



Hadith Expertise and the Formation of Ibn Katsir's Exegetical Orientation

Mawarni¹, Viona Dwi Wulandari², Ulfah Hawwa' binti Muslich Achmad³, Rifadlin Amin⁴, Nurhayati Masani⁴

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

²International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

³Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

⁴Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

✉ mawarni@student.uinib.ac.id *

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Abstract

The relationship between Hadith scholarship and Quranic exegesis has remained a significant subject in classical tafsir studies. As one of the most influential Muslim scholars, Ibnu Katsir is renowned for his authority in both Hadith and Quranic interpretation. This article examines the role of his Hadith expertise in shaping his exegetical orientation and explores its manifestation in the interpretation of the Quran. This study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis. Primary data were derived from Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, while secondary data were obtained from relevant literature on Hadith studies, Quranic exegesis, and the intellectual legacy of Ibnu Katsir. Data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed descriptively to identify patterns of Hadith utilization, narrative selection, and interpretive characteristics. The findings reveal that Ibnu Katsir's Hadith expertise significantly shaped his tafsir bi al-ma'thur orientation, characterized by reliance on authentic Hadith, the application of *sanad* and *matn* criticism, the use of reports from the Companions and Successors, and a selective approach toward *Isra'iliyyat* narratives. These findings demonstrate that mastery of Hadith sciences constituted a fundamental basis for the validity and authority of Ibnu Katsir's exegesis and highlight the importance of integrating Hadith and tafsir studies in contemporary Quranic scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

Quranic exegesis continues to evolve alongside the growing diversity of approaches used to understand and interpret the sacred text. This development indicates that exegetical works are shaped not only by the textual meanings of the Quran but also by exegetes' intellectual backgrounds, social environments, scholarly orientations, and academic competencies. From the perspective of the epistemology of Quranic exegesis, the relationship between an exegete's disciplinary expertise and interpretive approach is an important area of inquiry because it helps explain the methodological characteristics of an exegetical work (Mustafa et al., 2026).

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Accordingly, examining an exegete's scholarly competence is essential for understanding the argumentative structure, reference sources, and interpretive tendencies underlying a particular work of Quranic exegesis.

One of the most influential exegetes in the Islamic tradition is Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH/1373 CE), whose monumental work, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, has become a major reference in Quranic studies. This work is widely classified as *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, an exegetical approach that prioritizes the Quran itself, the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, the reports of the Companions (*athar al-sahabah*), and the opinions of the Successors (*tabi'in*) as primary sources of interpretation. This characteristic cannot be separated from Ibn Kathir's expertise in hadith as a *muhaddith*, or hadith scholar, who studied under prominent scholars, including al-Mizzi, al-Dhahabi, and Ibn Taymiyyah. His mastery of hadith enabled him to evaluate chains of transmission (*isnad*) and textual content (*matn*), classify hadith authenticity, compare transmission routes, and select reports used to explain the meanings of Quranic verses (Engkizar et al., 2025; Numan et al., 2025; Saminu et al., 2025).

The importance of hadith in the interpretation of the Quran has a strong normative foundation, as indicated in Quran 16:44, which emphasizes the role of the Messenger in explaining revelation. This verse establishes the authority of the Sunnah as an important means of clarifying the meanings and implications of the Quran. Consequently, an exegete's level of expertise in hadith influences how transmitted reports are understood, selected, and employed in the exegetical process. In this context, Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise constitutes a significant factor shaping the epistemological foundations and methodological orientation of his exegetical work.

Ibn Kathir's position as a hadith scholar is evident not only in the extensive use of transmitted reports in his exegesis but also in his critical approach to the sources of transmission. In various passages, he evaluates hadith authenticity, explains the status of chains of transmission, compares reports addressing similar themes, and provides critical assessments of reports considered weak or unreliable. This critical approach is also evident in his treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*, or reports originating from Jewish and Christian traditions. Rather than accepting such reports unconditionally, he evaluates them according to their compatibility with Islamic principles and the reliability of their transmission (Abdillah, 2026; Aziz & Adnan, 2026). These practices indicate that the exegetical orientation of Ibn Kathir's work is shaped not merely by the transmitted sources it employs but also by his hadith expertise, which underpins the selection, evaluation, and interpretation of those reports.

