

Message Theory: A Comparative Analysis between Western and Islamic Perspectives

Muhammad Taqiyuddin¹

Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi²

Nur Hadi Ihsan³

Corresponding Author: taqiyuddin@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract: The Islamic scholarly tradition is rich in fundamental related-communication concepts, including message theory. This article endeavors to undertake a comparison analysis of seminal concepts of message between Islam and Western perspectives in the field of communication science. Employing a library research approach and semiotics perspective, this study argues that aspects of the messages, that is, 'the subject of message' and 'the messenger,' have roots in the theological dimensions of Islam. This differs from the Western concept of messages, which tend to solely rational-empirically explain messages as themselves. However, some seminal concepts about messages in Islamic literature can be integrated into theories of messages in modern communication theory that are relevant to current the Islamic-based scholarly paradigm, namely the comparative-integrative framework.

Keywords: Theory of message, Islamic communication, western tradition, semiotics.

Abstrak: Khazanah keilmuan Islam kaya akan konsep-konsep dasar komunikasi, termasuk yang terkait dengan teori pesan. Kajian ini berupaya melakukan komparasi perihal seminal konsep pesan dalam perspektif Islam dan Barat modern. Dengan menggunakan kajian pustaka dan perspektif semiotik, studi ini menemukan bahwa aspek dalam pesan, yakni '*the subject of message*' dan '*the messenger*' memiliki akar dari dimensi teologis dalam Islam. Berbeda dengan konsep pesan di Barat yang cenderung hanya secara rasional-empiris menjelaskan tentang pesan sebagai dirinya sendiri. Namun demikian, beberapa konsep penting tentang pesan dalam literatur Islam dapat diintegrasikan ke dalam teori-teori pesan dalam teori komunikasi modern, yang relevan dengan paradigma ilmiah berbasis Islam saat ini, yaitu kerangka komparatif-integratif.

¹ Universitas Darussalam Gontor

² Universitas Darussalam Gontor

³ Universitas Darussalam Gontor

Introduction

What unfolds within religious communities or congregations undeniably encompasses communicative aspects. One of the manifestations is a fundamental belief that practicing religion involves personal communication with God in a private manner. On a broader social level and specifically within religious circles, religious leaders deliver sermons on religious teachings within the public sphere. The phenomenon contains aspects of communication, in terms of the content conveyed.

Everyday human activities are often connected to the divine aspect as the ultimate goal. It is in the realm of religious motives where several actions of religious adherents can have fundamental differences. However, not all extreme actions are necessarily driven by religious motivations. When one finds a motive to worship, it is undoubtedly part of the religious stimulus that often includes teachings about the consequences or punishment of abandoning worship, as well as the rewards or blessings promised through the performance of worship. Actions based on belief motives can be explained within the framework of the theory of values, beliefs, and norms, where the three are interconnected in a human action system driven by its thought patterns (Stern et al., 1999).

Fundamentally, this can be analyzed through semiotics and linguistics, as the transmission of messages from religious conveyors or religious leaders to adherents presupposes the transfer of abstract ideas or specific symbols. These ideas are conveyed through an integral and systemic language and meaning system. This aligns with the linear communication system among humans, which commonly employs language in messages to elucidate a particular reality (Hjelmslev, 1969, pp. 9–11). The Islamic vision of religion's universality reaffirms that the messages of Islam are directed towards all of humanity, including both believers and non-believers. Hence, in the Qur'ān, we encounter various commands that begin with different invocations: "O believers" and "O mankind," despite the Qur'ān being limited to the Arabic language. This vision is accompanied by the affirmation that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a messenger of Allah, appointed to

be a mercy to the entire universe (Ayish et al., 2008, pp. 82–83; Black, 2011, p. 11- 37).

The encounters between religion and science, whether science and religion can co-exist, have remained a continued discussion until today. The presence of religion in the public sphere is not always universally accepted. The academic background, in particular, serves as a primary factor for rejecting religion or any form of ideology and tradition that appears to empirically and logically contradict the principles of modern scientific knowledge. In religion, there exists a definitive, limited, and sometimes rigid interpretation of symbols. This is in contrast to the language of science, which seeks to explore meaning—where even a single meaning does not possess an ultimate endpoint or boundary of interpretation beyond subjective or objective limitations (Bowie, 2021; Goody, 1961). Contrary to the religious climate during the Renaissance period, it was religious fanaticism that became the contributing factor to such conflicts. To delve deeper into this discourse, readers can explore writings on the relationship between religion and science written by both scientists and religious scholars. The key points of these works can be analyzed using theories of semiotics and communication, revealing that the conflicts at hand stem from a) clashes between religious symbols, b) interpretations of religious symbols, and c) the failure of religious leaders to effectively convey the messages conveyed by religious symbols, be it through visual, oral, or written means. This analysis draws upon the language of communication, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal forms.

