# Analysis of the Impact of Persuasion in the Prophets Stories in Holy Qur'an

By

**Luma Hasan Mohammed**
College of Mass Communication , University of Baghdad, Iraq
Email: lumahassan@comc.uobaghdad.edu.iq

## Abstract

Persuasive is an important notion that we face in our daily life, frequently contrasted it with influence, especially in the social environment. In ordinary life a persuasive, often has an extended meaning and used by people for different reasons. Thus, it plays an important role in changing the person's ideology, beliefs and attitudes. This study highlights the importance of persuasive, identifies the persuasive methods and skills and analyses selected prophets' stories that from the holly Qur'an. However, a purely qualitative aspect is also introduced. Finally, the theory of Sherif (1965) The Social Judgment Theory is adopted in the analysis of the data.

**Keywords:** persuasive, qualitative method, social judgment theory.

## 1.    Introduction

Persuasiveness is a commonly used notion in everyday life. It is a difficult concept to be present; because of the different aspects that it is used for. Its frequent use as a descriptor of the way of acquiring information in the mind and heart, which leads to changes believes, ideology and attitudes of the addressees. Thus, the speaker or writer who wants to effect the others must know how persuasive development; to create a suitable condition in which the addressees are exposed. There is a consensus among many scholars and researchers that persuasive communication requires a skilled person to create the desired effect. However, it is not clear how this is achieved through cognitive elements. These elements share in the impact, cooperated with the personality and knowledge of the speakers.

Additionally, there is an implicit belief that persuasive is difficult to learn; it is not an easy process. According to Barton and Tucker (2021), persuasive arguments are difficult because we are biased against change. Besides, there is a question to be raised about the messengers and prophets of the Majesty of Allah, whether they have been sent to persuade the people? If so, what are the elements that are supported by the absolute power of Allah?

Throughout the world, many people follow Islam. Its noble book is the Qur'an, which presents stories to encourage people to follow Islamic laws and to avoid following the devil's road. In this sense, the Majesty of Allah uses persuasive methods to persuade people, whether they are prophets or not. This study illustrates the persuasive and how it is presented in the prophets' stories in the Holy Qur'an.

*1.    Theoretical background*
*2.1    What is Persuasive*

In his exploration of persuasive strategies, Taillard (2000) argues that it is important to make a speech that is understandable and also to make the listeners communicate and believe what the speaker says. Therefore, the use of persuasive is to make an effect on the audiences' desire, beliefs and actions. Also, understanding the speaker's message involves pragmatic

issues while recognizing and believing it is a cognitive process, which involves the mind and every psychological aspect.

In Mongeau (2003)'s view, persuasive communication refers to any communication used to influence, reinforce, or change the responses of others. Thus, by using words, someone can make you do an action or believe in a particular thing. The way of making this kind of effect is by persuasive. It can be used in written form or spoken one, but whatever its type, persuasive is the same in its effect and goals. Moreover, in any religious writing the purpose is to peruse the addressee with facts or change the ideology. This leads to the importance of knowing the things that are related to persuasiveness and how to be influenced. So, knowing of the strategies helps the speaker to know which way can have an effect on the addressee. In this sense many important points make the addressee accept the speaker's point of view, or not. The following is a brief of these elements.

### 2.2 The Elements of Persuasive

An effective speech communicates the intended goals of the speaker by revealing a message to the audience. Accordingly, the speech which makes the person communicates after the recognizing of the idea is depended on the principles of psychological behaviour; which effect on the person's future act and leads to produce new decisions as well as to change the audiences' mind, thoughts and ideology (Ghazani, 2016). Therefore, many philosophers emphasize the importance of the mind in understanding a message, which leads to the vital need to recognize how to make these messages persuasive. Thus, the work of Aristotle by which he is presented three important critical elements: the ethos, logos and pathos is very useful in the shaping of new speech to be persuaded.

### Logos

Tracey (2019) proposes that logos refer to logic things. Hence, the most important thing in any speech is to make everything in this speech fit together. When we plan a talk or think of something, we are organized from general to specific.

