhammad SAW Sebagai Komunikator Komunikasi Islam,” *EDU-RILIGIA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 1 (March 6, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.47006/er.v9i1.23322>.

⁵⁰ Abdul Fikri Ginting, Amran Pikal Siregar, and Lahmuddin Lubis, “Peran Kecerdasan Emosional Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Efektivitas Komunikasi Antarpribadi,” *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 10, no. 2 (August 9, 2025): 350–65, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jdk.v10i2.13832>.

constitutes a vital mechanism for maintaining the integrity of friendships and enhancing mutual trust.

In the digital era, friendships are frequently sustained through social media platforms and messaging applications.⁵¹ Text-based interactions are often susceptible to misinterpretation due to the absence of facial expressions and vocal intonations.⁵² In these contexts, the application of the principle of *qaulan layyina* assumes heightened significance. Employing courteous language, avoiding offensive remarks, and refraining from emotional responses constitute practical manifestations of Qur'anic values in digital communication.⁵³ Such approaches contribute to fostering a more positive atmosphere within friendships and help to avert unnecessary conflicts in interpersonal relationships.

It may therefore be concluded that the contextualisation of QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 within the social sphere, particularly in the context of friendships, demonstrates that gentleness in speech is not merely an individual ethical principle but also a fundamental basis for fostering healthy social relationships. The principle of *qaulan layyina* indicates that effective communication depends not only on the content of the message but also on the manner in which it is delivered.⁵⁴ When this value is applied within friendships, it can enhance mutual respect, maintain relational harmony, and cultivate a warmer and more empathetic social environment.

Conclusion

The application of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach to QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44 reveals that the concept of *qaulan layyina* extends beyond its lexical meaning of 'gentle speech' to form an integral component of the Qur'anic semantic system that underpins the Qur'anic worldview of ethical communication. Through an analysis encompassing its fundamental meaning, relational meanings (both syntagmatic and paradigmatic), as well as synchronic and diachronic perspectives, it becomes apparent that *qaulan layyina* operates as a pivotal concept linking the act of communication (*fa-qūlā lahū*), the ethical modality of message delivery, and the objective of moral transformation within the listener (*yatazzakkaru aw yakhsyā*). Within the Qur'anic semantic field, this concept is associated with related terms such as *qaulan ḥasanan*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan karīman*, and *qaulan sadīdan*, which collectively constitute a Qur'anic system of communicative values emphasising truthfulness, respect, propriety, and gentleness in speech. Consequently, *qaulan layyina* may be understood as a da'wah communication strategy that integrates linguistic, ethical, and psychological dimensions, while simultaneously serving as a normative foundation for

⁵¹ Nada Hanifah Harahap et al., "Analisis Isi Pesan Komunikasi Interpersonal Dalam Percakapan Digital Melalui Aplikasi WhatsApp Sebagai Bentuk Interaksi Sosial Modern," *Fatih: Journal of Contemporary Research* 2, no. 1 (July 5, 2025): 433–44, <https://doi.org/10.61253/dkjptn18>.

⁵² Rahula Hananuraga et al., "Pendidikan Mental Anak Di Era Teknologi Digital: Literatur Review Tentang Peran Orang Tua Dan Guru," *Journal of Innovative and Creativity (Joecy)* 5, no. 2 (July 5, 2025): 11132–42, <https://doi.org/10.31004/joecy.v5i2.1851>.

⁵³ Ali Mudlofir, "Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Penanaman Etika Berkomunikasi Dalam Al-Qur'an," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2011): 367–82.

⁵⁴ Nurlisana Shidqi Saili and Ali Akbar, "Analisis Evaluasi Etika Komunikasi Dalam Perspektif Studi Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Teologi Islam* 1, no. 2 SE-Articles (November 6, 2025): 472–82, <https://doi.org/10.63822/jsqe3c55>.

courteous, persuasive, and constructive communicative practices in social contexts, both in direct interpersonal interaction and within contemporary communication environments.

This study exhibits certain limitations, particularly with regard to its scope, as it is confined to a single verse, specifically QS. Ṭāhā [20]:44. Consequently, it does not provide a comprehensive examination of other Qur'anic verses that address analogous themes of communication ethics. Furthermore, the study predominantly focuses on semantic analysis and has yet to integrate this approach extensively with other tafsir methodologies or interdisciplinary perspectives, such as communication psychology, sociology, or digital media studies. Future research should therefore aim to expand the scope by investigating additional relevant verses and adopting more comprehensive, interdisciplinary frameworks. Such efforts would facilitate a more holistic and applicable understanding of the values inherent in Qur'anic communication, particularly in relation to the evolving dynamics of contemporary communication.

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