Previous studies have examined *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* from various perspectives. Nasrullah et al (2026) investigated Ibn Kathir's exegetical method as an example of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* employing the *tablili* approach, which interprets the Quran verse by verse in accordance with the order of the text. The use of hadith as a source of interpretation in Ibn Kathir's work. Azmi (2026) discussed the concepts and characteristics of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* within the tradition of Quranic interpretation. Ridwan & Mahmud (2025) emphasized the authority of the *bi al-ma'thur* method in the history of Islamic exegesis. Meanwhile, Pratiwi et al (2025) examined Ibn Kathir's criticism of *Isra'iliyyat* reports; Robaniyah et al (2023) focused on the use of the Companions' reports in the construction of Ibn Kathir's interpretations; Ibrahim (2025) analyzed the contribution of hadith studies to classical exegetical methodology; Ghazali & Shah (2021) discussed the application of *isnad* criticism in tradition-based exegetical works; Rasid et al (2024) investigated the relationship between hadith authority and the validity of Quranic interpretation; and Nasrullah et al (2026) examined the epistemological dimensions of Ibn Kathir's exegesis from the perspective of contemporary Quranic studies. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* has been extensively examined in terms of its methods, sources, and interpretive characteristics, contributing significantly to the development

of Quranic and hadith studies.

Nevertheless, previous research has predominantly focused on exegetical methodology, the use of hadith in specific thematic contexts, the characteristics of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, or the epistemology of Ibn Kathir's exegesis in general. Relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise contributes to the formation of his exegetical orientation through the selection of transmitted reports, criticism of *isnad* and *matn*, the use of reports from the Companions and Successors, and his treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* (Aziz & Adnan, 2026; Nasrullah et al., 2026). Consequently, the relationship between hadith competence and exegetical characteristics remains insufficiently explored in the academic literature.

The research gap, therefore, concerns the relationship between Ibn Kathir's competence as a *muhaddith* and the formation of his exegetical orientation. Previous studies have tended to examine exegetical methods, the use of hadith, and the characteristics of *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* as separate subjects. A comprehensive analysis explaining how hadith expertise shapes methodological construction, the assessment of transmitted reports, and interpretive orientation in Ibn Kathir's work remains limited. Addressing this gap is necessary to clarify the role of disciplinary expertise in shaping the methodological and epistemological foundations of classical Quranic exegesis (Ajuba et al., 2025; Rasid et al., 2024).

The novelty of this article lies in positioning Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise as the central analytical focus for explaining the formation of his exegetical orientation. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize exegetical methods or sources, this article integrates an analysis of hadith competence, the selection of transmitted reports, criticism of *isnad* and *matn*, the use of reports from the Companions and Successors, and the treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*. Through this integrated perspective, the study examines how these dimensions contribute to the development of the *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* orientation in *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim*.

This article contributes theoretically to Quranic and hadith studies by advancing an understanding of the relationship between an exegete's scholarly competence and the characteristics of their interpretation. The findings are expected to enrich discussions on the epistemology of classical Quranic exegesis, expand research on the integration of hadith and tafsir, and provide a conceptual basis for understanding the validity of transmitted reports as an essential instrument in interpreting the Quran. The study may also serve as a reference for academics, researchers, and students conducting contemporary Quranic studies through interdisciplinary approaches.

Accordingly, this article aims to analyze how Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise contributes to the formation of his exegetical orientation and to explain its implications for the methodological characteristics of *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim*. By examining the relationship between hadith competence and exegetical construction, this study seeks to contribute to the development of Quranic and hadith studies and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of scholarly expertise in shaping classical Quranic interpretation.

METHODS

This article was developed through several systematic stages, including defining the research focus, collecting data from primary and secondary sources, organizing the data according to relevant themes, conducting content analysis, interpreting the findings within the frameworks of hadith and Quranic exegesis, and drawing conclusions. These stages were designed to examine the relationship between Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise and the formation of his exegetical orientation in *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim*. Through this process, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how hadith competence shapes the methodological orientation and interpretive characteristics of Ibn Kathir's work.

Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of the meanings, patterns, characteristics, and interpretive tendencies embedded in textual data (Takona, 2024). Content analysis is used to identify, classify, and interpret the use of hadith, reports from the Companions (*athar al-sahabah*), reports from the Successors (*athar al-tabi'in*), and *Isra'iliyyat* narratives in *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* (Wahyuna et al., 2025). This method is appropriate because it facilitates an examination of the methodological construction underlying Ibn Kathir's exegetical orientation and clarifies the relationship between his hadith expertise and his exegetical work.

In accordance with the research objectives, the analysis extends beyond identifying the use of transmitted reports to examining the patterns of selection, validation, and application employed by Ibn Kathir in explaining Quranic verses. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how hadith expertise contributes to the *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* orientation that characterizes his exegesis.

Data Sources

The data consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir, which serves as the principal object of analysis. This work was selected because it represents a major source for examining Ibn Kathir's exegetical methodology and interpretive orientation. Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, dissertations, and other scholarly publications addressing hadith studies, Quranic exegesis, the methodology of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, Ibn Kathir's intellectual biography, and other topics relevant to the research objectives (Millah et al., 2024).

Primary and secondary sources were used complementarily to develop a comprehensive analysis. The primary source was examined to identify the characteristics of Ibn Kathir's interpretations directly, while secondary sources provided theoretical context, supported the interpretation of the findings, and situated the analysis within the broader academic discourse.

Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument (*human instrument*), responsible for defining the research focus, collecting data, selecting relevant information, analyzing the data, and interpreting the findings (Kocaman, 2024). Accordingly, the researcher's understanding of hadith studies, Quranic exegesis, and research methodology is essential to producing credible interpretations.

To support the analytical process, several supplementary instruments were employed, including a documentation sheet, data-recording forms, and a data-categorization matrix. These instruments were used to classify the data according to relevant themes, including the use of authentic hadith, criticism of *isnad* and *matn*, the use of reports from the Companions and Successors, and Ibn Kathir's treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* narratives. This categorization facilitated the identification of patterns and relationships relevant to the research focus.

Data Analysis Framework

The study employs Engkizar et al (2025) content analysis framework. Content analysis was selected because it provides a systematic and structured procedure for examining meanings embedded in textual data. In this study, the analysis focuses on how hadith functions as a source of Quranic interpretation and how transmitted reports are selected and evaluated in *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim*.

Within this framework, the categorized data were interpreted to identify relationships between Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise and the formation of his

exegetical orientation. This analytical process is important for demonstrating that the characteristics of an exegetical work are shaped not only by the sources it employs but also by the exegete's scholarly competence in evaluating and interpreting those sources.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures were adapted from the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising four main stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data collection, information concerning the use of hadith and the interpretive characteristics of Ibn Kathir's work was gathered from primary and secondary sources (Nabiel, 2021). The next stage involved data condensation, which consisted of selecting, focusing, and organizing information relevant to the research objectives. The condensed data were then displayed through thematic categorization to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were subsequently drawn by identifying recurring patterns, relationships, and interpretive tendencies across the data. Verification was conducted iteratively to ensure consistency between the findings and the underlying evidence, thereby supporting academically defensible interpretations (Akinyode & Khan, 2018; Lungu, 2022).

Data Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness was addressed through source triangulation and persistent observation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* with relevant hadith literature, exegetical works, and academic studies to assess the consistency and accuracy of the information (Engkizar et al., 2019; Flick, 2022). This procedure enabled the researcher to examine interpretations against multiple sources rather than relying on a single reference.

Trustworthiness was further strengthened through persistent observation, which involved repeatedly reading and examining the data to develop an in-depth understanding of patterns in hadith usage, the selection and evaluation of transmitted reports, and the interpretive characteristics of Ibn Kathir's work. The combination of source triangulation and persistent observation was intended to strengthen the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings in accordance with qualitative research principles (Adi et al., 2025; Aji et al., 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Characteristics of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*

Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim is one of the most influential works in the Islamic exegetical tradition, written by Abu al-Fida' Isma'il ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH/1373 CE). The work is classified as *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, an approach to Quranic interpretation that primarily relies on the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, reports from the Companions (*athar al-sahabah*), and interpretations attributed to the Successors (*tabi'in*) (Latif, 2017). In the introduction to his exegesis, Ibn Kathir establishes a hierarchy of interpretive sources, beginning with the Quran explaining itself, followed by the Sunnah, the explanations of the Companions, and the interpretations of the Successors.