In the context of the philosophy of science, the term 'message', as elucidated through the framework of communication theory above, qualifies as a seminal concept in understanding the complexities of Islamic communication. Max Weber himself is said to have proposed a theory of values that serves as the foundation for a community in determining standards of goodness or badness, as well as truth or falsehood. This foundation is fundamentally laid by Nietzsche, who stated that "values represented by an individual are deeply rooted in human instinct itself" (Boudon, 2001, pp. 94–95). However, those experts' statements still leave unanswered questions: where does the

origin of these 'instinct-based values' lie? Does this critique evolutionary theory by suggesting that humans are purely animals? The statement can indeed affirm that a human is born with their innate disposition, and it is only through their environment and upbringing that changes human instincts and characters. This article endeavors to undertake a comparison analysis of seminal concepts of message between Islam and Western perspectives in communication science.

Literature Review

The seminal concept of *fitrah* (natural disposition) in Islam can be deemed equivalent to the concept of the message (*risālah*). It is considered equivalent if we redefine it to mean that humans communicate through their ability to articulate thoughts through words (*dzū-nuṭq*), as emphasized by al-Attās, who posits that humans are unique creatures and distinct creations (*khalqan ākhar*) (Al-Attas, 2015, pp. 31–33). Another key concept concerning message can be traced back to the ethical dimensions of icommunication based on 'qaul' terms (Sari, 2023). Meanwhile, in the Western sense, Nietzsche's viewpoint can be considered the differentiating factor between the rational-empirical perspective, which sees humans merely as evolving creatures shaping their own individual value systems, and the religious perspective that regards humans as creations with specific characteristics and bestowed with a special task by God. These two points form the basis of belief in the development of subsequent communication theories. These divergent and even conflicting bases strive to attain their respective systems of knowledge, aiming to explain the meanings of both empirical and abstract realities. According to Massimiano Bucchi, a sociologist of science, the first basis tends to represent science, while the second falls outside the realm of science (H. P. Peters, 2008).

From the above explanation, it is understood that science is not the sole path to explaining reality; moreover, science itself requires verification and falsification. Science even has its

counterpart, which is the domain beyond science sourced from everyday knowledge, practical knowledge, as well as religion, culture, and other local traditions. Both of these domains, if further developed, should serve as the basis of belief for subsequent theoretical frameworks and auxiliary hypotheses. Within this framework, what is referred to as 'Islamic message concepts' or 'Islamic communication studies' have a sufficiently scientific foundation from a sociological perspective, aiming towards the pursuit of knowledge or explanations and interpretations of reality (Bird, 2019). Of course, reality here encompasses the realm of symbols, signs, and various linguistic elements as well. In this regard, to comprehend the relationship between religion, science, and message, the application of a semiotic framework is of great significance.

Signs in semiotics encompass everything. Marcel Danesi further explains that even letters are part of signs. Moreover, when letters form a word, they are essentially part of the linguistic system and possess specific syntagmatic structures (Danesi, 2004a, p. 14). Furthermore, when a word is combined to form a sentence containing more than one or two words, it evolves into a 'narrative'. This narrative possesses the power to influence persuasively and bind legally, exerting compelling force (Rader, 2020, pp. 2–3). In Islam, we are familiar with the Qurʾān and Hadith, both of which fulfill these criteria. They can be considered valid messages, albeit with structures that differ somewhat from the scientific perspective mentioned above.

In the context of media development in digital technology, the presence of messages in the form of narratives, signs, and symbols becomes increasingly visible. As a concept, messages encompass various definitive aspects. The important aspects of message, rest on 'the subject of message' and 'the messenger' (Ahmed, 2018, pp. 70–71). This section will be further detailed in the theory of messages. Messages also have an outer layer, namely attribution and structure, which enable them to be recognized in terms of their meaning. The outer layer of a message becomes important to design, considering that messages always have limitations in meaning and purpose.

Methodology

This study uses the semiotics approach in analyzing the collected data. It primarily revolves around the production, transmission, and interpretation of meaning that symbolically arises within 'signs' –primarily, of course, a message, including language as the medium or entity encompassing it. Methodologically, this approach aligns well with the concepts previously advanced by John Mingers and Leslie Wilcocks (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017). Furthermore, there are indeed several aspects that have been addressed in this analysis, based on the 'onto-semiotic' approach framework pioneered by Juan D. Godino, Carmen Batanero, and Vicenç Font in examining metaphysical matters by focusing on their object, in this case, mathematics. Among these aspects is the origin of a message, the role of humans in its development, the formal definition that encompasses it, and whether a message is 'discovered' from either: a) something already in existence but not known, or b) brought into existence through human creativity (Godino et al., 2007). Therefore, in this section, we will elaborate on several elements that constitute both the object and subject of study within the theory of messages.

Result and Discussion

The Message

Littlejohn and (Littlejohn & Foss (2010) highlight the important aspects of the messages: 1) messages are inseparable from symbols and serve a central purpose in human life. 2) The meaning of messages depends on their structure and interpretation. 3) Our communication consists of complex message codes. 4) Messages are created for various purposes, along with a hierarchy of meanings. In this regard, messages are not synonymous with meanings because a message can have various meanings, and conversely, many messages can have the same meaning. Therefore, semiotics experts often employ binary oppositions in designing a message to ensure its understanding. They use appropriate signs to refer to the true meanings and realities (Danesi, 2004b, pp. 15–16).

