

## PRINCIPLE OF PERSUASION FOR LOYALTY IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

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### Abstract

*The focus of this research is the principle of persuasion for loyalty in the Koran. The aim of this study is to link persuasion theory with the first-revealed verses in the Koran. This study uses a qualitative library research method. The data in this study comes from the book "how to change anybody" by David J. Lieberman and the book Tafsir Al-Mishbah by Muhammad Quraish Shihab. Data analysis in this study uses content analysis technique. The result of this study shows that the principles of persuasion for loyalty which were developed by psychology scientists are in line with the principle of persuasion in the Koran.*

**Keywords:** Qur'an, Loyalty, Persuasion

### Abstrak

*Fokus penelitian ini adalah prinsip persuasi untuk menumbuhkan kesetiaan di dalam Al-Qur'an. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menghubungkan teori persuasi dengan ayat-ayat yang pertama kali diturunkan dalam Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif kajian literatur. Data dalam penelitian ini berasal dari buku "how to change anybody" oleh David J. Lieberman dan kitab Tafsir Al-Mishbah oleh Muhammad Quraish Shihab. Analisis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik analisis isi. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa prinsip persuasi untuk menumbuhkan kesetiaan yang digagas dan dikembangkan oleh para ilmuwan psikologi sejalan dengan prinsip persuasi yang ada di dalam Al-Qur'an.*

**Kata kunci:** Al-Qur'an, Kesetiaan, Persuasi

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Available online at <https://journalmahadaly.asadiyahpusat.org/index.php/tafasir>

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### A. Introduction

The Qur'an is a holy book that serves as a guide and a distinction between right and wrong.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the Qur'an contains "sign" and "science" elements that function as a guideline for humanity. As a "sign" the

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<sup>1</sup>Amroeni Drajat, *Ulumul Qu'an: Pengantar Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), h. 7-8.

Qur'an aims to explain the signs of the existence and power of Allah. As a “*sign*” the Qur'an includes arguments related to faith and guidance for religious and social life.

To realize the function of the Qur'an as a “*sign*”, the Qur'an should contain “*science*” or knowledge as a tool to validate the “*sign*” it carries. The Qur'an as “*science*” means that it is a holy book that contains knowledge, both explicitly and implicitly. For the function of the Qur'an as “*science*” to be realized, the knowledge contained within the Qur'an must be valid and unique. Valid means that the knowledge in the Qur'an aligns with concrete evidence found and agreed upon (not still widely debated) by the majority of researchers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Unique means that the knowledge in the Qur'an is presented in such a way that it convinces the reader that no one but the Lord of the universe could have provided such information.

The knowledge contained in the Qur'an can be explicit or implicit. Explicit information in the Qur'an usually relates to the system of the universe and everything within it, as well as human civilization (history). This type of information is typically studied by scholars in biology, physics, geography, and history.

This type of information is typically studied by scholars in biology, physics, geography, and history. This type of Qur'anic knowledge is usually more difficult to study because only certain individuals can perceive the intended wisdom. Scholars who generally study this aspect are those specializing in Sufism and psychology.

From the perspective of psychology, especially Islamic psychology, the Qur'an is believed to contain various psychological insights, both in terms of mental health and guidelines for social interaction. However, as mentioned earlier, much of this information remains less known due to its implicit nature. One area of psychological study that should be found in the Qur'an is the principle of persuasion to foster loyalty.

The historical fact of the Prophet Muhammad's loyalty in fulfilling his mission from Allah over 23 years, despite all challenges, should serve as a basis for proving the existence of a persuasion theory for loyalty within the Qur'an. Persuasion essentially involves influencing others, including encouraging them to loyally do what is desired.<sup>2,3</sup> The persuasion process typically takes place at the initial meeting, serving as an introduction and a determinant of whether the target of persuasion is willing to voluntarily do what is requested. Based on this, the researcher suspects that there are principles of persuasion embedded in the initial interactions between Allah and the Prophet Muhammad before the Prophet willingly and faithfully carried out his mission.

As previously mentioned, persuasion is generally conducted at the beginning or before giving a command. Therefore, to find the principle of loyalty persuasion in the Qur'an, the verses that need to be examined are those that were first revealed chronologically, not based on the order in the mushaf. Consequently, this research will study the initial verses of the Qur'an and compare them with existing theories of loyalty persuasion.