### Ethos

According to Higgins and Walker (2012), ethos comes from Greek, which means character. That word is used in persuasive language which means that the reliable character of the speaker or his credibility can be convinced the addressee.

### Pathos

Ting (2018) illustrates that pathos is an emotional appeal, putting the addressee in a specific frame of mind using love, greed, security, guilt, humour, pity, and other elements.

Additionally, there are other important points in presenting any speech for the purpose of persuasive. Firstly, the explanation of the important points in order to make the audiences understand the reason behind the full situation whether in speaking or writing. Additionally, when providing facts to support the speaker's idea, the facts should be appropriate to the audience's level of education and information, as well as honest. Finally, the facts must be presented in a manner of sequences in a suitable way to be recognized easily by the addressee (Umar and Superman, 2022).

### 2.3 The Persuasive as a Psychological and Social Method

In Kolenda (2013), he describes the methods which must be used to influence human behaviour, and how they can aid in perusing humans through psychological effects. The author

divides the methods into steps. The first step is to mold people's perception. Identify attitudes that are congruent. Activate social pressure. Habituate the speaker's message. Optimize the speaker's message. Drive the people's momentum and sustain the people's compliance.

## 2.4 The Persuasive in Holy Qur'an

It is difficult to appeal to people's minds and hearts at the same time; it requires someone with enough information and the ability to bring about change. Persuasion is significant in this sense because it is necessary to change the habits, thoughts, ideologies or beliefs of others. The process is very complex because there is a close relationship between beliefs, the situation and behaviour (Hamdan, 2005). Moreover, every situation is the result of a particular belief. If we can change someone's belief in a certain direction, we can also change their situation and thus their behaviour.

May (2014) explains that Aristotle focuses on three elements of persuasion: the ethos of the speaker, the pathos of the presentation of the message, and the logos of the intended message. Persuasion can thus be both oral and written. In this sense, all persuasive elements are found in the Holy Qur'an, especially in the stories of the prophets. Furthermore, persuasive communication can be used to convey ideas, thoughts, feelings and attitudes, as well as to change behaviour.

The Holy Qur'an is the light of human life, for it contains verses (ayats) with a variety of themes collected to serve human life in every place and time. These verses contain many stories that tell of real situations in the lives of the prophets or messengers who preceded Prophet Mohammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), and some events related to our Prophet himself or other living beings. Thus, the stories tell people about various events and difficulties that the previous prophets faced. Some of them depict situations and conversations between Allah and the prophets or between prophets and disbelievers. So these situations show the process of conviction (Fathollahi and Kamely, 2012).

## 2.5 Prophets Stories in Holy Qur'an

Teaching and educating are not new; they have existed for centuries. Likewise, the teaching of the Qur'an begins with the creation of the creatures, when Allah taught his prophet Adam what is called in the Qur'an *the names*, that are considered the starting point for teaching. Then the teaching of people whether prophets or messengers, or not is continuous until the period of our prophet Mohammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) who is the end of the prophets (Saabin, 2021).

Additionally, it is pertinent to emphasize that the Holy Qur'an is a complete and complete divine book, which includes social, political, scientific and moral knowledge. Thus, the stories in the Holy Qur'an have unique qualities that make them differ from any other stories. Mahavi (2002) discusses many characteristics of the Holy Qur'an stories, such as having a message, being concise and dispersed, purposefully and realistic, repetition, characterization, fragmentation, and objective description.

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an contains many stories about prophets and many other believers or unbelievers, as well as creatures. The Majesty of Allah desires to give an example to be emulated by Muslims and unbelievers alike. These stories aim to educate people about Islam. According to the stories, the Majesty of Allah gives each period of time its own way of presenting the events to be appropriate to the people's minds (Abbasi and Moghaddam, 2000).

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 The Nature of The Study

This study examines the persuasion in the stories of the prophets in the Holy Qur'an. This is a very significant work of scholarship. It explains and analyzes the elements and strategies of persuasion in selected stories from the Holy Qur'an. In this qualitative study, the researcher uses analytical methods to collect and analyze the data. The researcher selects the data from non-numerical data. The qualitative method also makes the study reliable and objective in its approach to achieving objective results.