There are several models of messages in the context of communication, they are, verbal, non-verbal, emotional, and conversation (DeVito, 1999, p. 95). Non-verbal messages are often conveyed without face-to-face interaction, but through specific triggers. The interpretation of such messages often occurs gradually through the process of semiosis (Akhtar et al., 2019). Verbal messages are communicated using the language we are familiar with. Non-verbal messages are conveyed through audio, visual, or design structures that we indirectly recognize, such as colors, symbols, and signs that point to realities we already know (Sobur, 2002).

Non-verbal messages are often designed to be understood through the principles of semiotics. In multimedia, we encounter visual presentations without dialogue or text, yet filled with gimmicks, body language, and expressions. All of these can be referred to as the 'gestures' of non-verbal communication, namely: kinesics (kinesis), haptics, and proxemics (prosemics) (Hans & Hans, 2015). Non-verbal messages are predominantly analyzed semiotically, considering that communication is largely mediated by "body language" conveyed through facial expressions, voice effects, gestures, gazes, gaits, and even odors. All of these aspects avoid verbal messages, which are mostly written with formal language conventions (Matsumoto et al., 2016).

Messages can be likened to a kind of scientific proportion. Therefore, the meaning of a message can sometimes be arbitrary or consensual. It is arbitrary because a meaning is produced based on the 'will' and 'intention' of the information source. Thus, it binds the recipient of the message to understand it as intended by the source. At this point, the message source must provide the infrastructure that enables this to happen. For example, some form of digital or physical information system as a medium. Additionally, the meaning of a message can be understood through consensus within the accepting society. At this point misunderstandings between the 'recipient' and the source often occur (Weaver, 1949, 2017).

To comprehend the message, one does not have to rely solely on hermeneutic-heuristic approaches that are more focused on the interpersonal aspect, but also on the ideal and textual aspect (Chalker

& Weiner, 1998, pp. 789–790). To this point, the structure of meaning in a message can be divided according to the systemic-functional grammar into: 1) ideational, 2) interpersonal, and 3) textual.

A message has two important components, namely design logic and goal structure. Both are based on Western schools of thought and communication theories that prioritize the effectiveness of message reception and its impact in line with the message structure: propaganda and persuasive (O’Keefe & McCornack, 1987). A message’s external structure allows it to be ‘accepted’ or ‘believed’. This occurs because of the theory of irony in communication, as asserted in Kierkegaard’s philosophy of communication, which historically examines the model of direct communication in the stories of Roman kings and biblical narratives. In this theory, a messenger can be ‘trusted’ even if they convey a message that is ‘factually untrue’. Conversely, a messenger can be ‘distrusted’ even when delivering a message that is ‘factually true’ (Abuisaac et al., 2021; J. D. Peters, 2012).

The theory of irony seems to align with several approaches in information and message communication, namely syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The first emphasizes the power of the means, signs and symbols used to convey the message. The second focuses more on the content in terms of logic and reasoning, whether it contains tautology or contradiction, among others. The third is more concerned with how the message can influence its recipient (Noeh, 2012).

The theory of irony, in essence, originates from propositions in specific cases. Often, the theory refers to causality: why is a message not received? What truly makes the recipient ‘accept’ the message or its introduction? In Islam, this theory can at least be represented in relation to causality and the power of God at its core, as stated in the verse: *‘Verily, you guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills’*. This is part of the practical scientific proposition affirmed in the Qur’an: the concept of causality encompassing the effectiveness of the message and the concept of God’s power (Al-Nasrawi, 2022; Abuisaac et al., 2020).

When the theory is affirmed, the concept of 'barriers' or 'noise' in media communication can be further explained based on the psychological aspects of human beings: joy, dislike, sadness, or anger. This is particularly relevant when we recall the hadith that encourages us to control our anger and restrain ourselves from succumbing to sadness and other worldly desires (Clarke, 2014, p. 56).

Therefore, in the structural theory of messages in Islamic semiotics, Allah plays a role as the inspiration behind the formation of symbols and even the delivery of the message to the message recipient. It is not solely due to causalistic actions represented syntactically, semantically, or pragmatically. As for the types of messages, Allah provides inspiration through several seminal concepts in the Qur'ān (Cúrto, 2021).

The Subject of Message

The concept of communication often involves messages transmitted through two models of transmission: a) the theory of communicative action, and b) the technical-material theories of communication. However, in both models, there is a convergence regarding the autonomy of language and media. Both are always *a priori* in the process of communication. If the autonomy of media is rejected, then there must be a specific model of the 'message bearer' who acts as an influencer. Similarly, if the autonomy of language is rejected, there will certainly be the emergence of models in 'interpreting the message' accurately (Krämer, 2016, pp. 197–213). Such a framework is also present in religion, namely the relationship between the message and God.

Asserting the message and its relationship with the dimension of the divine was only done in the era of the emergence of modern religious philosophy. Western scholars, particularly philosophers who 'understood' religion, then redefined the meaning of God and the Holy Scriptures and their contents. Modern semiotic studies in the realm of religion developed in the hands of John Dewey and Charles Sanders Peirce. The nature of these studies aimed to uncover the aspects of rationality and logic within religious texts, particularly

through analytical approaches influenced by the growing field of analytical philosophy at the time. Subsequently, various studies on the philosophy of religion emerged as a distinct discipline (Koshul, 2017, pp. 1–2).

