

CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON FAKE NEWS SYNDROME IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

By

Musa-Jeje Ibrahim Aladire,

Department of Religious Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State

E-mail: jejeibrahim4real@gmail.com; Phone: +2347032627005

and

Asma'u Muhammad Sa'ad

Department of Religious Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State

E-mail: asmaumammedsaad@gmail.com; Phone: +2348038039655

Abstract

The growing trend in sharing and acquiring news through social media platforms and the World Wide Web (W.W.W) has been seen to have same impact on individuals as well as societies as a result of spreading misinformation and disinformation. The facts and truths of the news have always become the imperative point in informing and updating the public. However, the fake news that emerged has disrupted the originality and authenticity of the news. It has become a longstanding issue when social media sites become a platform disseminating fake news through videos, photos, etc. They become more aggressive due to the development of Information Communication Technologies (I.C.T) and made the quality of the news posted become questionable. The methods employed in this paper are historical and analytical. Historically, the paper tends to unravel the historical events that are pertinent to the topic while analytical method is meant to analyze the findings from the historical events. It ends with a conclusion and recommendations. In writing this paper, the author relied on history books, journals and recent research works of some major scholars of Islam.

Keyword: *Fake, News, Syndrome and Islamic perspectives.*

Introduction

Deception can be described as an act of “intentionally causing another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is truly believed to be false by the person intentionally causing the false belief by bringing about evidence on the basis of which the other person has or continues to have that false belief”. (James E.M, 2003)

Deception has always existed in some form or the other; rumor, partisan news and manipulative content are

nothing new. However, in the present day, deception has a far greater range to influence and manipulate than it has ever had, with the ease of sharing information on social media platforms, the rapid accessibility of uploaded news on the World Wide Web (W.W.W), and the rapidly progressing fields of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). As a result, various new ethical issues have arisen.

The information we consume makes an impact on our perception of the truth, altering our views about politics, economics, relationships, needs and wants. In the present, the impact of misinformation, disinformation and artificially generated content has increased to the extent that we find ourselves questioning if our opinions or views are actually ours or the result of the influence of deceitful content viewed on the web. As a result, it is now necessary to create strategies for countering deceptive artifacts.

Experts distinguish between *misinformation* and *disinformation*. A piece of information is labelled as misinformation when it is false or misleading—e.g., sharing a fraudulent online article without verifying the authenticity of its source is misinformation. A piece of information is labeled disinformation, on the other hand, when it is deliberately falsified to obscure the truth—e.g., spreading false news with the intention to harm an individual's reputation is disinformation. In this paper, the researcher highlights fake news in journalism, impact of fake news in technology, information dissemination and sharing in Islam, responsible journalism and dissemination of news, Islamic approach to fake news, verification of report in Islam by using the science of hadith (*Ilm Al-Hadith*), traditional reliability verification of hadith, probability theory based on hadith verification, conclusion and recommendations.

Fake News in Journalism

Fake news is used as a term that denounces media and journalism, and simultaneously a term for various levels of wrong and fabricated information. Fake news can be categorized into intentional and unintentional; where unintentional can include sloppy reporting and propaganda respectively (Quandt et al. 2019). Claire Wardle's keynote speech (Jorgensen et al. 2018) proposes that the notion of fake news can be understood from the broad issue of "information disorder". To her, much information that is considered as fake news is not actually fabricated but is used out of context or being manipulated by journalists. Fake news, she added, ranges from satirical news, which is the least harmful, to fabricated content which is the most harmful to the audience. At the same time, the harm of fake news is not merely about the impact of fake news to the audience but can also be extended to "fake news label" which is the instrument to delegitimize news media. This includes obvious journalistic deception as described by (Lasorsa and Dai 2001). They identified seven types of fake news based on journalistic activities: full fabrication (total fabrication of a news event), fact fabrication (fabrication of particular elements of a story), dateline fabrication (where the reporter was not present at the scene they were identified as being), source fabrication (invention of a source), quote fabrication (falsifying a quote), plagiarism (duplication of another's work) and the use of undisclosed bylines (where work by others is not accurately attributed). This brings us