## 3.2 The Model of The Analysis

This study is a qualitative study. It adopts the theory of Muzafer Sherif (1965) which is the Social Judgment Theory, that can be considered as the most suitable theory in the analysis of persuasion.

### Social Judgment Theory (1965)

It is impossible to create a persuasive speech or piece of writing unless we have many elements that are brought together. These elements are related to the process of changing the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, ideologies, and other social values of the addressee. As well, acquiring any knowledge is not easy, as there is a great deal of information, and we need to acquire knowledge that is suitable to our values and needs.

In order to test the persuasive concept in any speech, it is helpful to use a theory that can serve all the purposes of an analysis. Therefore, Sherif's social judgment theory is the most appropriate theory for this study. Explains the reason behind making people get so agitated, and it also shows that the persuasive process is difficult. Sherif and others (1965) explained this theory as a suitable plan of action in a specific situation. Additionally, there are five main principles of this theory as follows:

1. We can evaluate the persuasive position by our own judgment.
2. The person who receives the message by means of persuasion places the message in his\ her categories of judgment.
3. The level of the addressees' ego – involvement effects on the size of the latitudes.
4. - Our judgment about persuasive information is influenced by our incoming information.
5. If the latitude of rejection is larger than exception, or if the discrepancies are large, it is difficult to make change.

## 3.3 Theoretical Framework of the data analysis adopted of the Social Judgment Theory by Sherif (1965).
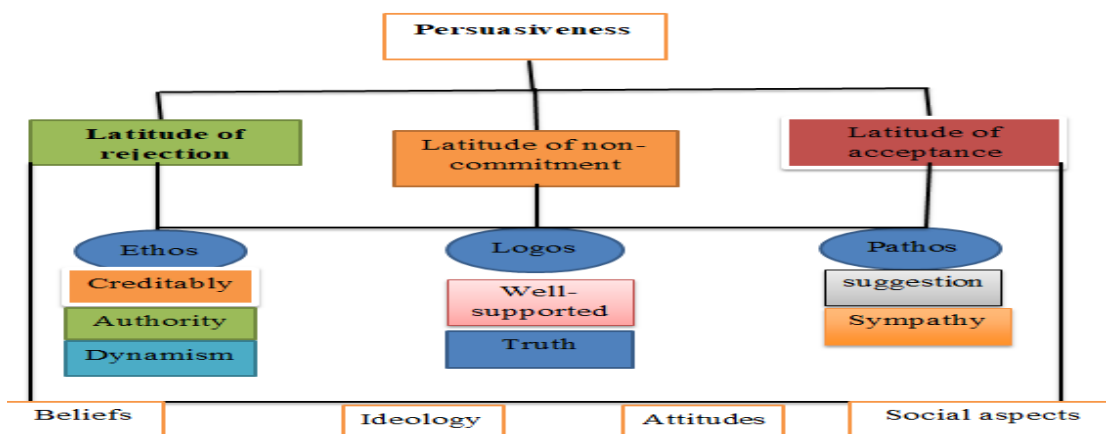
## 2.    Data Analysis

The data are three stories from the Holy Qur'an: the story of the prophet Ibrahim and his conversation with the Majesty of Allah, when the prophet asked Allah to support his belief in Allah and the ability of Allah to revive dead creatures to life again. The prophet Ibrahim believes in Allah, but he wants to develop his faith from certainty to sight. As a result, he asks Allah to show him how to bring the dead creature back to life.

The second story is about the prophet Muses when Allah chose him to be the messenger and sent him to Pharaoh for the first time. In this part of the text, the speaker is Allah, the addressee is the prophet. The purpose of the persuasion was to convince Muses that he was the messenger of Allah and to support him in facing Pharaoh and his followers of witchcraft and sorcery. Thus, Allah chooses the suitable things that people are interested in to make an effect on the ideology of the addressees.

