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# Investigating Online Quran Interpretation: Methods and Sources on Muslimah.or.id and its Contribution to Online Islamic Discourse

## Dewi Rahmawati<sup>1</sup>; Mohamed Sharei Abouzeid<sup>2</sup>; Andri Nirwana AN<sup>3</sup>; Syamsul Hidayat<sup>4</sup>

#### Abstract

Technological advancements are increasingly shaping daily life. This includes disseminating information, with Muslims utilizing technology for Islamic da'wah, particularly Qur'anic interpretation (Tafsīr). While traditionally accessed through physical prints, Tafsīr is now available on websites. This study analyzes the sources, methods, and patterns of interpretation employed by http://muslimah.or.id. Employing a qualitative research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach, the study reveals several key features of the website's Tafsīr approach. Interpretations focus on individual letters, specific themes, and contemporary Muslim women's issues. Authors cite reference sources, and diverse interpretations reflect at least four distinct methods. The website incorporates both traditional (bi al-Ma'thūr) and rational (bi al-Ra'y) methods, drawing from classical Tafsīr works like Jalalain, at-Ṭabarī, and Ibn Kathīr. Notably, the website utilizes thematic (Mawḍū'ī) and comparative (Muqāran) approaches. The website prioritizes socio-literary (Adabī ijtimā'ī) aspects, focusing on linguistic, literary, and socio-cultural contexts. However, the inconsistent nature of interpretations due to the website's multiple contributors presents a potential challenge.

**Keywords**: *Quran interpretation; Online Islamic discourse; Comparative interpretation; muslimah.or.id.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia, Email: g100210029@student.ums.ac.id, Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0895-3909

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Prince of Songkla University, Pattani, Thailand, Email: <a href="mohamed.sh@psu.ac.th">mohamed.sh@psu.ac.th</a>, Orcid: <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8517-2407">https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8517-2407</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia, Email: an140@ums.ac.id

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia, Email: <a href="mas1syam@ums.ac.id">mas1syam@ums.ac.id</a>

## Introduction

The internet has revolutionized religious studies, significantly altering how religious information is accessed, practiced, and disseminated. Initially, the emergence of internet technology in the Eastern world was met with some skepticism among religious communities[1]. Concerns were raised about its potential negative impact on moral values, as it was perceived as a Western product. Over time, however, Muslims have increasingly embraced the internet as a medium for Islamic da'wah.

In today's digital age, religious studies have also transitioned to online platforms. For instance, religious education, which traditionally required attending in-person scholarly gatherings, can now be accessed directly through live streaming features on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Many religious scholars now utilize online platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to deliver lectures, teach, and address religious questions[2]. Online media enables religious scholars to reach a wider audience, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries.

Religious scholarship has also been significantly impacted by online media. A wide range of religious literature, including  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$ , is now more accessible than ever before. People increasingly prefer to seek religious knowledge through online platforms.  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$ , a crucial discipline for comprehending the Quran, has not been exempt from this digital transformation. Given the Quran's timeless and universal significance, its proper interpretation is vital, as it serves as a fundamental guide in the daily lives of Muslims, primarily achieved through a deep understanding of its teachings[3]. Traditionally,  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$  was transmitted orally, then through handwritten manuscripts, and eventually through printed texts. In the digital age, online media has further evolved the study of  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$ , aiming to preserve the integrity of classical scholarship while ensuring the Quran's relevance in contemporary life without changing its content and context.

The emergence of digital *Tafsīr* is marked by the digitization of classic *Tafsīr* works, such as *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. This trend has led to the development of digital libraries like *Al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah*, *Al-Mawsūʿah*, and Lidwa Pusaka, accessible on various devices. Additionally, *tafsīr* works are now available in diverse formats, including prints, videos, audios, and online[4]. Numerous websites offer various typs of Quran interpretations, both individual and collaborative and in some cases based on trending themes. The digitalization of *Tafsīr* has significantly facilitated access to a vast body of knowledge, making it easier for the public to engage with *Tafsīr* studies. However, the proliferation of information online necessitates critical

evaluation of sources. It is crucial to verify the credibility and authenticity of information before accepting it as fact.