to some recent definitions of fake news that have been discussed by scholars that include “appropriates the look and feel of real news from how websites look to how articles are written and how photos include attributions.” (Tandoc et al. 2018), while (Finneman and Thomas 2018) define fake news as sharing some concepts with media hoaxing: awareness of falsehood, intent, and scale. Therefore, they conclude that “fake news is the intentional deception of a mass audience by non-media actors via a sensational communication that appears credible but is designed to manipulate and is not revealed to be false. In journalism, fake news is nothing new. The act of muckraking, for example, historically is the act of faking facts and information. However, today, in the digital era, fake news is much more rampant because it is so easy to produce fake news and easy to share. In this instance, social media is seen to be the main culprit of this phenomenon. Newman et al. (2017) in Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 demonstrates growth in social media for news such as WhatsApp. The popularity of social media does not only show in consumer use but also in journalism practice. Johnson and Kelling’s (2017) study on Facebook demonstrates how Facebook has changed the whole practice of professional journalism. For example, Facebook is seen as a new form of news organization when they can criticize traditional news organizations. In India, the literature suggests a slightly different phenomenon of scholarly research on fake news. Bhaskaran et al. (2017) for instance argue that while debates on

fake news in the West engaged with the non-elite audience and the culture of fact checking, in India, the focus is more on issues on hampering institutional forces and outdated journalism curricula in universities. This suggests for issues related to fake news must be tackled not only from journalistic perspective but also public policies (Tambini, 2017). A further question arises when discussing fake news in the western democracies. Humprecht (2018) compared online disinformation re-published by fact checkers from the US, the UK, Germany, and Austria. The findings demonstrate that there are significant differences between English speaking and German-speaking countries. For instance, partisan disinformation is mostly shared in the US and the UK, while in German speaking countries, fake news attacks political actors. This study concludes by arguing that online fake news is shaped by a specific national information environment and not a merely technological-related issue. At the same time, individuals also need to play their role as agents to reduce the impact of fake news. Tandoc et al. (2018) studied 2501 Singaporeans to understand how people authenticate information they receive from social media. The study shows that individuals rely on their own judgment and the source of the message to determine trust. However, if they still doubt the authenticity, they utilize external resources to authenticate the news they read. This further suggests the need for evidence-based journalism to be one of the crucial forms of journalism in the future. The power of such a form of journalism has been proven in the exposure of global scale wrongdoing

such as the Panama Papers. It is here we can see how digital technologies, although responsible for various uncertainties and misuse of journalism principles, also offers opportunities for evidence-based journalism to flourish (Carson and Farhall, 2018). This may further be associated with a larger issue in journalism which is trust. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 also shows that based on survey of over 70,000 online news consumers in 36 countries including the US and UK, there are variations in trust in over 36 countries in the study. Finland records the highest country that trusts the news (62 percent), while Greece and South Korea are the lowest (23 percent) (Newman et al., 2017). Teenagers, in a study conducted by (Marchi 2012), shows different attitude towards news and their trust to news. They talk with trusted adults to reconfirm news they read and rely on social networking to get latest news. Although this study reveals that teens value truth in reporting, they unfortunately are not convinced on trustworthiness of professional news. Traditional news is “boring” and “predictable” in terms of subject matters discussed. On the other hand, postings on social media are more opinioned and allow them to understand the wider meanings of political happenings and thus develop their own opinions on issues.

Impact of Fake News in Technology

The majority of scholars relate fake news as similar to disinformation campaigns, cyber propaganda, cognitive hacking, and information warfare, which all can conclude as the manipulation of public opinion in order to achieve certain goals (Gu,

Kropotov & Yarochkin, 2017). Later, Lazer, et al. (2017) stated that fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation, which can be defined as false or misleading information, and disinformation, which is defined as false information that is purposely spread to deceive people. No matter what, the increase of fake news is due to the connectivity and digital platforms that make it possible to share and spread information, where the barriers of time and distance do not exist anymore, while at the same time, ease the process of spreading fake news that affects our real life. Each of fake news issues proved the influence this technological manipulation can have on people’s daily lives either positively or negatively (Gu, Kropotov & Yarochkin, 2017).

Historically, the faking of news stories has been around for a long time and has evolved into something far more aggressive due to the development of information communication technologies that allow rapid transmission and communication (Greg, 2018). Unfortunately, every development of new technology, from the telegraph in the 19th century to contemporary social media algorithms, has initiated new possibilities of deception and fabrication (Gelfert, 2018). Lazer, et al. (2018) define “fake news” to be invented information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent. However, these fake-news channels lack news media’s editorial practices which are also affecting the process of ensuring the accuracy and credibility

of information. According to Posetti and Matthews (2018), the advancement of technology allowed the fake news channels to copy the real news websites and with less effort, they easily manipulate audio and video to create copied representations of any number of sources.