Structurally, the work follows the order of the surahs in the Uthmanic codex and employs the *tablili* method, examining Quranic verses sequentially and analytically. Ibn Kathir connects verses with other Quranic passages, relevant hadith, and reports from the Companions and Successors. His discussions also address occasions of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), linguistic aspects, Quranic readings (*qira'at*), relationships between verses, and legal implications when relevant. These characteristics demonstrate the integration of transmitted evidence and scholarly analysis within his exegetical framework (Hasan, 2019).

Ibn Kathir's expertise in hadith is particularly relevant to his treatment of transmitted reports. His approach involves considering the chains of transmission (*isnad*), the reliability of narrators, and the evidentiary status of reports used in interpretation. Rather than treating every transmitted account as equally authoritative, he considers its relationship to other available evidence. This orientation reflects the importance of hadith scholarship in understanding the methodological characteristics of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (al-Dzahabi, n.d).

Another defining characteristic is Ibn Kathir's treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*, referring to narratives originating from Jewish and Christian traditions that appear in some works of Quranic exegesis. Such reports are not accepted unconditionally. Instead, their status is considered in relation to Islamic sources, distinguishing accounts that are consistent with authoritative evidence from those that contradict it or remain unverified. This approach reflects the need to distinguish supplementary narratives from evidence that can legitimately support Quranic interpretation (Ibn Kathir, 1998).

Taken together, these characteristics indicate that Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise is closely associated with his exegetical orientation. His prioritization of transmitted evidence, attention to the reliability of reports, use of material attributed to the Companions and Successors, and critical treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* constitute important features of his interpretive framework. These characteristics help explain the continuing significance of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* in Quranic exegesis and hadith studies.

The Influence of Hadith Expertise on Ibn Kathir's Exegetical Orientation

Ibn Kathir's expertise in hadith is reflected in his prioritization of transmitted evidence when interpreting Quranic verses. His approach places the Quran as the primary source of interpretation, followed by the Prophetic Sunnah, reports from the Companions, and interpretations of the Successors. This hierarchy is consistent with the principles of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, in which Quranic interpretation is grounded in transmitted sources with recognized scholarly authority (Dadach, 2020). Consequently, Ibn Kathir's exegetical approach gives substantial attention to transmitted evidence rather than relying exclusively on independent reasoning (Engkizar et al., 2025; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025). This orientation can be observed in his interpretation of Quran Surat An-Nisa verse 3:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْيَتَامَىٰ مَتًى وَثَلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ

Meaning: If you fear that you will not deal justly with orphan girls, then marry those that please you of other women: two, three, or four.

In explaining this verse, Ibn Kathir cites a hadith narrated by 'A'ishah and recorded by al-Bukhari concerning a guardian who wished to marry an orphan girl under his care without giving her an appropriate dowry. The report explains the context of the verse by highlighting the potential exploitation of orphan girls whose guardians controlled their property and marriage arrangements. On this basis, Ibn Kathir explains that the verse concerns not only the permissibility of polygyny but also the obligation to uphold justice and protect the rights of vulnerable orphans (Nurmila, 2016). The use of hadith in this interpretation demonstrates how transmitted evidence helps clarify the contextual and ethical dimensions of a Quranic passage.

Ibn Kathir also discusses the report concerning Ghaylan al-Thaqafi, who reportedly embraced Islam while having ten wives. According to the report, the Prophet Muhammad instructed him:

أَمْسِكْ أَرْبَعًا وَفَارِقْ سَائِرَهُنَّ

Meaning: Keep four of them and separate from the rest.

This report is transmitted in hadith collections, including those of Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah. Ibn Kathir uses it in discussing the legal implications of Quran surah An-Nisa verse 3, particularly the limit of four wives. The example illustrates how Prophetic traditions contribute to the interpretation of Quranic legislation. Hagler (2015) likewise examine the hadith employed by Ibn Kathir in interpreting this verse, emphasizing the importance of transmission routes and narrator reliability in assessing the evidentiary basis of his interpretation.