The proliferation of online *Tafsīr* platforms raises important questions about the qualifications of the authors and the reliability of the interpretations. Are the authors qualified mufassirs? What are the sources of their interpretations? What interpretive methodologies do they employ? And most importantly, can these interpretations serve as reliable references for Muslims? In his book Kaidah Tafsir, M. Quraish Shihab discusses the qualifications of a mufassir, citing *al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn alssuywṭī*'s criteria[5]. According to *Alssuywṭī*, a mufassir should possess knowledge of Arabic language, grammar, lexicography, rhetoric, Quranic recitations, Islamic theology, jurisprudence, the historical context of revelation, abrogating and abrogated verses, Islamic law, relevant hadiths, and a natural inclination for interpretation [1].

M. Quraish Shihab further elaborated on these qualifications. He clarified that these conditions primarily apply to those who aim to present original interpretations, not those who simply convey the views of earlier scholars. Additionally, he noted that these qualifications are intended for those who seek to interpret the entire Quran. He also suggested revising or reinterpreting certain aspects of the conditions and adding a criterion related to knowledge of the subject matter being discussed. Finally, he outlined several pitfalls to avoid in *Tafsīr*, including a lack of understanding of the historical context of revelation, the Speaker and addressees of Quranic verses, relevant sciences, and appropriate interpretive methodologies [2].

This analysis of mufassir qualifications highlights the authors' interest in evaluating the Muslimah.or.id website as a source of *Tafsīr*. The website's diverse interpretations on various themes raise questions about the expertise of the contributors. By examining the website's interpretation methods, sources, and adherence to established scholarly principles, the authors aim to determine whether the website's *Tafsīr* can be considered a reliable reference for Muslims.

Several studies have been conducted on interpretation websites, which are relevant to this research. A brief overview of each study is provided below:

Siti Nur Lailatul Azizah [3]: This study uses a comparative approach to analyze features, reference sources, advantages, and disadvantages of two interpretation websites: tafsir.web.id and tafsirq.com. Hernita Putri Lestari [4]: This research focuses on similarities and differences in presentation methods between tafsirq.com and tafsirweb.com, further examining the websites' approaches to presenting Quranic interpretations.

Rani Surani [5]: This study specifically investigates the credibility of information presented on tafsirweb.com and tafsirq.com, evaluating their interpretations for accuracy and reliability. Achmad Rifa'i [6]: Rifa'i's work delves into tafsir.web.id, exploring how the website utilizes digitalization to interpret Quranic verses related to democracy within religious sources in Indonesia. Anis Nuralvi [7]: Nuralvi's research focuses on the systematic techniques, sources, methods, and patterns of interpretation employed by two websites: almanhaj.or.id and nadirhosen.net.

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights significant scholarly contributions to the study of interpretation websites, addressing aspects such as features, presentation methods, credibility, specific interpretations, and systematic approaches. Building on this foundation, the present research seeks to identify potential gaps through a more comprehensive analysis of the muslimah.or.id website, aiming to enrich the discourse and provide a deeper understanding of its interpretative framework.

#### Method

This study employs a qualitative research methodology rooted in library research, utilizing books and literature as primary data sources, along with content analysis of both primary and secondary data relevant to the research focus. The primary data is drawn from the tafsiralquran.id and tafsirq.com websites, while secondary data includes books, journals, articles, and other literature related to the study [8].

The research adopts a descriptive-qualitative approach, aiming to examine the methodology, techniques, and systematics of Quranic interpretation as presented on the muslimah.or.id website, followed by critical analysis. Data collection is conducted through the documentation method, enabling the researcher to thoroughly review all relevant content on the website[6]. This involves searching for, collecting, and analyzing information, such as downloading PDF articles, to synthesize findings and formulate a comprehensive conclusion.