Fake news has also been used to refer to the manipulation of real images or videos to create a false narrative. Manipulation of images has become an increasingly common occurrence with the advent of digital photos, powerful image manipulation software, and knowledge of techniques. Effects may range from simple to complex, and simple adjustments can include increasing color saturation and removing minor elements (Tandoc Jr., Lim & Ling, 2018). The manual editing, publication, and amplification, which were handled by the experts previously, now can be done by anyone due to the technology of internet. The internet is providing a vast array of services where content can be published, from basic web servers, via hosting services, to social networks where content is connecting developers and consumers. Unlike traditional news processing, there is not a single point where the content of fake news could be supervised, controlled or quality-assured, because people are their own gatekeepers without depending on any professionals (Turk, 2018). Much of the evidence point a finger at social media sites, and online news distribution sites in general, as the main sources of rising concerns about fake news, false news, and the quality

of news (Martens et al. 2018). Platforms like Facebook are in a powerful position to influence the process of spreading fake news. Relatively, both real and fake news can circulate through social media because the technology suits fake and real news equally well (Turk, 2018). Despite the advantages provided by social media, the quality of news on social media is lower than traditional news organizations. However, because providing news online is much cheaper, faster, and easier to disseminate through social media, large volumes of fake news, such as those news articles with intentionally false information, are produced online for a variety of purposes, such as financial and political gain (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang & Liu, 2017). Mohale and Leung (2019) stated that the extreme spread of fake news can have serious negative impacts on society because it leads to an inequality of the news nature which is to tell the truth. Furthermore, propagandists and politicians always use fake news to convey their political messages and manipulate readers to accept certain biased and distorted facts, and these fake news have influence on how their readers react to their environments, and frequently generate misunderstandings, doubt and delay the ability to differentiate between what is right and what is not effective.

Other than that, the evolution of smart devices such as mobile phones and other handheld devices has enabled more diverse services to consumers, and with the advancement in mobile technologies, the services are also becoming smarter, ubiquitous, and

more pervasive. The current evolution towards 5G networks is not only benefiting the consumers but also the involved stakeholders. This technology will help various stakeholders to enhance their business models for bigger and better revenues (Ahmad et al., 2019). However, Yuval Harari 2018; cited in Bakowicz, (2019), combines fake news with advertising, claims that false information is often the foundation of business activities, such as Coca-Cola Company, which builds its brand on the combination of carbonated drink with youth, fitness, and joy, while in fact, drinking Coke contributes to the development of diabetes and heart disease. Nagi, (2018) mentioned that social media, messaging apps, and various email platforms provide a constant stream of news to the users either from close people or from total strangers. News stories on social media can now come in the form of links or shares, which is not stressing the original publisher and might allow the altering of the source.

Unfortunately, fake news also comes to users, whether they expect it or not. In the end, false news can be brought into the market because it is cheap to produce and distribute. If in a real environment, publishers of fake news would quickly be caught, lose their credibility, and might be unable to set up a sustainable business. However, publishers of online fake news which experience low production and zero distribution costs, combined with quite definite access to advertising revenue, make false news production economically more sustainable (Martens et al., 2018). Since the origin of the fake news is hard to trace, it

will be much more difficult to locate and take legal action to those behind such actions (Nagi, 2018). According to Jang et al. (2018), the process of searching for the root of fake news on social media is particularly challenging for numerous reasons. First, it is difficult to track down the original source of online information because it is often posted and published by authors whose identity is hidden or unknown. Second, unlike traditional publication outlets where the citation of sources is the norm, social media dialogues often neglect standard protocols for reporting who says what. Finally, as social media content is often transformed through the process of sharing and spreading, it is hard to determine which version of media content is closest to the original. No matter what, even if the quest for a system to prevent the creation of fake news contradict many democratic values like freedom of speech, however, it is possible to identify elements in the technology which can help to solve the issue of fake news. Figueira and Oliveira, (2017) believe that, currently, the necessary settings and resources to attack this problem are available, such as the technology in form of algorithms, the hardware to cope with big data, and access to big data for training the algorithms. Besides, various fact-checking organizations, such as Snopes and PolitiFact, have been initiated to expose or confirm news stories. While these organizations are based on “fact-checking journalism” that relies on human verification more desirable automated technological solutions have been proposed by technological companies like Fact Mata which aims