Interestingly, while in Christianity the theology of the message behind the Bible text is often mentioned, Cook argues that the Church's missionary program is not based on the Bible text itself, but rather rooted in the love of God and a sense of responsibility towards others (Snider, 2016, p. 191). This perspective is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition of Augustine, where the essence of Christianity lies not in theological terms, but rather in a profound commitment known as 'credo,' which allows one to experience a sense of communion with God. It seems to suggest that theological terms do not primarily refer to the Bible itself, but rather to doctrines (Credo) assumed as commitments. This distinction allows us to differentiate between religious texts and their contexts. Theology serves as a key term or tool to connect the sacred and the profane within religion (Gorlée, 2012, pp. 117–118). Augustine laid the foundations for semiotic studies of verbal messages to be applied in theology and education. In the modern era, John Locke further proposed the thesis that semiotics explains words that carry ideological significance, reflecting both good and evil (Gorlée, 2012, p. 9).

It is not only in metaphysical-based theological concepts, but theological messages also exist in the field of exact sciences. It is because there is logical structure of argument within the science that is based on language and agreement:

“It is especially difficult to give a full semiotic account of this symbol because it is so recent and because it has emerged within the context of a movement that is quite explicit in refusing to have anything like a theological creed that would provide the linguistic analogue to the physical symbol” (Corrington, 2009, p. 124).

However, the messages about reality within the exact sciences are not always completely accurate and certain. It can be looked at Physics, for example, there is a study of calibration, where we encounter the concept of 'uncertainty' in measurements. This is actually quite

reasonable. It is also found in statistics, that there is still a possibility of bias and error. From an axiological perspective, this is considered a result of the human mind's way of formulating these things. The more detailed a concept becomes, even to the point of becoming a formula, the greater the chance of uncertainty. Conversely, the more global a concept is the greater the chance of certainty. For instance, a statement in the Qur`ān: *kullu nafs dzā-iqatu al-mawti* (every soul shall taste death) [Ali Imrān 185]. This concept is truly global and carries a high level of certainty. If it is compared with statements as *allażi ja`ala lakum min al-syajaril-akḥḍari nāran fa iżā antum min-hu tuqidun* (He who made for you from the green tree, fire, and then from it you ignite.) [Yāsin 80]. This concept reflects something that needs to be explored in detail: What kind of tree? What type of fire? It still carries a significant amount of uncertainty. However, it still contains a certain level of certainty: there is a green tree that can produce fire (Sardar, 2021).

It appears that there is a tendency to apply a semiotic approach to the Bible, and this inclination has its own reasons. Semiotics, often followed by hermeneutics, is employed due to the difficulty in finding an authoritative foundation within the text (Haynes & McKenzie, 1999, pp. 24, 204, 214). This differs from the interpretive tradition in Islam. Semiotic and hermeneutic readings of the Qur`ān may not always attain the same level of truth as the interpretations put forth by scholars. Moreover, the Qur`ān does not simply employ a 'literal' language that requires every aspect to be interpreted as an imaginative language that necessitates interpretation, as is the case with the Bible. If they do, it would still rely on the interpretations provided by those scholars. Yet, as the world of the text does not contain syllogistic patterns of order upon which to understand the plot events, the result is a dissimulation of the occurrential coherence of the book to that of a textual labyrinth. It is a hermeneutic dilemma or interpretative predicament where the reader must trace and then retrace the receptive steps of textual production in order to decipher the potentialities for meaning-making embodied within the narrative itself (Bruner, 1991; Tate, 2008, pp. 89–93).

Fundamentally, the subject of this message can be considered as both the recipient and sender of the message from two sides simultaneously. This is because the sender and receiver can potentially exist on the same level. It is in this semiotic context that various media, bureaucratic systems, academic language, and hierarchical languages between sender and receiver have developed. As has briefly discussed, the choice of terminology in the Qur'ān, for instance, implies a degree of reverence or disrespect towards both the recipient and sender of the message.

To delve further into the subject of this message, within the framework of the semiotic approach employed in this study, it becomes necessary to categorize it based on the practices of faith and its social domains in the sub-context of theology and message in Islamic communication.

The Messenger

The sender of a message or the message transmitter is often considered an essential aspect of the process of communication. It will influence the level of trust the receiver has and indicate the level and degree of the sender's message. In the field of microbiology, the human body naturally possesses a structure of 'messengers' that send information between cells; one of which is mRNA, functioning to transmit DNA information from a gene to ribosomes (Hook & Torroba, 2011; Kedes & Gross, 1969). Perhaps it may seem straightforward, but this paradigm of microbiological research also influences the development of communication studies in the West, where the overall epistemological basis is reason and the five senses. Hence, what is referred to as communication is an activity of information transfer that is 'neutral,' 'pragmatic,' and oriented towards the physical aspects of humans. Even if there are studies on the spiritual and ethical aspects of communication, the ultimate goal is often 'mental health' directed towards contributing to the quality of life in this world alone (Wagner, 2019). The pragmatic aspect -perhaps too vulgar to be mentioned of this message and messenger is more evident in the purpose of sending messengers by Allah to humanity,

which is to 'purify them' (*yuzakkīhim*), teach the book (the law), and wisdom (beneficial knowledge). Additionally, the fact that human beings themselves are a 'sign' (*āyat*) has been emphasized in the Qur'ān as: *Wa fi anfusikum, afalā tubşirun* (*And in yourselves, then will you not see?*) [Al-Dzāriyāt verse 21].