## **Result and Discussion**

The Muslimah.or.id website serves as an online platform specifically designed for Muslim women, aiming to provide information and education relevant to their daily lives. The website regularly publishes Islamic articles covering a range of topics, including Aqidah, Manhaj, Fiqh, ethics and advice, family and women's issues, Islamic history, study information, and Quranic exegesis (*Tafsīr*). Established in 2007, Muslimah.or.id operates as the online

media arm of the Al-Atsari Yogyakarta Islamic Education Foundation, which was officially founded on February 3, 2014.

With the motto "Achieving Muslim Women's Happiness on the Path of Salaful Ummah," Muslimah.or.id is dedicated to inspiring and educating its audience by adhering to moderate Islamic principles rooted in the Quran and AsSunnah. The website is also committed to combating Polytheism (*al-Shirk*) within the community, emphasizing the exclusive worship of Allah through physical actions, speech, and heartfelt devotion. Additionally, it seeks to eradicate deviant practices and beliefs within society.

As of October 2024, the website has garnered significant attention, with 146,474 visitors, distinguishing it among similar platforms.

This website, Muslimah.or.id, stands out for its comprehensive collection of articles on Islamic Creed ('Aqīdah). These articles go beyond basic explanations of faith to explore its practical application in daily life. Additionally, the website delves into Islamic Jurisprndence (*Fiqh*), addressing specific issues faced by Muslim women. In doing so, Muslimah.or.id aims to provide practical guidance that empowers Muslim women to navigate their lives according to Islamic principles. Muslimah.or.id extends its focus to children's education[7]. Articles explore Islamic pedagogical methods, emphasizing how to raise devout and responsible individuals while instilling moral and ethical values from a young age. This demonstrates the website's commitment to nurturing not only Muslim women but also the next generation.

Furthermore, the website offers a dedicated section for understanding the Quran and Hadith. Muslimah.or.id presents clear interpretations and explanations, allowing visitors to engage more deeply with these sacred texts. This section delves into various interpretive topics, short letters, and themes related to contemporary Muslim challenges, offering relevant Quranic verses viewed through an interpretive lens[8]. This approach fosters a deeper spiritual understanding and encourages further exploration of Islamic teachings. Finally, the website provides a discussion forum for exploring Islam in a modern context, empowering Muslim women to integrate their faith into their daily lives.

An analysis of existing literature revealed a vast number of articles on Quranic interpretation. However, these articles represent the work of numerous scholars and authors. Given the ongoing activity of Muslimah.or.id, it is likely that the website's contributors will continue to produce more content[9]. Therefore, to ensure a manageable scope, this research will focus on interpretation studies published on the website between 2019 and 2024.

## Muslimah.or.id: Interpretation Methodology

The technique of writing *Tafsīr* refers to the specific methods employed by a mufassir to compile their work. In contrast, the systematics of interpretation encompass the broader rules and procedures used to interpret the Quran. While the former focuses on the technical aspects of writing, the latter is concerned with the methodological approach to interpretation [9].

Through an academic analysis and examination of the methods employed for Qur'anic interpretation (Tafsir) on the website Muslimah.or.id, the research has identified the following findings:

- 1. **Thematic Focus:** Articles often address entire short chapters (*Suwar*) within *Juz* ' 30, emphasizing specific themes rather than interpreting every verse. These themes frequently resonate with contemporary issues relevant to Muslim women, contributing to the website's popularity among this demographic.
- 2. **Source Referencing:** Authors consistently cite their sources, utilizing either footnotes or bibliographies.
- 3. **Multiple Interpretative Approaches:** Articles showcase a plurality of perspectives on a single theme. Here are four prominent methods employed:
  - a. **Classical Commentary:** Verses are interpreted through the lens of established scholars like *Al-Qurṭubī*. An example involves Surah An-Nas: verse 2; "The King of mankind", where interpretations from *Al-Qurṭubī* and 'Āyiḍ al-Qarnī's Tafsīr, "Al-Muyassar," are presented [14].
  - b. **Arabic Text Summarization:** Interpretations sometimes involve summaries of non-tafsir Arabic works. This approach is exemplified in the interpretation of Surah Al-Qadr:1-5, where the author cites Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān's "Itḥāf ahl al-īmān Badrūs shahr Ramaḍān" to emphasize the significance of Laylat al-Qadr [10].
  - c. **Scholarly Lectures:** Interpretations may draw from lectures on specific books. For instance, the interpretation of Surah An-Nahl:80, concerning family maintenance, references a lecture delivered by Ustadz Sulaiman Abu Syaikha on "*Arba'ūn Naṣīḥat l'ṣlāḥi al-buyūt* (40 Advice on Maintaining the Family)" at the An-Nabi mosque in South Tangerang [11].
  - d. **Translation of Online Resources:** Occasionally, interpretations are translations from Arabic websites. An example can be found in the article