to provide fake news detection solutions to businesses and consumers and assign credibility scores to web content using artificial intelligence. Various other automated solutions in the form of plug-ins and applications such as BS-Detector and Crosscheck provide similar automated fact-checking services (Zubiaga et al. 2016). In conclusion, technology in general and social media in particular does not only introduce new challenges for dealing with fake news but also offers a potential for mitigating it more effectively (Lazer et al., 2017). Vasu et al. (2018) stressed that lesson from the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) experience, where critical thinking skills useful in steering youth away from radicalization, can also be applied to solve fake news issues. In addition, here are existing media literacy programs that can be implemented such as the Safer Internet Day, which is promoting responsible use of digital technology, which has been organized in Singapore by the Media Literacy Council (MLC). Besides that, as suggested by Bakir and McStay, (2018), policymakers and authorities also need to take immediate steps to consult with international associations representing advertising, large advertisers, ad networks, and programmatic firms, to practice healthier advertising media environment. If all these related advertising companies choose not to support and advertise in fake news channels, this might result in the failure of the channels to survive independently.

Information Dissemination and Sharing in Islam

The Islamic ethics of disseminating information requires information literacy, which is a set of skills needed to discover, evaluate, interpret, and use information properly and truthfully. With reference to these skills, information dissemination can be broken down into three steps; acquiring, evaluating and sharing information. The first phase of acquiring information dictates that a Muslim must verify the credibility of the sources. Reporters and news transmitters need to thoroughly check the reliability of the source of news before they accept or deny it. A guideline to verify news source includes knowing the author of the article and the sponsor of the medium, determining if there is an agenda to the content, what kind of page it is and, for online source, if the URL is relevant to the content, along with ensuring the information is complete, accurate and current. With the growth of media sources, finding the credibility of every source can be a challenge, hence, if authentication is not possible, then it is advisable to suspend the judgment. The Qur'an says:

Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Surely the hearing, the sight, the heart - each of these shall be called to account. (Q17:36).

Muslims should take inspiration from the *ḥadīth* scholars who are very cautious about accepting narrations from unknown individuals or individuals whose identity and character were doubtful. In addition to this, the Prophet (pbuh) has also commented:

Indeed among the excellence of a person's Islam is that he leaves what does not concern him (Sunnah Al Tirmidhi).

Following these teachings, a Muslim is advised to ignore the news that does not affect him in this world or in the Hereafter. These include the celebrity gossips, scandals and other news that may seem interesting but is of no benefit.

The second phase is evaluating the information where Islam guides Muslims to seek clarification. Upon accessing a piece of information, an individual should investigate it before acting upon it. This command is given in the Qur'an in the following verse:

O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful. (Q49:6).

Furthermore, when judging a piece of news, it is advised to do so without any prejudice.

After the initial two phases of acquiring and assessing the information, the third phase is to ensure that the sharing of news must be done keeping in mind the Islamic ethics. It is an Islamic belief that human intellect, wisdom, understanding and reason are a trust (*Amānah*) of Allah and that these should not be used to harm another human soul. Hence, before spreading any piece of information, Muslims have a responsibility to consider the

impact it can have on an individual. The noble Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said,

A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one from whom the people's lives and wealth are safe and He who believes in Allah and the Last Day must either speak good or remain silent (Sahih Muslim).

Muslims, therefore, need to be cautious when clicking on the share button or forwarding a message that can be insulting, hurtful or offensive to others. The cautiousness also applies against spreading misinformation in the form of spam messages, chain mails, conspiracy theories, or fake news articles, as these can be damaging to the society. By controlling the virility of the fake news, its impact and acceptability can be reduced.

Responsible Journalism and Dissemination of News

Allah (SWT) stipulates in the Qur'an:

Say, Bring your proof, if you are truthful. (Q 2:111).

In Islam, there is a lot of emphasis on verification of truth, authenticity of the source and proper management of the knowledge. This is evident from the efforts that Muslim scholars have put over the centuries to preserve and authenticate the sayings of the Prophet (PBHU). The Qur'an commands Muslims to verify the source of the information they receive before they believe it to be true. Allah (SWT) Says:

O you who have believed, if there comes to you a

disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful. (Q49:6).

This command also applies to the frequently shared pieces of information on Social Media, News Channels and Newspapers. A Muslim is not supposed to act on an unexamined source, and the information should be authenticated if there are reasonable doubts about the source.