We may agree with some of Michel Serres' views that consider the existence of an imaginative system metaphorically referred to as 'Hermes' in the past, where humans received unexpected inspirations and attributed them to gods or deities. This system, essentially, represents the occurrences of the present and bridges our epistemological apparatus in comprehending the objects or subjects of knowledge (Barker, 2021). Indeed, there is a continuous process of transmission in communication that occurs throughout time, and only then can humans arrive at an understanding of such matters.

Thus, in the context of religion, Serres emphasizes that angels play a role in conveying messages and understanding to humans; conversely, there are also angels who are wicked and incapable of conveying messages to humans. (Balbi & Kittler, 2016; Brown, 2002) In religions other than Islam, 'prophethood' holds a distinct position. For example, prophets have also committed sins, such as the prophet Lot in the Bible; another clear example can be found in the book 'Shahīh al-Qashash al-Nabawī' written by Umar Sulaimān al-Ashqar (al-Asyqar, 1997, pp. 66–67). The significant difference lies in the absence of the concept of '*işmah*' (infallibility) in the prophets as found in Islam. This concept of '*ishmah*' serves as a kind of guarantee that the prophet is chosen by Allah through direct revelation, reinforced by miracles as a 'sign' (*āyat*) that Allah sends messengers to other human beings (al-Makkiy, 1995, pp. 15–16).

Indeed, it can be regarded as a similarity that these messengers of God all carry truths and prophecies about the past and the future. In the Qur'ān, it is acknowledged that messengers of Allah can be angels or humans; however, angels are not prophets. Even though some prophets also become messengers, it does not mean that angels, as 'messengers' (*rasūl*), can become prophets. Hence, the concept of prophethood in Islam has its distinct identity, which requires belief in

all the prophets besides Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as explained in the Qur`ān and hadiths. Additionally, prophets are not exempt from human limitations such as forgetfulness, hunger, illness, and even death. On this matter, all Sunni Muslim scholars agree on the human characteristics of prophets and messengers (al-Asyqar, 1989, pp. 69–93).

From a scientific perspective, Serres' view on knowledge transmission through 'Hermes' is also affirmed by the hermeneutic approach, both by those who view everything as 'text' or 'literature'—this aspect is closely related to linguistics and is closer to Saussurean semiotics— and by those who perceive everything as 'signs' in terms of their meaning and function as tools for logical thinking (regarding referents, representamens, or objects behind them), and this is closer to Peircean semiotics (Serres & Latour, 1995, pp. 1, 65, 74, 83, 109). Due to these similarities, it is possible for orientalists and some contemporary Muslim scholars to insist that: a) *tafsīr* or *ta'wīl* is similar to hermeneutics, b) if not the same, then hermeneutics is considered an alternative for understanding the text; assuming that the Qur`ān— in this case, the original Word of Allah— is transcendental and not in human language, and the Arabic language serves as the 'medium' (read: Hermes) to convey the intentions of God. Thus, hermeneutic activities are essential in this context. Furthermore, both claims are often supported by the views of Arab historians that Hermes is a metaphor for the prophet Idrīs, who is said to be the first to formulate writing and language rules (Nasr, 1996, 27–39; Nelson, 2022).

To find a middle ground, we need to refer to the uniqueness of knowledge transmission and truth in the perspective of Islam itself, namely the concept of *isnad*. Just as the concept of '*iṣmah*' is attached to the prophets as messengers, the concept of *isnad* is attached to individuals who have had direct experience meeting with the sources of information. Moreover, it is strengthened by the system of '*adālah*' among the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). With these three concepts, the philosophical aspect of the 'messenger' concept in Islam holds significant and distinct significance.

Additionally, there are means of clarification to others about doubtful or false news, such as through 'oaths' (*shahādah*, *ḥalaf*).

Islam was revealed through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the recipient of divine revelation from Allah and the sender of the message to all of humanity (*kāffatan linnās*). This concept is one of the important symbols in Islam, making it one of the pillars of faith. This pillar is interconnected with others coherently; believing in the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) entails believing in the commands and prohibitions present in the Qur ʾān. Furthermore, it involves having faith in various information contained therein, such as past stories, future events, and others. Through this framework, revelation can be seen as a unique epistemological source in Islam compared to others, with concepts synonymous with Islamic communication like *sanad*, *işmat al-rusul*, and others.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis Concerning the Idea of Messenger

Epistemological Framework	Islam	Others	West
Messenger	Man and angel (<i>allāhu yaştafi minal-malā'ikati rusulan wa minan-nās</i>) [al-Hājj ayat 75].	Man is considered to possess qualities that approach the divine, akin to angels (Capurro, 2011).	Media tools (scientific products) and humans: Aligned with the epistemologies of rationalism and empiricism as their basis.
The concept of ' <i>işmah</i> ' as validation that prophets are messengers of Allah.	Available	Humans and angels: Humans possess qualities approaching the divine, while angels are messengers of God. (Broekman, 2017; Broekman & Fleerackers,	Not available