## **B. Research Methodology**

This study examines the principles of persuasion to foster loyalty in the Qur'an. It employs a qualitative research method in the form of a literature review. The data for this study are drawn from two primary sources. The primary literature for persuasion theory is *How to Change Anybody* by David J. Lieberman, Ph.D., while the primary reference for Qur'anic exegesis is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* by Prof. Dr. K.H. Muhammad Quraish Shihab, Lc., M.A. The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Results**

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<sup>2</sup>Gary VandenBos, *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (Washington: American Psychology Association, 2015), 786.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Gass dan John Seiter, *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 4-5.

a. David J. Lieberman's Principles of Persuasion for Loyalty

*The American Psychological Association* (APA), a leading psychological association worldwide, defines persuasion as the active effort to change someone else's attitudes, beliefs, or emotions regarding specific issues, people, concepts, or objects.<sup>4</sup> Gass and Seiter state that the purpose of persuasion is to influence others to willingly do what is desired.<sup>5</sup> Persuasion can be achieved through various means such as verbal, nonverbal, and visual media. One of the most widely applied functions of persuasion is to foster loyalty among peers, subordinates, and even superiors, ensuring they continuously and voluntarily comply with requests.

Lieberman outlines four techniques of persuasion to foster loyalty or allegiance.<sup>6</sup> First, make the target feel like they are on the same side. One key to ensuring someone's loyalty is making them feel like they are on the same team. People who feel aligned with a cause or group are willing to do anything for that side. Those who are committed will sacrifice personal rights to defend or prioritize their group.

Second, make the target feel like they are part of something extraordinary. People feel happy, proud, and secure when they are part of or associated with something great. Humans tend to associate themselves with extraordinary entities and are willing to do anything to maintain that association. For example, many people have a favorite sports team, political figure, or ideology they are proud of. It is not uncommon to see people fiercely defending their sports team, political figure, or ideology, sometimes to the point of violence.

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<sup>4</sup>Gary VandenBos, *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (Washington: American Psychology Association, 2015), 786.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Gass dan John Seiter, *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 4-5.

<sup>6</sup>David Lieberman, *How to Change Anybody* (New York: St. Martin Griffin, 2006), 15-21.

Third, give responsibilities gradually, starting from the simplest tasks. Humans have a tendency to see themselves as consistent individuals. The more often someone successfully proves themselves or completes a task, the more likely they are to take on larger tasks or more complex positions. Conversely, a person will lose self-confidence if their beliefs or statements about themselves frequently contradict their behavior or reality.

In Social Psychology, this is known as *the foot-in-the-door* approach.<sup>7</sup> This concept states that to get someone to perform a main task, it should be preceded by simpler tasks or requests. If a heavy task is given right away, the target is likely to fail and lose confidence, making them reluctant to undertake further requests. Therefore, the appropriate step is to provide requests gradually, from the simplest to the main task. This way, the target's confidence will increase as they complete the simpler tasks, making them more willing to take on heavier tasks in the future.

Fourth, attract with humility. Everyone appreciates a humble person who respects others. People are more willing to do what is asked when it is requested in a respectful manner. Conversely, someone's willingness to follow orders will diminish if delivered arrogantly or offensively. One way to show humility is by appreciating the person whose loyalty is sought. Another way is to intentionally lower one's status by performing tasks or positioning oneself at the level expected of someone lower down in the hierarchy.

#### b. Chronological Order of Al-Qur'an Verses

Persuasion processes are generally carried out during initial interactions before assigning tasks. To understand the concept of persuasion in the Qur'an, it is necessary to know the chronological order of the verses' revelation, not the order in the mushaf. This is

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<sup>7</sup>Nayla Branscombe dan Robert Baron, *Social Psychology* (London: Pearson Education, 2017), 296.

intended to determine which verses indicate the initial interaction between Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. Darwuzah explains that the order of the Qur'an verses based on their chronological revelation is as follows.<sup>8</sup>

The first is Q.S. Al-'Alaq, Verses 1-5. Most scholars agree that Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5 comprises the first set of verses revealed to Prophet Muhammad. This verse was revealed in the Cave of Hira, marking the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad's prophethood. Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5 contains the command to "read" and introduces Allah as the Lord to Prophet Muhammad. The Arabic text of Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5 is as follows:

﴿اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۝ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ﴾

Translation:

"(1) Read in the name of your Lord who created. (2) Created man from a clinging substance. (3) Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous. (4) Who taught by the pen. (5) Taught man that which he knew not."

The second is Q.S. Al-Qalam, Verses 1-4. These verses were revealed after Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5. Based on the context and style of the language, this set of verses is believed to have been revealed shortly after Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5. These verses affirm Prophet Muhammad's experience during the first revelation, which is Q.S. Al-'Alaq:1-5. The Arabic text of Q.S. Al-Qalam:1-4 is as follows:

﴿ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ۝ مَا أَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ ۝ وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ۝ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

Translation:

<sup>8</sup>Muhammad Darwuzah, *At-Tafsir Al-Hadits: Tartib As-Suwar Hasaba An-Nuzul* (Beirut: Dar Al-Garab Al-Islamiy, 2000), 315-394.