Muchtar et al. (date) report about journalistic roles in twelve Muslim majority countries while describing the normative principles of the Islamic worldview about news reporting and journalism based on four principles: truth-telling (*hāqq*); pedagogy and communication (*tablīgh*); seeking the best for the public interest (*maṣlahah*); and moderation (*wasāṭiyyah*).

In another work, Pintak (date) identified the additional concepts of justice (*ʿadl*), independence and sincerity (*Hurriyah wal Ikhlas*), balance (*i'tidāl*), and prevention of evil attitude and public accounting (*hisbah*) as being critical to Islamic journalism.

Having considered the impact unauthentic information can have on political and social level, the responsibility falls upon Muslims to take an action. The Qur'ān says:

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to (all that is) good, enjoining what is right

and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful. (Q3:109).

The command at the beginning of the verse “let there be arising from you a nation” implies a collective obligation on the community. A relevant ḥadīth also directs Muslims to take an action against evil: The Prophet (PBUH) said:

Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart—and that is the weakest of Faith (Sunnan an Nasa'i).

A suggested approach is to establish a center for Islamic journalism as a platform to provide media services that strictly adhere to Islamic framework of dissemination of news and encourage positive interaction between practitioners and scholars. The obligation of enjoining the right and forbidding wrong includes all institutions of social communication, including press, radio, television and cinema and can be extended to social media platforms.

Furthermore, there is also need for training of Muslim journalists where individuals are taught editorial tasks, circulation, distribution, advertisement and effective use of new communication technologies within the framework provided by Islam.

Social media posts or website articles receive more attention when they are accompanied by a huge number of likes, shares or comments and are more likely to spread further. Islam

prohibits Muslims from sharing unverified information. The Qur'an says:

When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous. (Q24:15).

The Prophet (pbuh) has also stressed upon avoiding the spreading of false news. He has said

The person who goes about with calumnies will never enter Paradise (Sahih Bukhari and Muslim).

Islamic Approach to Fake News

The objectives of the Islamic law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*), as Imam Ghazali puts it, is to encourage the individual, societal and communal well-being through safe guarding one's religion, life, intellect, dignity and property. If these objectives are not met, chaos and disorder will prevail. The acts that fulfill these objectives are desirable, whereas the acts that do not fulfill these objectives, their removal is desirable. In this section, we evaluate the ethical issues of deceptive content with reference to each of these objectives:

1. **Religion:** The protection of religion signifies preserving the faith from all forms of violence and destruction. Dissemination and consumption of the content that portrays a negative image of Islam (like the Notre Dame Fire incident – Section II-A) and misrepresents the Islamic teachings affects an individual's religious beliefs and misleads and

deceives them. (Zohora, Azmin et al, 2019)

2. **Life:** The intent to protect life with safety and security is another objective of the Islamic law. The fake news that motivates individuals to cause harm to the lives of others cannot be considered permissible in Islam. In Section II-A (*Problems of Disinformation Misinformation*), we discussed the violent incident (Mob lynching in India) which provided an evidence of dissemination of fake news hurting human life. (Zohora, Azmin et al, 2019).
3. **Intellect:** Considering the 'illusionary truth' effect discussed in Section II-A (*Problems of Disinformation Misinformation*), the false information alters one's beliefs and affects their perception of truth. The fake content that 'appears' too authentic to be considered false, makes one skeptical about believing in truth. In addition to this, the articles that share partisan and biased news are aimed to manipulate and misinform people, along with the filter bubbles that restrict acquiring information on the web that does not align with one's views (Zohora, Azmin et al, 2019).
4. **Dignity:** The deep-fake videos have the potential of tarnishing and dishonoring someone's reputation by producing false content showing their involvement in dishonorable and illegal acts. The attempt to defame an individual either through machine-generated content or through rumors or lies in form of web

articles attacks the dignity of an individual. (Zohora, Azmin et al, 2019).

5. **Wealth and Property:** In the section II-C (Weapons of Mass Deception), the discussion about deep learning technology showed how an individual's personal data; their body and voice, are manipulated to produce fake content. This goes against the intent of protecting one's property. Additionally, an immense amount of wealth is going into the research for such questionable technologies which corrupts the objective of wealth generation and spending of wealth for social benefit (Zohora, Azmin et al, 2019).