"Qadha Fasting for Pregnant Women and Lactating Women According to Shaykh Al-Albani [12]," where Athirah Mustajab translates material from <a href="http://www.sahab.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=95002">http://www.sahab.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=95002</a>.

## Tafsīr Methods Utilized on Muslimah.or.id

This study investigates the methods of Qur'anic interpretation utilized on the website Muslimah.or.id. While there exist various approaches to Qur'anic interpretation, including analytical (At- $Thlyl\bar{\imath}$ ), concise (Al- $Ilm\bar{\imath}l\bar{\imath}$ ), thematic (Al- $Mawd\bar{\imath}u'\bar{\imath}$ ), and comparative exegesis (Al- $Muq\bar{\imath}ran$ ), this analysis focuses on the two primary methods employed by the website: thematic exegesis and comparative exegesis.

## 1. Thematic Exegesis (Al-Mawḍū'ī)

Thematic exegesis, as defined by *Al-Farmawi* [13], involves two main forms:

- Examining the interpretation of an entire surah, emphasizing its general and specific objectives (thematic unity) and the connections between its various themes.
- Compiling and thematically interpreting verses from different surahs that address a specific issue.

Muslimah.or.id utilizes the first form of thematic exegesis, providing interpretations for entire surahs such as An-Nas [14], Al-Falaq [15], Al-Ikhlas [16], Al-Fatihah, An-Nasr [17], Al-Qari'ah [18], and Al-Masad [19]. Additionally, the website offers thematic interpretations based on issues commonly faced by Muslim women, enhancing its value as a reference source for them.

## • Example of Thematic Interpretation by Surah:

o Title: "Tafsir Surat Al-Falaq", by Yulian Purnama, uploaded February 11, 2024.

## • Example of Thematic Interpretation by topic:

 Title: "Is it better for a Lactating Mother Better to Fast or Not?" by Victa Ryza Catartika, uploaded July 14, 2024 [20].

## 2. Comparative Exegesis (Al-Muqāran)

The comparative method (al-*Muqāran*) involves a mufassir (interpreter) comparing various interpretations of a specific verse from different commentators [21]. The mufassir presents these interpretations and may choose the one deemed most convincing or thematically relevant.

Muslimah.or.id employs the comparative method in two ways: a) Presenting interpretations of verses with different wordings but addressing the

same issue, and b) Comparing interpretations of a verse with the views of other mufassirs, offering visitors broader and deeper insights.

- Example of Comparative Interpretation on Muslimah.or.id:
- o Title: "Wealth is Responsibility, Part 2" [22]. This article compares interpretations of verses related to extravagance and profligacy [23].

## Forms of Tafsīr applied on Muslimah.or.id

In the *Tafsīr* presented on Muslimah.or.id, the forms of interpretation applied in the thematic study of surahs are *Tafsir bil Ma'thur* (Exegesis Based on Transmitted Narrations), and *Tafsir bir Ra'yi* (Exegesis Based on Reasoned Opinion).

## Tafsīr bil Ma'thūr:

Tafsir bil Ma'thur refers to an interpretative approach that relies on authoritative sources, such as authentic Prophetic traditions ( $Ah\bar{a}d\bar{\iota}th$ ), the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself, the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), as well as the interpretations provided by the Companions ( $\Sah\bar{a}bah$ ) and their successors ( $T\bar{a}bi'\bar{\iota}n$ ). [24, 25].