“(1) Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe, (2) you are not, by the favor of your Lord, a madman. (3) And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. (4) And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Thirdly, Q.S. Al-Muzzammil, Verses 1-9. These verses were revealed after Q.S. Al-Qalam:1-4. The impression conveyed by these verses seems to depict a continuation of the events from the previous two sets of verses, leading to the belief that this is the third set of verses revealed. This set of verses contains hints that the prophetic duties will be assigned to Prophet Muhammad after receiving the revelation and being appointed as a prophet. The Arabic text of Q.S. Al-Muzzammil:1-9 is as follows:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَزْمِيلُ ۖ قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۖ يَصْفَهُ ۖ أَوْ أَنْقِصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا ۖ أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا ۚ إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا ۖ إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا ۖ إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا ۖ وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا ۖ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا ۖ﴾

Translation:

“(1) O you who wraps himself in clothing! (2) Stand (to pray) at night except for a little, (3) half of it or subtract from it a little, (4) or add to it, and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation. (5) Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word. (6) Indeed, the hours of the night are more effective for concurrence (of heart and tongue) and more suitable for words. (7) Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation. (8) And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with complete devotion. (9) (He is) the Lord of the east and the west; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as Disposer of your affairs.”

Fourthly, Q.S. Al-Muddaththir, Verses 1-6. These verses were revealed after Q.S. Al-Muzzammil:1-9. Scholars have differing opinions regarding the revelation of these verses; some believe they were revealed shortly after the previous verses, while others believe

they were revealed after a short pause in the revelation of the Qur'an. This set of verses is the first to explicitly command Prophet Muhammad to give warnings. The Arabic text of Q.S. Al-Muddaththir:1-6 is as follows:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ۝ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ ۝ وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ ۝ وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ۝ وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ۝ وَلَا تَمْنُنْ ۝ تَسْتَكْبِرُ ۝﴾

Translation:

“(1) O you who covers himself (with a garment)! (2) Arise and warn! (3) And magnify your Lord. (4) And purify your garments. (5) And avoid uncleanness. (6) And do not confer favor to acquire more.”

c. Interpretation of the Initial Verses of the Qur'an

#### **Interpretation of Al-‘Alaq: 1-5**

In Q.S. Al-‘Alaq: 1-5, two verses relate to the theory of loyalty persuasion, specifically the first and third verses. In the first verse, Allah distinguishes Himself from the other gods worshipped by the Arabs at that time. Allah uses the term "rabb" instead of "Allah" because the word "Allah" was also used by polytheists of that era. In the third verse, Allah declares His utmost generosity or supreme nobility to Prophet Muhammad. The term "Akram" can mean The Most Noble or The Most Generous. This verse is Allah's declaration to Prophet Muhammad that He is the most exalted above all. It is also a message to Prophet Muhammad that if he obeys Allah's commands to the best of his ability, he will be rewarded by The Most Generous.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Interpretation of Al-Qalam: 1-4**

In Q.S. Al-Qalam:1-4, three verses relate to the theory of loyalty persuasion, namely the second, third, and fourth verses. In the second verse, Allah defends or reassures Prophet Muhammad

<sup>9</sup>Muhammad Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Vol. 15* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 392-421.



that he is not mad as was accused. In the third verse, Allah promises an endless and unbroken reward as a recompense for Prophet Muhammad's efforts in fulfilling Allah's tasks. In the fourth verse, Allah highly praises Prophet Muhammad, using hyperbolic language, stating that he possesses the most noble character.<sup>10</sup>

### **Interpretation of Al-Muzzammil: 1-9**

In Q.S. Al-Muzzammil: 1-9, three verses relate to the theory of loyalty persuasion, specifically the first, second, and ninth verses. In the first verse, Allah shows His closeness to Prophet Muhammad. The style of address used in this verse, “*yaa ayyuhal muzzammil*” (O you who wraps himself), is a form of language typically used by the Arabs to address someone they considered close or familiar. In the second verse, Allah gives a simple command to Prophet Muhammad, which is to perform the night prayer. In the ninth verse, Allah invites Prophet Muhammad to rely on Him, the Lord, the owner, and the ruler of everything.<sup>11</sup>

### **Interpretation of Al-Muddaththir: 1-6**

In Q.S. Al-Muddaththir: 1-6, two verses relate to the theory of loyalty persuasion, specifically the first and second verses. In the first verse, Allah shows His closeness to Prophet Muhammad. The style of address used in this verse, “*yaa ayyuhal muddatstsir*” (O you who covers himself with a garment), is a form of language typically used by the Arabs to address someone they considered familiar. In the second verse, Allah commands Prophet Muhammad to deliver his message to his closest family or companions in a private manner. This command was given for three years until a verse was revealed commanding public preaching.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Muhammad Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Vol. 14* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 378-382.