Epistemological Framework	Islam	Others	West
Miracles (<i>mu'jizat</i>) as reinforcement for the concept of ' <i>išmah</i> '.	Available	2017) Depend on religious feeling and experience	Not available
The concept of ' <i>isnād</i> '	In religious texts like the Qur'ān, hadith, and the words of scholars, there are clear chains of transmission (<i>sanad</i>), ensuring authenticity (Al Seini, 1986; Atiyeh, 1995, p. 42; Hakak et al., 2022; Kopycki, 1996).	There is no such concept of knowledge transmission in this manner. Knowledge or information, as well as interpretations of religious texts, are done intuitively, supported by institutional materialization such as specific ritual places like churches and others (Krämer, 2015, pp. 64–66).	No, but there are rigid communication media with secure networks; both physical media (such as print: telegrams, newspapers, etc.) and digital media (Krämer, 2022).

It can be stated that -quoting and comparing the characteristics of messengers or senders according to Serres- communication gradually becomes a ritual with several formalities supporting certain success. There are at least several characteristics that must be fulfilled or become the goals of the existence of a 'messenger' in various contexts, namely the following:

1. In the context of education, a 'messenger' is highly necessary as a means to transmit knowledge to learners; it is in this aspect that the terms andragogy and pedagogy were developed in Greek (Barker, 2015, 2021; Kull & Velmezova, 2014; Serres, 1997, pp. 48–49).

2. The media, or messenger, should possess certain qualities that go beyond mere 'ritualistic' message transmission acknowledged by the recipient community and intended recipients. They should have the ability to avoid miscommunication in terms of explanation and language. Especially concerning religious messages (Barker, 2021; Carey & Adam, 2008, pp. 14–16) which are sometimes conveyed through metaphors or 'highly open' (open text) terms - in Gadamerian Hermeneutics terminology - thus leading to multiple interpretations by the readers (Krämer, 2015, pp. 14, 37, 41, 65, 87–88, 180).
3. On the contrary, media and messengers have a parasitic aspect that causes interference (noise). This refers to their ability to 'infest' the beliefs of the message recipients through information manipulation to subjugate them. It is likened to a horse rider who tames the horse to reach their destination (Barker, 2021; Brown, 2002; Serres, 2013, pp. 48–49). This aspect also bears resemblance to the concept of 'Leviathan' within a state's regulation, employed to subdue society - be it through legal means, culture, or religion (Broekman, 2017; Burkholder, 2017, pp. 64, 66, 77).
4. At times, media and messengers need to be elevated from mere symbols to icons – in Peirce's terms – in order to effectively convey and persuade (Lotman, 2019; Weiss & Burks, 1945). This can be achieved through framing for both media and messengers, such as creating images or physical media like sculptures and more (Bailey, 2018).
5. Taking a more stringent approach, Sybille Krämer (2015, pp. 14–15) delineates several key 'figures' of the 'messenger' as follows:
 - a. All forms of communication are actually forms of transmission, which are always unidirectional and non-dialogical. In other words, communication is a form of dissemination rather than dialogue, and it is directly opposed to the 'personal' principle of communication, which is based on the concept of understanding, dialogue, consensus, etc
 - b. The medium embodies the message through its own disembodiment, and therefore transmission depends on the

separation of text and texture, sense and form, signal and noise.

- c. The medium is heteronomous, as it speaks with a voice that is not its own and therefore it is not responsible for the content of the message it transmits. The messenger model is thus directed against hermeneutics and points to a subject-free theory of communication that challenges the notion of media as autonomous agents or as the cause of cultural-historical dynamics (i.e. Kittler's famous dictum that 'media determine our situation').
- d. The invisibility of the messenger enables its function as a transmitter to be easily replaced by non-human entities, which suggests that the technical transmission model of communication can be used to explain the function of interpersonal communication and vice versa.

Conclusion

We contend that theoretical studies based on Islamic sources can be aligned with modern communication theories, as evidenced by the message theory we are currently examining. There appear to be aspects from seminal concepts about messages in Islamic literature that can be integrated into theories and concepts of messages in modern communication theory. This framework of thought is inherently relevant to the Islamic-based scholarly paradigm that can be developed in Indonesia. The comparative-integrative conceptual elaboration can now reinvigorate various Islamic scholarly treasures for actualization or reconceptualization in contemporary contexts. However, it undoubtedly requires various competencies in studying and interpreting two major sources, namely the Islamic sources and Western communication theories.