*Tafsir bil Ma'thur* on muslimah.or.id is further categorizes into two types:

- 1. **Authenticated** (Ṣaḥīḥ): Qur'anic Interpretations with verified chains of transmission (sanad) and reliable content (matn) based on hadith scholarship.
- 2. **Weak** (*Pa'īf*): Qur'anic interpretations based on unreliable sources, often due to issues in the chain of transmission (*snad*), content (*matn*), or narrator reliability.

## Tafsīr bir Ra'y:

Tafsir bir ra'y stems from the scholarly reasoning (*Ijthād*) of an interpreter (*mufassir*) with expertise in the Arabic language, knowledge of verse contexts (*Asbāb an-Nuzūl*), abrogation (*Naskh*), and other relevant disciplines [26]. While some scholars disagree with interpretations based on reason, others like *al-Imām al-Dhahabī* advocate for a balanced approach utilizing both *Tafsīr bil Ma'thūr* and *bir ra'y*. 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī refers to this approach as "*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bāljm' bayna al-ma'thūr wa-al-ma'qūl*" (Interpretation of the Noble Qur'an through the Integration of Transmitted Reports and Rational Analysis) [27].

## Examples on Muslimah.or.id:

o *Tafsīr bil Ma'thūr*: An article titled "The End of Life (Tafsir Surah Al-Qari'ah)" by Um Afifah (uploaded February 12, 2021) interprets Surah Al-Qari'ah verse 5 "And the mountains will be like carded wool", through Surah An-Naml

- verse 88 "You will see the mountains and think they are firmly fixed, but they will float away like clouds", drawing upon established hadiths [18].
- o *Tafsīr bir Ra'y*: Yulian Purnama's "Tafsir Surat Al Ikhlas" (uploaded November 25, 2023) utilizes scholarly reasoning (*bir ra*'y) by citing interpretations from figures like Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, and Al Hasan Al Basri regarding the meaning of (*Ālṣḥmd*) "Being devoid of any cavity, He is entirely Self-Sufficient, unlike created beings which possess cavities [16].

## Approaches to Qur'anic Interpretation on Muslimah.or.id

In the field of Quranic interpretation, each mufassir (interpreter) tends to adopt different approaches when interpreting the verses of the Quran. These approaches are generally categorized into two types: the textual approach and the contextual approach. The textual approach focuses on understanding the meaning of Quranic verses by emphasizing grammatical and textual analysis [28]. On the other hand, the contextual approach considers not only the text itself but also external factors such as the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verses, historical context, socio-cultural conditions, geographical aspects, and causative relationships [29].

On the Muslimah.or.id website, both textual and contextual approaches are employed. The textual approach involves analyzing words and phrases within the Quranic text to uncover deeper meanings. Meanwhile, the contextual approach extends beyond the text, considering various dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Quranic verses.

An example of a textual interpretation can be found in an article by Yulian Purnama, published on November 24, 2023, titled Tafsir Surat Al- Lahab (Part 1). In this article, the interpretation of the first verse of Surah Al- Masad explores the meaning of the word (tabbat), referring to the actions of Abu Lahab, and (tabb), which signifies Abu Lahab's wretched personality. The interpretation also incorporates the concept of *Asbāb an-Nuzūl* (the circumstances of revelation) to provide a deeper understanding of the surah [19].

#### Tafsīr Patterns on Muslimah.or.id

The term "pattern" in *Tafsīr* is sometimes referred to as "other *Tafsīr*," which encompasses meanings such as tone, type, and distinctive features [30]. In this context, it reflects the inclinations, focus, or intellectual framework that guide a mufassir (interpreter) in their exegetical work. The determination of a *Tafsīr* pattern is shaped by the intellectual and scientific orientation of the mufassir. Notably, a single *Tafsīr* work may exhibit multiple patterns, though one typically dominates. Below are some of the established patterns of interpretation:

## a. Fiqhī Pattern

This pattern, often referred to as  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$   $\bar{A}y\bar{a}t$  al- $A\dot{n}k\bar{a}m$  (interpretation of jurisical verses), focuses on the jurisical rulings derived from Quranic verses. It is one of the oldest patterns of interpretation, closely aligned with the Quran's foundational role in Islamic jurisprudence. Many *mufassirun* (interpreters) regard this type of  $Tafs\bar{\imath}r$  as integral to Islamic scholarship [31].