Finally, the third story is about the prophet Muses. It is the sequence of events, when the prophet faces Pharaoh and his followers in order to persuade them to believe in Allah as the creator of the creatures. In each part of the analysis, references to the verses will be made to the whole stories.

### 1.    *The Characteristics of the Speaker*
Berger (2020) explains that it is not easy to change the behaviour of others. You cannot tell them what to do or what not to do, but you have to persuade them and make them convince themselves. In this study, the speakers who seek to persuade the addressees are either the Majesty of Allah or the Prophets, with specific characteristics of personality; honesty and faith that ensure that the listeners trust them. Thus, the personality of the speaker influences the convention of the addressees.

In the verse Al-Baqarah (260), especially in the conversation between the Majesty of Allah and Prophet Ibrahim, we can say that the speaker is the Majesty of Allah, the addressee is Prophet Ibrahim, and the purpose of persuasion is to support the Prophet's belief in Allah's ability to bring the dead back to life. Therefore, " (Allah) said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but (I ask) only that my heart may be satisfied."(Holy Qur'an, P.44). On the one hand, Allah has the ability to influence the addressees and tell stories with examples to convince them, confidence and brevity, all qualities of an effective speaker are in the noble majesty of Allah. Therefore, the speaker is trustworthy because the Prophet believes that Allah is the Right and the Creator of creatures. So, there is no doubt about His truth and His authority. This point serves the condition of ethos and makes the margin of acceptable size that serves belief.

Moreover, in the conversation between Allah and the Prophet Muses, the speaker is Allah. After speaking to Prophet Muses, Allah begins to ask him simple questions, the answers to which Allah already knows, for Allah is the Creator and knows everything. This is how Allah wants Prophet Muses to feel at peace, because Allah wants events that are difficult to be recognized as such, in Thaha verse (17)" And what is that in your right hand, O Moses? He said, " It is my staff; I lean upon it, and I bring down leaves for my sheep and I have therein other uses". (Holy Qur'an, P.313). While when Moses faces Pharaoh and his followers the speaker is the prophet, Moses. In the verse AL-A'raf (115). "They said, "O Moses, either you throw (your staff), or we will be the ones to throw (first)."He said, "Throw" (Holy Qur'an, P. 164 ). In this situation the speaker Muses has self- confidence with his ability supported by the power of Allah, and he knows that he can make such a miracle that shock the magicians.

Therefore, he poises under their pressure, and armed with bravery.

As explained by Stangor (2013), persuasion is also used to persuade people to donate to charity, to give blood voluntarily and to behave in a healthy way. Hence, Attitudes are one of the most significant concepts in social psychology. Thus, persuasive appeals that change our thoughts and feelings will also effectively change our behaviour. This consistency of attitude. In addition, attitude consistency also works in the other direction, such that when our behaviors change, our beliefs and thoughts about the attitude object may also change.

## 2. *The Characteristics of the Addressee*

Values and attitudes, decision-making characteristics, motivational traits, experience differences and cultural differences are simply knowing an audience's character requires more than trying to guess their sentiments. Thus, leadership and creativity can be stimulated by live audiences (Carrol and Flood, 2012). Therefore, in the story of the prophet Ibrahim, he trust with the leader Who is Allah, and follows his rules. So, it is easy to be persuade. When Allah asks his that *"Have you not believed?"* he said *"Yes".* Moreover, in the story of the prophet Musa, there is a conversation between him and Allah. Firstly, the prophet didn't know anything about the Majesty of Allah and His ability, but then he was convinced and felt comforted. Thus, Allah has a direct effect upon him. Allah asks Moses about the staff in his hand, the prophet replies with contentment. This creates a sense of trust between the speaker and the addressee. This is because the addressee is accepting of the speaker and his words. As the prophet states, it is my staff that I use for my own benefit and for the benefit of my sheep. Additionally, the speaker - Allah - is credible, and as a result, the prophet trusts Him and is receptive to receiving accurate information from Him. As a result, the use of pathos in asking the questions reflects the prophet's feeling of peace. This leads to the second step in the presentation of the unbelievable, when Allah instructs the prophet to throw his staff on the ground. Audience characteristics that affect persuasion include attention (Albarrac & Wyer, 2001; Festinger & Maccoby, 1964), intelligence, self-esteem (Rhodes & Wood, 1992), and age (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). To be persuaded, listeners must be attentive. People with lower intelligence are more easily persuaded than people with higher intelligence, while people with medium self-esteem are more easily persuaded than people with higher or lower self-esteem.