References

- Abuisaac, S. R. S., Sapar, A. A., & Wolf, H. V. (2020). Rhetorics of Ironic Discourse of the Qur'an. *QURANICA-International Journal of Quranic Research*, 12(1), 1–18.
- Abuisaac, S. R. S., Zaidan, A. M., Alshater, M. M., & Bin Sapar, A. A. (2021). Emotiveness and Translational Equivalence of Irony Interface with Other Figures of Speech in the Quranic Discourse. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 50(2), 146–165.
- Ahmed, S. (2018). *Message layering: A grounded theory of overcoming message limitations in social media communication*. University of Bedfordshire.
- Akhtar, N., Sun, J., Ahmad, W., & Akhtar, M. N. (2019). The effect of non-verbal messages on Muslim tourists' interaction adaptation: A case study of Halal restaurants in China. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 11, 10–22.
- al-Asyqar, U. S. (1989). *al-Aqidah fiy Dhau'i al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah: Al-Rusul wa al-Risalat* (Vol. 4). Dar al-Nafais.
- al-Asyqar, U. S. (1997). *Shahih al-Qashash al-Nabawiy*. Dar al-Nafais.
- al-Makkiy, I. bin 'Uqail 'Azuz. (1995). *I'lam al-Muslimin bi Ishmat al-Nabiyyin*. Dar Ibn Hazm.
- Al Seini, S. (1986). An Islamic concept of news. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 3(2), 277–289.
- Alahmed, A. M. (2020). Internalized Orientalism: Toward a postcolonial media theory and De-Westernizing communication research from the Global South. *Communication Theory*, 30(4), 407–428.
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (2015). *On Justice and The Nature of Man: A Commentary on Surah al-Nisa and Surah al-Mu'minun*. IBFIM.
- Al-Nasrawi, R. D. S. (2022). A Pragmatic Study of Irony in Some Selected Quranic Verses. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 13(2).

- Atiyeh, G. N. (1995). *The book in the Islamic world: The written word and communication in the Middle East* (Vol. 297). SUNY Press.
- Ayish, M. I. & others. (2008). *The new Arab public sphere* (Vol. 15). Frank & Timme GmbH.
- Bailey, A. (2018). “Man Himself is a Sign”: Emerson, CS Peirce, and the Semiosis of Mind. *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*, 64(4), 680–714.
- Balbi, G., & Kittler, J. (2016). One-to-one and one-to-many dichotomy: Grand theories, periodization, and historical narratives in communication studies. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 1971–1990.
- Barker, T. (2015). Media Ecology in Michel Serres’s Philosophy of Communication. *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*, 19(1), 50–68.
- Barker, T. (2021). Michel Serres’ Messengers. *Media Theory*, 5(1), 164–184.
- Barthes, R. (1964). *The rhetoric of the image: Image, music, text*. Translated by S. Heath. London: Fontana.
- Bertolotti, M., & Catellani, P. (2014). Effects of message framing in policy communication on climate change. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(5), 474–486.
- Bird, A. (2019). The aim of belief and the aim of science. *Theoria. Revista de Teoria, Historia y Fundamentos de La Ciencia*, 34(2), 171–193.
- Black, A. (2011). *History of Islamic political thought: From the prophet to the present*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Boudon, R. (2001). *The origin of values: Essays in the sociology and philosophy of beliefs*. Transaction Publishers.
- Bowie, F. (2021). Anthropology of religion. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, 1–24.

- Broekman, J. M. (2017). "Street" as Theory. In *Street-Level Sovereignty: The Intersection of Space and Law* (pp. 1–30). Lexington Books.
- Broekman, J. M., & Fleerackers, F. (2017). On Hermes Avenue. In *Legal Conversation as Signifier* (pp. 191–228). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Brown, S. D. (2002). Michel Serres: Science, translation and the logic of the parasite. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19(3), 1–27.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1–21.
- Burkholder, L. E. (2017). *The Leviathan Factor*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Capurro, R. (2011). Angeletics—a message theory. In *Messages and Messengers-Von Boten und Botschaften* (pp. 31–42). Brill Fink.
- Carey, J. W., & Adam, G. S. (2008). *Communication as culture, revised edition: Essays on media and society*. routledge.
- Chalker, S., & Weiner, E. S. C. (1998). *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*. Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, B. (2014). 39. Communication and Information: Noise and Form in Michel Serres and Niklas Luhmann. In *Neocybernetics and Narrative*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816691005.003.0002>
- Corrington, R. S. (2009). *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cúrto, S. (2021). Qur'anic Internal Prophetic Theophany in Sūrat al-Najm and Sūrat al-Takwīr: An Intra-and Extra-Textual Exegesis. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 23(2), 169–181.
- Danesi, M. (2004a). *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication* (3rd ed., Vol. 1). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Danesi, M. (2004b). *Messages, signs, and meanings: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication* (Vol. 1). Canadian Scholars' Press.

- DeVito, J. A. (1999). *Messages: Building interpersonal communication skills*. Addison-Wesley.
- Godino, J. D., Batanero, C., & Font, V. (2007). The onto-semiotic approach to research in mathematics education. *Zdm*, 39, 127–135.
- Goody, J. (1961). Religion and ritual: The definitional problem. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12(2), 142–164.
- Gorlée, D. L. (2012). *Wittgenstein in translation: Exploring semiotic signatures* (Vol. 9). Walter de Gruyter.
- Grau, M. (2014). Reframing Theological Hermeneutics. In *Refiguring Theological Hermeneutics: Hermes, Trickster, Fool* (pp. 187–192). Springer.
- Hakak, S., Kamsin, A., Zada Khan, W., Zakari, A., Imran, M., bin Ahmad, K., & Amin Gilkar, G. (2022). Digital Hadith authentication: Recent advances, open challenges, and future directions. *Transactions on Emerging Telecommunications Technologies*, 33(6), e3977.
- Hans, A., & Hans, E. (2015). Kinesics, haptics and proxemics: Aspects of non-verbal communication. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 20(2), 47–52.
- Haynes, S. R., & McKenzie, S. L. (1999). *To each its own meaning: An introduction to biblical criticisms and their application*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Higgins, E. T., & Rholes, W. S. (1978). “Saying is believing”: Effects of message modification on memory and liking for the person described. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 14(4), 363–378.
- Hjelmslev, L. (1969). *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language: Transl. By Francis J. Whitfield*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hook, A., & Torroba, G. (2011). A microscopic theory of gauge mediation. *Journal of High Energy Physics*, 2011(8), 1–24.