#### b. Şūfī Pattern

This approach delves into the esoteric and spiritual dimensions of the Quran, seeking meanings beyond the apparent text. It often interprets Quranic verses based on subtle indications or signs that resonate with spiritual practices and mystical experiences [32].

#### c. Scientific Pattern

This pattern employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating insights from natural and social sciences. It seeks to draw connections between Quranic verses and various branches of knowledge, often incorporating philosophical reasoning to provide a broader understanding [33].

## d. Falsafī (Philosophical) Pattern

This pattern applies a philosophical lens, often characterized by liberal and radical thought. It aims to harmonize philosophical inquiry with religious teachings, fostering a dialogue between faith and reason [34].

## e. Adabī ijtimā'ī (Socio-Literary) Pattern

Lexically, *Adabī* refers to cultural and literary norms, while *ijtimā'ī* denotes societal and communal aspects. This pattern emphasizes the social and cultural dimensions of the Quran, focusing on its humanistic and practical guidance for contemporary life. It demonstrates the Quran's relevance across eras, addressing doubts and misconceptions while showcasing its timeless applicability. The *Adabī ijtimā'ī* approach is particularly valued for exploring the Quran's societal and ethical teachings [35].

The Muslimah.or.id website predominantly employs the *Adabī ijtimā'ī* pattern, reflecting its emphasis on language, literature, and addressing contemporary issues faced by the Muslim community, particularly women. For instance, an article by Victa Ryza Catartika, published on November 2, 2023, titled Tafsir Surat Al-Fatihah Verses 3-5 (Part 3), exemplifies this approach [36]. Another example is the interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah: verse 233, addressing the permissibility of nursing mothers breaking their fast. Published on July 14, 2024, shortly after *Ramaḍān*, this article provides timely guidance by referencing the opinions of renowned scholars such as *As- sa'dī* and *Muhammad Salih Al-*

*Munajjad.* This reflects the site's commitment to addressing real-life concerns of Muslim women through relevant Quranic interpretations [37].

## Referral Sources used on Muslimah.or.id

The primary sources of *Tafsīr* referenced by the authors on Muslimah.or.id include prominent works such as *Zubdatut Tafsīr Min Fatḥil Qadir* by Muhammad Sulaimān bin 'Abdullāh al-`Ashqar, *Tafsīr Al-Jalālain* by *Jalāluddīn al-Maḥallī*, Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān, by *As- sa'dī*, i, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī*, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, *Tafsīr* At-Ṭabarī, and *Tafsīr Juz'i 'Amma* by *As- sa'dī*. In addition to these classical *Tafsīr* works, the website also incorporates books of hadith, books of explanations of hadith, and other *Tafsīr* materials derived from traditional sources. Some articles on the website also reference Arabic-language online resources and summarize insights from scholarly studies or lectures. A notable feature of Muslimah.or.id is its user-friendly approach to referencing. Many articles include hyperlinks that direct readers to the original sources, making it easier for users to verify and explore the references used.

#### Conclusion

The study of Quranic interpretation through online platforms represents a relatively new area of research. The Tafsīr analysis presented on Muslimah.or.id demonstrates commitment providing a to interpretations that are clear, accessible, and grounded in classical sources. The website offers insights from renowned mufassirun (interpreters), ensuring reliability and authenticity in its content. Muslimah.or.id serves as a valuable resource for both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking an understanding of the Quran. It can be used as a reference by students for academic purposes, by laypeople for practical daily guidance, and by anyone interested in exploring Quranic teachings. Its user-centric design and direct linkage to sources further enhance its utility as a trusted platform for Quranic interpretation.

#### **Author Contributions**

**Dewi Rahmawati**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Mohamed Sharei Abouzeid & Andri Nirwana AN**: Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Syamsul Hidayat**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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