These examples demonstrate that hadith functions as an integral interpretive source in Ibn Kathir's exegesis rather than merely as supplementary material. Through the integration of Quranic verses, Prophetic traditions, contextual explanations, and legal reasoning, Ibn Kathir develops interpretations supported by transmitted evidence. His approach illustrates how hadith expertise contributes to the construction of Quranic meaning and the justification of exegetical arguments.

Hadith Criticism and the Selection of Transmitted Reports

Another important finding concerns Ibn Kathir's engagement with the critical assessment of transmitted reports. His hadith expertise is relevant to his consideration of narrator reliability, chains of transmission, and the evidentiary status of reports used in Quranic interpretation. Within the broader hadith tradition, the principles of *jarh wa ta'dil* provide a framework for evaluating narrators' reliability and integrity (Sirajudeen & Aminullahi, 2023).

From this perspective, transmitted reports should not automatically be treated as equally authoritative. Their evidentiary value depends on their reliability, their relationship to other reports, and their relevance to the interpretation under consideration. A weak report, for example, cannot automatically be assigned the same evidentiary weight as a report established through stronger transmission. This distinction is important when examining how transmitted material contributes to an exegetical argument.

The methodological significance of this finding lies in distinguishing the presence of a report in a tafsir work from its actual function as evidence. A report may be cited to explain the historical context of a verse, document an interpretation attributed to an earlier authority, provide supplementary information, or support a legal argument. Therefore, an assessment of Ibn Kathir's exegetical orientation requires attention not only to the sources he cites but also to the manner in which those sources are evaluated and employed.

This perspective is consistent with Rahayu & Alwizar (2024) discussion of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, which identifies the Quran, the Sunnah, reports from the Companions, and interpretations of the Successors as major sources of transmitted exegesis. It also corresponds with al-Dzahabi's discussion of classical Quranic interpretation and the importance of evaluating transmitted material (al-Dzahabi, n.d.). However, the present analysis focuses specifically on the relationship between hadith expertise and the formation of Ibn Kathir's exegetical orientation, rather than treating the sources of interpretation and the exegete's scholarly competence as separate concerns.

Critical Treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* in Ibn Kathir's Exegesis

Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise is also relevant to his treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*. In the introduction to *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, he discusses the classification of reports originating from Jewish and Christian traditions. Such reports can be divided into three broad categories: those supported by Islamic sources, those that contradict them, and those for which no reliable confirmation or contradiction is available. The first category may be accepted insofar as it is supported by authoritative evidence, the second must be rejected, and the third should neither be affirmed nor denied without sufficient evidence. This approach is consistent with the Prophetic report:

حَدَّثَنَا عَنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا حَرَجَ

Meaning: Relate reports from the Children of Israel, and there is no harm in doing so. (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 3461.)

This hadith does not establish that all *Isra'iliyyat* narratives should be accepted without scrutiny. Rather, their use in Quranic exegesis requires consideration of their relationship to authoritative Islamic sources and the extent to which their content can be substantiated. Ibn Kathir's treatment of these narratives illustrates the importance of distinguishing between information supported by reliable evidence and details whose authenticity remains uncertain.

One example appears in his interpretation of Quran Surah al-Baqarah verse 67–73, which recounts the story of the cow. The passage describes the command given to the Children of Israel to slaughter a cow and the subsequent disclosure of a murder through the application of that command. In his commentary, Ibn Kathir discusses reports that provide additional details about the murder, the identity of the victim, and the characteristics of the cow. However, such supplementary details must be distinguished from the Quranic account itself. Information derived from transmitted narratives does not automatically acquire the same authority as the Quranic text, particularly when its evidentiary basis cannot be established (Hajar, 2022; Huda et al., 2023).

A similar approach can be observed in Ibn Kathir's interpretation of Surah al-Kahf (18:22), which discusses differing claims about the number of the Companions of the Cave (*Ashab al-Kahf*):

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ

Meaning: They will say, 'They were three, the fourth of them being their dog,' and they will say, 'They were five, the sixth of them being their dog,' guessing at the unseen; and they will say, 'They were seven, and the eighth of them was their dog.'

In discussing this verse, Ibn Kathir presents different opinions concerning their number and considers the uncertainty surrounding reports associated with earlier scriptural traditions. The verse itself distinguishes between speculative claims and statements about the unseen that cannot be established through reliable knowledge. Accordingly, the precise number of the Companions of the Cave is not the principal focus of the passage. Instead, the interpretation directs attention to the limits of human knowledge and the importance of avoiding unsupported speculation (Ibn Kathir, 1998).