<sup>11</sup>Muhammad Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Vol. 14* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 513-524.

<sup>12</sup>Muhammad Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Vol. 14* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 548-572.

## 2. Discussion

Lieberman suggests that persuasion to foster loyalty is conducted through four techniques:

### a. Making the Target Feel They Are on the Same Side

This principle is found in the early verses of the Qur'an. In Q.S. Al-'Alaq: 1, Allah distinguishes Himself from the gods believed in by the majority of the Arabs at that time. This aligns with Prophet Muhammad's belief before his prophethood that the deities worshipped by the Arabs, which could not see, hear, or speak, could not be the true God. In Q.S. Al-Qalam: 2, Allah reassures Prophet Muhammad that he is not mad, despite any accusations or future accusations. Moreover, in Q.S. Al-Qalam: 4, Allah clarifies Prophet Muhammad's position, stating that he possesses the highest moral character, and any accusations against him are unfounded. In Q.S. Al-Muzzammil: 1 and Al-Muddatstir: 1, Allah indicates to Prophet Muhammad that He is very close to him. Despite Allah's transcendent nature, He assures Prophet Muhammad of His proximity.

These verses demonstrate that at the beginning of His direct interaction with Prophet Muhammad, Allah assures him that they are on the same side. Allah shows that what Prophet Muhammad believes aligns with what Allah wills that there is no god except the true God. Allah also defends Prophet Muhammad, stating that he possesses the highest moral character and is not insane. Additionally, Allah indicates His closeness to Prophet Muhammad, proving that He is on the same side as him.

### b. Making the Target Feel Part of Something Extraordinary

This principle is found in the early verses of the Qur'an. In Q.S. Al-'Alaq: 3, Allah describes Himself as The Most Noble or The Most Generous to Prophet Muhammad. In Q.S. Al-Muzzammil: 9, Allah guides and invites Prophet Muhammad to rely solely on Him.

This verse emphasizes that Allah controls everything, and if Prophet Muhammad relies on Allah as his guarantor, he will be guaranteed by the One who has supreme control over everything.

These verses show that at the beginning of His direct interaction with Prophet Muhammad, Allah displays all forms of His greatness and magnificence. Allah assures Prophet Muhammad that his devotion to Him will not be in vain because Allah is the true God and possesses supreme power. In these verses, Allah assures Prophet Muhammad that the side he has chosen is the one that will bring him fortune, victory, and salvation.

#### c. Giving Tasks Starting from the Simplest

This principle is found in the early verses of the Qur'an. In Q.S. Al-Muzzammil: 2, Allah gives a simple task to Prophet Muhammad, which is to perform the night prayer. In this verse, Allah provides Prophet Muhammad with flexible timing to perform the night prayer. After instructing him to pray, Allah assigns Prophet Muhammad a slightly more challenging task through Q.S. Al-Muddatstsir: 2, which is to start preaching on a small scale to his close confidants. This small and private preaching lasted for approximately three years until the revelation for open preaching was received. This shows that Allah gradually gives tasks and responsibilities to Prophet Muhammad, starting from the simplest to the main and more challenging tasks.

#### d. Captivating with Humility

This principle is found in the early verses of the Qur'an. In Q.S. Al-Qalam: 3, Allah promises an infinite reward to Prophet Muhammad for all his efforts and sacrifices in carrying out Allah's duties. In Q.S. Al-Qalam: 4, Allah, in all His magnificence, praises Prophet Muhammad for his noble character. In Q.S. Al-Muzzammil: 1 and Q.S. Al-Muddatstsir: 1, the Most High Allah positions Himself as if He were a close friend of Prophet Muhammad by addressing

him in an intimate manner. This is a form of "humility" where Allah appreciates what Prophet Muhammad has done and positions Himself in a close role despite being the Most High God.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The principles of persuasion for fostering loyalty, as proposed and developed by psychological scholars, are in harmony with the principles of persuasion found in the Qur'an. This congruence serves as evidence that the Qur'an is a holy scripture that aligns with the fundamental principles of human life in general. Although the findings in this study are still quite basic, the researcher hopes that this research will inspire more in-depth studies on the same topic in the future.

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