### *The Properties of the Message*

Ashman (2018) illustrates that a persuasive message is the central message that fascinates, informs, convinces or calls to action. Persuasive messages are often discussed in terms of reason and emotion. Every message contains elements of *ethos* the *credibility*, *pathos* the *passion and enthusiasm* and *logos the logic* and *reason*. It's worth mentioning that if your *persuasive* message focuses solely on reason, with emotionless *logical facts* and nothing but the facts, you may or may not appeal to your audience. People make their decisions not only with *reason*, but also with *emotion*. Even if they have researched all the relevant facts, the decision may still depend on *impulses, emotions and desires.* On the other hand, if your persuasive message focuses solely on emotions and has little or no substance, it may not be taken seriously. Finally, if your persuasive message does not seem credible, it may be rejected altogether. Therefore, the messages in the stories of prophets in Holy Qur'an are depends on scientific facts, logic and truth all of these elements are joined together cooperated with the emotional and creditable ways of presenting the message. Such as the in the verse of AL-Baqara when Allah said: *" Allah said, "Take four birds, draw them to you, and cut their bodies to pieces. Scatter them over the mountaintops, then call them back"* (Holy Qur'an, P. 44).

In order to support the mental belief of the prophet with the newly revealed

information, Allah asks the prophet to hold four types of birds in front of him. This is a helpful way to become familiar with them. Considering this well-supported argument, Allah wants to prove to his prophet that the birds returned alive after Allah asked for the prophet to mix them in different parts then put them into groups on each mountain. Furthermore, Allah shows the prophet, after placing each part on the mountains, the outcome of the situation in a dynamic manner. In this case, Allah - the speaker - is confident that He will affect the mind of the addressee, since the calling of the birds yields the re-entry of the birds. This *essay focuses* on the future thoughts, beliefs and attitudes of the prophet Ibrahim and his followers. This reflects the social values related to the belief in the Majesty of Allah.

Additionally, in the story of Muses when Allah told him to throw his staff, *" Allah said "Throw* it down, O Moses. "So he threw it down, and thereupon it was a snake, moving swiftly. Allah said, " Seize it and fear not; We will return it to its former condition". The confidence with the speaker makes Muses threw his staff, when it's directly changes into snake, Allah told the prophet not to be afraid which is the emotional process helps in the persuasion, that Allah will return it into staff again. In any persuasive situation the trust with the speaker is very important and Moses knows that there is a magic around him that made by magicians, but the prophets knows that he isn't one of them and this ability is from Allah, and it is not magic.

"As well, to strength the persuasive of the prophet with the ability of Allah, He asked him " And draw in your hand to your side; it will come out white without disease - another sign, That We may show you [some] of Our greater signs". In changing the colour of Moses hands into white skin, without any sickness is another well- supported situation adds strength to the prophet. Therefore, the second miracle is not as the first one; because it support the scientific and logical knowledge that no one can make it. As a result, the prophet is persuaded to face Pharaoh and his followers.

The clear change in the ideology, beliefs and attitudes of the prophet makes him able and ready to create new change in the social aspects of the society supporting by Allah, when He asked him to go to Pharaoh.

Finally, the third message is also for the story of the prophet Muses, but between him and the followers of Pharaoh. " and when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them, and they presented a great [feat of] magic" .The first situation when the followers of Pharaoh – the magicians- be faced with the prophet Moses, they want to perused the people of their ability in order to make the king Pharaoh pleased with them and to make people respect them and fell with fear. So, at the first time those magicians were in the position of strength; due to the believe of their capability, that it is not real but from their magic. The addressee in this situation is in two parts: Pharaoh, and the other people. Thus, as a magic man at that time people respect them and their situation is in acceptable. They have a huge authority among other people, with much more confidence the magicians threw fist, and by their magic on the audiences' eyes; people think that they create snakes.