In order to promote individual and collective good, and prevent disorder in the world, one should adhere to the acts that are intended to preserve the religion, life, intellect, dignity and property. Dissemination of false media and information is a threat to information accuracy, individual privacy and integrity and societal security, and thus, by consulting the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, we can conclude that its elimination is desirable.

Verification of Reports in Islam by Using the Science of Hadith (*Ilm Al-hadith*)

Hadīths, oral traditions that report the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad is an important tool in the Islamic tradition for understanding the Qur'ān and for various matters related to Islamic jurisprudence. A *ḥadīth* contains two parts: (1) the text (*Al-Matn*), which refers to the actual text

of the narrative; and (2) the chain of narrators (*Isnād*), which refers to the chronological list of the narrators through which the *ḥadīth* is reported.

During the lifetime of the noble Prophet (PBUH), the companions meticulously conveyed what they directly heard from him. However, the fabrication of *ḥadīth*, intentionally and unintentionally, began around 40 A.H., following the assassination of the third caliph, Ḥazrat 'Uthmān (May Allah be pleased with him), due to political unrest after his demise. These fake *ḥadīths* resulted from various factors such as the addition of new immigrants from the formerly Persian and Roman empires; storytellers inventing their own *ḥadīths*; and mistakes in copying and transmission. *Ḥadīth* scholars realized the imminent threat that the fabrication of *ḥadīth* posed for the future generations and developed a rigorous science of *ḥadīth* (*ilm al-ḥadīth*) to protect the authenticity of the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) and protect the Muslims from falsehood (Ahmad J. 2018) by verifying each *ḥadīth* based on the narrator (*Rawi*), the text of the *ḥadīth* (*Matn*), and the chain of narrators (*Sanad*, plural *Isnād*). The *Isnād* system is the great contribution of *ḥadīth* scholars through which the authenticity of *ḥadīths* is ascertained.

Ḥadīth scholars used a rigorous science of criticism and praise (*Ilm al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*) to scrutinize each link of the chain of narrators (i.e., each person in the chain of reporters) for grading the overall authenticity of the *ḥadīth*. The science was developed to maintain the purity and sanctity of Islam and protect the

religion from the craftiness of the liars (Imaad A.J, 2019). The objective of the science of *'Ilm Al-Jarh wa Al-Ta'dil* is to assess the status and trustworthiness of the narrator in order to determine the authenticity of a *hadith* (Muhammed A.M, 2015). The term *Al-Jarh* is used for accusation and denunciation, whereas the term *Al-Ta'dil* means to establish, enforce or say personal good; with reference to validation of *hadiths*, *Al-Jarh* focuses on rejecting an individual as a reliable narrator, while *Al-Ta'dil* complements the narrator saying they are righteous and have perfect memorization.

Traditional Reliability Verification of Hadith

1. **Reliability of Narrators:** The study of the transmitters of *hadith* (*'Ilm ul Rijal al-hadith*) is another integral discipline in the Sciences of *Hadith* which focuses on studying the biographies of each narrator (*Rawi*) in an *Isnād* to determine the reliability of the narrator, and hence, the validity of the *hadith* (Mansour L. 2019). A narrator is accepted if he is a Muslim, matured, possessing sound mind, free from things that lead to open sinfulness, and is not known for having poor memory, negligence, or making mistakes. Moreover, for a *hadith* to be valid, the biographical account of the narrator should indicate that he is a practicing Muslim and he is not involved in the major forbidden acts. If a narrator was a known liar, then he is not classified as a liar (*Kadh-dhab*) and the *hadiths* transmitted by him are classified as weak (*Da'if*).

2. **Authenticity of Narrations:** The scholars of *hadith* have carefully studied the *Matn* and *Isnād* of the prophetic traditions to ensure their authenticity. To be considered as an authentic (*Ṣahīḥ*) *hadith*, the chain of transmitters needs to be continuous and a *hadith* is rejected if the chain is broken due to the possibility of untruthfulness. As for a narration's text (*Al Matn*), comparisons are made between the *hadith* of different students of a scholar, between the statements of a single scholar at different times, between the oral and written documents, and between the *hadith* and a related verse of the Qur'ān.