- Kedes, L. H., & Gross, P. R. (1969). Synthesis and function of messenger RNA during early embryonic development. *Journal of Molecular Biology*, 42(3), 559–575.
- Kopycki, W. J. (1996). *Isnad in Arabic literary works*.
- Koshul, B. B. (2017). *Semiotics as a Resource for Theology: Philosophical Warrants and Illustrations*. Kalam Research & Media.
- Krämer, S. (2015). *Medium, messenger, transmission: An approach to media philosophy*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Krämer, S. (2016). The messenger as a model in media theory. Reflections on the philosophical dimensions of theorizing media. In *Media Transatlantic: Developments in Media and Communication Studies between North American and German-speaking Europe* (pp. 197–213). Springer.
- Krämer, S. (2022). From Dissemination to Digitality: How to Reflect on Media. *Media Theory*, 5(2), 79–98.
- Kull, K., & Velmezova, E. (2014). What is the main challenge for contemporary semiotics? *Sign Systems Studies*, 42(4), 530–548.
- Labrador, B., Ramón, N., Alaiz-Moretón, H., & Sanjurjo-González, H. (2014). Rhetorical structure and persuasive language in the subgenre of online advertisements. *English for Specific Purposes*, 34, 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2013.10.002>
- Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2010). *Theories of Human Communication*. Waveland press.
- Lotman, J. (2019). The symbol in the system of culture. *Juri Lotman-Culture, Memory and History: Essays in Cultural Semiotics*, 161–173.
- Matsumoto, D., Hwang, H. C., & Frank, M. G. (2016). The body: Postures, gait, proxemics, and haptics. In *APA handbook of nonverbal communication*. (pp. 387–400). American Psychological Association.
- McCarron, G. (2021). Lecture 7: Visual Persuasion. *Scholarly and Research Communication*, 12(1), 24–pp.

- Mingers, J., & Willcocks, L. (2017). An integrative semiotic methodology for IS research. *Information and Organization*, 27(1), 17–36.
- Muhammad, S. (2021). Fire symbolism in the holy Qur'an analysis of contrary connotation. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 44(1).
- Nasr, S. H. (1996). The Qur'an and Hadith as source and inspiration of Islamic philosophy. *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 27–39.
- Nelson, J. E. (2022). From Hermes to Hermes Trismegistus. In *Shakespeare and religio mentis* (pp. 256–258). Brill.
- Noeh, W. (2012). Charles S. Peirce's theory of information: A theory of the growth of symbols and of knowledge. *Cybernetics & Human Knowing*, 19(1–2), 137–161.
- O'Keefe, B. J., & McCornack, S. A. (1987). Message design logic and message goal structure: Effects on perceptions of message quality in regulative communication situations. *Human Communication Research*, 14(1), 68–92.
- Peters, H. P. (2008). Scientists as public experts. In *Routledge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology* (pp. 131–146).
- Peters, J. D. (2012). *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rader, K. (2020). *Talking about Narrative Messages: The Interaction between Elaboration and Interpersonal Validation*. The Ohio State University.
- Sari, M. (2023). Etika Komunikasi Politik dalam Perspektif Islam. *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, 13(2), 305–322.
- Serres, M. (1997). *The troubadour of knowledge*. University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (2013). *The parasite* (Vol. 1). U of Minnesota Press.
- Serres, M., & Latour, B. (1995). *Conversations on science, culture, and time*. University of Michigan Press.

- Snider, G. L. (2016). *The Use of the Old Testament in a Wesleyan Theology of Mission*. ISD LLC.
- Sobur, A. (2002). Bercengkerama dengan Semiotika. *Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 3(1), 31–50.
- Stern, P. C., Dietz, T., Abel, T., Guagnano, G. A., & Kalof, L. (1999). A value-belief-norm theory of support for social movements: The case of environmentalism. *Human Ecology Review*, 81–97.
- Tate, W. R. (2008). *Biblical interpretation: An integrated approach*. Baker Books.
- Wagner, A. (2019). E-victimization and e-predation theory as the dominant aggressive communication: The case of cyber bullying. *Social Semiotics*, 29(3), 303–318.
- Weaver, W. (1949). The mathematics of communication. *Scientific American*, 181(1), 11–15.
- Weaver, W. (2017). The mathematics of communication. In *Communication theory* (pp. 27–38). Routledge.
- Weiss, P., & Burks, A. (1945). Peirce's sixty-six signs. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 42(14), 383–388.