"And We inspired to Moses, "Throw your staff," and at once it devoured what they were falsifying. So the truth was established, and abolished was what they were doing. And Pharaoh and his people were overcome right there and became debased".

## 3.    Results and Conclusion

In the study, the researcher analyzed the persuasive power of selected symbols found

in stories of the prophets in the Holy Qur'an. After analysing the data, the researcher concluded that convincing communication plays a significant role in changing the ideology, beliefs, and attitudes of the audience. This change has an effect on social values, because society is in a close relationship with many aspects of life. Additionally, the researcher observed that persuasive language is used in the Holy Qur'an to persuade the prophets in certain situations, which is advantageous in today's society. It's also used to persuade the unbelievers to follow the Qur'an rules.

In Moses' ability to speak to Allah and to make things just like magic which convinces the audiences. Just as the magicians when his staff changed into a big snake. Moses' unwavering confidence in Allah is what makes the audience think he is right. The staff of him is transformed into a gigantic snake that eats all the other snakes of the magicians. The phrase **"throw your staff,"** symbolizes the latitude of acceptance between Allah and the prophet, when the prophet threw the staff in full confidence that Allah would help him. The first reaction of the magicians was the latitude of rejection, but after the persuasions of the prophet to them they accepted the truth.

In the story of the prophet Ibrahim also. The researcher proved that the persuasive is very clear when Ibrahim accept the retuning of the dead alive, which is the ability of Allah. As a result, the researcher claims that the persuasive process very difficult. By which there is a change in the situation. So, the changes are in the latitude of accretion and the beliefs were totally changed as well as their social values.

# References

Abbasi Moghaddam, M. (2000). *The Quran samples and their teaching methods*. Qom: Boostan Ketab..

Albarrac, D. & Wyer, R. (2001). Elaborative and non-elaborative processing of a behavior-related communication. *SAG,* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167201276005.

Berger, J. (2020). How to persuade people to change their behavior. *Harvard Business Review*, *https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-persuade-people-to-change-their-behavior*.

Carroll, S. & Flood, C. (2012). The persuasive leader (lessons from the arts) \ audience characteristics. *https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119206972.ch6*.

Festinger, L., & Maccoby, N. (1964). On resistance to persuasive communications. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 68*(4), 359–366. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0049073.

Ghazani, A. (2016). Study of persuasive strategies in selected American presidential speeches. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*.

Kolenda, N. (2013). *Methods of persuasion: How to use psychology to influence human behaviour.* Kolenda Entertainment LLC.

Krosnick, J. A., & Alwin, D. F. (1989). Aging and susceptibility to attitude change. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57(3), 416–425. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.3.416.

Mahdavi, S. (2002). Stories and its teaching points in the Quran. *Qom: Boostan Ketab.*

Rhodes, N., & Wood, W. (1992). Self-esteem and intelligence affect influenceability: The mediating role of message reception. Psychological Bulletin, 111(1), 156–171. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.111.1.156.

Sherif, M., Sherif, K., & Nebergall, R. (1965). Attitude and attitude change: The social judgment-involvement approach. *Philadelphia: Saunders*.

Stangor, Ch. (2013). *Principles of social psychology*. Saylor Foundation.

Stiff, J. & Mongeau, P. (2003). *Persuasive communication*. The Guilford Press.

Taillard, M.(2000). Persuasive communication: The case of marketing. *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251482806_Persuasive_communication_The_case_of*.

Ting, S. (20118). Ethos, logos and pathos in university students' informal requests. *GEMA Journal of Language Studies*.

Tracy, B. (2019). Three elements of persuasion. *https://www.amanet.org/articles/three-elements-of-persuasion/*.

Umar, M. & Superman, B. (2022). *Environment based academic paragraph writing*. CV. Jakad Media Publishing.

Higgins, C. & Walker, R. (2012). Ethos, logos, pathos: Strategies of persuasion in social environmental reports. *Accounting Forum Journal*.