In his book *Naqd Al-Manqūl*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah has presented some guidelines for identifying a false narration. A *hadith* is probably fabricated if it clearly contradicts (1) a verse of the Quran; (2) widely established Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) or authenticated *hadiths*; (3) authenticated historical facts; or the (4) basics of the Islamic laws (*Sharī'a*). Narrations having illogical or severe, aggravated or grievous connotations are also considered false, and hence, unacceptable, along with the *hadiths* that do not reflect the words of the Prophet (pbuh). The *Isnād* criticism has priority over *Matn* criticism; when the *Isnād* of a *hadith* is rejected, evaluation of the *Matn* is not required however, and the reliability of the *Isnād* does not guarantee the authenticity of the narration. (Mansour L. 2019).

3. **Validation through the Act of Narrating:** The method of narrating a *hadith* involves either directly hearing

it from the teacher or hearing it from another transmitter. For both methods, a narration is considered weak (*Da'if*) due to the uncertainty caused by concealing the identity of the teacher in the *Isnād*. A person reporting from the teacher whom they have not heard from or seen, using well-known name or nickname while concealing the name of the teacher and omitting the name of a weak authority from the *Isnād* fall into the category of weak and concealed (*Mudallas*) narrations (Mansour L. 2019).

Probability Theory Based on Hadith Verification

Leveraging insights from the Science of Hadith for fake news: Taking heed from the attempts of Islamic scholars to develop disciplines to differentiate between authentic and fake reports, similar efforts can be made to address the problems that have arisen due to fake news and misinformation on the web. The entire process of dissemination of news can be analyzed by assessing the reliability of each entity individually. The narrators' criticism can be applied to the organizations and websites that share information, principles of authenticating narrations are applicable to the information being shared and the author of the content and the act of narrating can be applied to the medium used to convey the information. With no regulations imposed on the content being shared on web, an attempt to critically evaluate the reliability of websites and organization and maintain a directory of reliable and unreliable sources, while rejecting all content shared through the unreliable sources can

reduce the frequency of fake news being transmitted.

Probabilistic *ḥadīth* transmitter criticism uses probability theory to compute the reliability of pieces of information transmitted by *ḥadīth* transmitters by combining all existing transmission chains present in *ḥadīth* collections using two processes that we term vertical and horizontal combination. Each transmitter in a chain is assigned a baseline reliability score of 0.6, with 1 representing total reliability and no reliability, respectively. Due to the extreme vetting process that *ḥadīth* transmitters have undergone by *ḥadīth* critics, it is assumed that each transmitter is more likely than not to transmit the piece of information truthfully and accurately. Transmitters who are known to have had unreliable memories (*Muḡtalit*, *Sāyyi āl-ḥifẓ*), or whose truthfulness has been put into question by *ḥadīth* critics (*Majrūh*, *Ghayr Ḥujja*, *Da'if*, *Laysa bi-shay'*, *Matrūk*) are assigned lower reliability scores (Ikram H, 2019).

A source of inconsistency and moral hazard in the judgment of *ḥadīth* transmitters is the sectarian leaning of the *ḥadīth* critics. Certain *ḥadīth* critics tended to judge transmitters more harshly than others and would even consider them entirely unreliable due to engaging in unorthodox beliefs and practices—with orthodoxy defined by the culture of the *ḥadīth* scholars. The important early *ḥadīth* collector Maalik b. Anas (d. 795 CE) urged his students to disregard *ḥadīths* transmitted by a proselytizer of “religious innovation” (Scott 2019). Since it was left to each scholar's own

judgment, and the judgment of his colleagues, to determine orthodoxy, this created the possibility of *ḥadīth* critics judging a transmitter weak despite their widely accepted truthfulness and ability to transmit information accurately. Additionally, *ḥadīth* critics had an aversion to the transmission of information through writing, despite the obvious fact of written information being better at preserving integrity than human memory. This led to *ḥadīth* critics considering certain transmitters unreliable (*da'īf*) merely for relying on written *ḥadīth* materials (Gregor S. 2016). Another source of inconsistency in the *ḥadīth* literature is the fact that *ḥadīth* critics used to judge legal *ḥadīths* in a stricter manner than non-legal *ḥadīths*, due to their belief that legal *ḥadīths* would influence the way Muslims practice Islam.

These observations point to the fact that human beliefs, biases, and membership in social groups strongly influence their judgment of the reliability of information transmitters, representing a source of error that causes empirically correct information to be erroneously judged unreliable, or empirically doubtful information to be judged reliable. Probabilistic *ḥadīth* criticism represents a step forward in removing some of these biases by providing a consistent set of criteria to be used on all *ḥadīths*, and by being collection-agnostic, avoiding the common bias of considering *ḥadīths* found in the more famous collections to be of higher quality without due regard for the *ḥadīth's* transmitters. The problem of judging the reliability of transmitters remains and requires

further empiricalization and standardization, and probabilistic *ḥadīth* criticism can contribute to this area of research by providing a consistently- judged corpus of *ḥadīth*, comprising all major *ḥadīth* collections, to use as test-cases for judging the reliability of transmitters.