These examples demonstrate that Ibn Kathir's treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* involves more than the inclusion or exclusion of external narratives. It requires distinguishing between the Quranic account, reports transmitted by earlier authorities, and additional details whose reliability remains uncertain. His approach illustrates how hadith scholarship provides a critical framework for assessing transmitted narratives and determining their appropriate role in Quranic interpretation (Engkizar et al., 2026; Hafizah et al., 2025).

Theoretical Implications of Hadith Expertise for Exegetical Validity

The findings indicate that Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise contributes to the formation of his exegetical orientation through three interconnected dimensions. First, it supports the prioritization of transmitted evidence in explaining Quranic verses. Second, it provides a framework for considering the reliability and evidentiary value of reports used in interpretation. Third, it informs his treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*, enabling distinctions between reports supported by Islamic sources, those that contradict them, and those whose status remains uncertain.

These findings reinforce the significance of transmitted sources in *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, as discussed by al-Qattan (1998, 2000). They also correspond with Qudsy & Burhanuddin (2016) examination of the hadith employed by Ibn Kathir in interpreting Quran 4:3 and with al-Dhahabi's discussion of classical exegetical methodology. Nevertheless, the contribution of the present study lies in examining

these elements collectively as manifestations of the relationship between hadith competence and exegetical orientation.

The implications extend beyond identifying the sources cited in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. They suggest that the methodological assessment of classical Quranic exegesis should consider both the authority of the cited sources and the procedures through which an exegete selects, evaluates, and interprets transmitted material. In this respect, Ibn Kathir's work provides an important case for understanding how expertise in a particular Islamic discipline can shape the construction of an exegetical text.

Overall, the analysis addresses the research objective by demonstrating the close relationship between Ibn Kathir's hadith expertise and the methodological characteristics of his exegesis. This relationship is reflected in his prioritization of transmitted evidence, attention to the reliability of reports, use of hadith to clarify Quranic meanings, and critical treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*. These characteristics help explain the methodological orientation of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* and its continuing relevance to the study of Quranic exegesis and hadith.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Ibnu Katsir's* expertise in Hadith played a significant role in shaping his exegetical orientation. This influence is evident in his commitment to the *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* approach, which prioritizes the Quran, authentic Hadith, the reports of the Companions, and the opinions of the Successors as the principal sources of interpretation. His mastery of Hadith sciences is reflected not only in the extensive use of transmitted reports but also in his application of *sanad* and *matn* criticism, the principles of *jarb wa ta'dil*, and his selective treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* narratives. These findings indicate that the validity, authority, and methodological rigor of *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* are grounded in a systematic process of verifying and evaluating transmitted reports. Consequently, the exegetical orientation of *Ibnu Katsir* was shaped not merely by his reliance on narrational sources but also by his scholarly competence in Hadith as an essential epistemological foundation of interpretation.

The novelty of this article lies in its emphasis on Hadith expertise as a central factor in explaining the formation of *Ibnu Katsir's* exegetical orientation, rather than merely describing his interpretive methods or sources. By examining the mechanisms of report selection, *sanad* and *matn* criticism, the utilization of the reports of the Companions and Successors, and the treatment of *Isra'iliyyat* traditions, this study highlights the decisive role of Hadith scholarship in shaping the character and direction of Quranic interpretation. The implications of these findings reinforce the view that *tafsir* studies cannot be separated from Hadith studies, particularly in understanding the validity, authority, and epistemological foundations of classical Qur'anic exegesis. Furthermore, this study contributes to the advancement of *tafsir* and Hadith scholarship by providing a conceptual framework for future investigations into the relationship between a mufassir's scholarly expertise and the interpretive orientation of his exegetical works, both within the classical Islamic tradition and in contemporary Quranic studies.

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Author contribution

Mawarni: writing-original draft preparation, visualization and data curation, **Viona**

Dwi Wulandari: editing, **Nurhayati Masani:** analysis, **Ulfah Hawwa' binti Muslich Achmad:** conceptualization, **Rifadlin Amin:** methodology.

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