Lessons from Hadith Criticism

Falling victim to fake news is more a symptom of “lazy” thinking than of biased computation (Ordon P. 2019). Fact-checking systems can therefore serve an essential role by enabling information consumers to delegate the task of information verification to systems designed to fight fake news. Lessons learned from our research in *ḥadīth* criticism can contribute to the issue of designing systems to counter fake news. Consistently applied criteria for judging the reliability of transmitters of information are essential for preventing the introduction of human error and bias into the verification process. Humans employ various techniques to discount information that clashes with their beliefs, such as biased assimilation, relative weighting of evidence, and minimization of impact (Rohini A. 2000). Any system designed to fight the spread of false and inaccurate information can fall victim to the human biases of its designers and operators. It is therefore necessary to design and operate such systems with the express goal of minimizing the impact of these factors through consistent and transparent criteria and procedures. Besides the benefit of increasing the system’s reliability, such consistency and transparency can enhance the reputation of the system. Such reputation can be essential in

whether users will trust the judgments issued by it.

Another aspect of *ḥadīth* criticism that can be beneficial to fighting fake news is the comparative process by which the reliability of little-known transmitters is determined. Such transmitters are judged by the concordance of their transmitted information with information available through other transmitters. Persons known to mostly transmit narrations containing strange and unusual assertions (*Al-manākir*) are considered less reputable, while those whose narrations are largely in accord with the rest of the *ḥadīth* literature are considered more trustworthy. A person whose career largely involves accurately transmitting information corroborated by other transmitters can be trusted even in those few cases where the information they transmit is rare and uncorroborated, with their personal reputation serving as confirmatory evidence enhancing the status of their narration.

Fake news-fighting systems, in the absence of knowledge about the reputation of a given information source can monitor the track record of the source to determine the rate at which it publishes unusual and uncorroborated assertions. Even in the complete absence of reputation information, an automated system can judge the reliability of an information source, such as a little-known news website, by determining the concordance rate of the website's contents with information found in reputable sources. A largely unknown news source can be judged trustworthy when it is discovered that

an overwhelming majority of the news available at the source are corroborated by other sources. An important benefit of such a system is its ability to judge a news piece to be trustworthy despite (a) the lack of external knowledge about the reputation of the source, and (b) the lack of corroborating news pieces from other sources. In such a case the automatically computed concordance rate of previously published news pieces at the source with pieces found at other, well-known sources serves as evidence in enhancing the probability of the accuracy of the novel and uncorroborated news piece coming from a little-known source. Conversely, news sources suffering from a low concordance rate can be downgraded in the absence of further information about the source's trustworthiness and reliability.

Probabilistic *ḥadīth* criticism can also serve as an educational tool for teaching important aspects of critical thinking when it comes to judging the reliability of information; the inherently probabilistic nature of the reliability of transmitted information, the influence of human error on the judgment of the reliability of information, and the importance of applying explicit and consistent criteria and procedures when judging information.

Recommendations

- Muslims need to realize the negative societal, communal, and political impact of fake news and misinformation and understand the Islamic stance on spreading falsehood to be able to actively participate in initiatives that are

working towards fighting the spread of false content.

- In order to ensure false information is not consumed, individuals should practice assessing the credibility of the source, whether social media or world wide web, when acquiring information.
- Taking insights from the Muslim scholars of the past, Muslims should critically and unbiasedly evaluate a piece of information. One should not shy away from demanding proof or investigating further, especially when it comes to synthetic content, lest we become the victims of manipulation.
- Refrain from spreading a piece of news whose validity is doubtful and ensure that content is shared with sufficient information about its author and publisher. Journalism organizations should establish platforms that adhere to the Islamic framework of dissemination of news and train journalists to ensure responsible journalism is practiced.
- Seeking guidelines from the verification of the *ḥadīth* through probability theory, individuals can apply similar strategies to combat fake news spread through the world wide web (W.W.W).

Conclusion

Fake news can be summarized as a form of misinformation whether it is done intentionally or unintentionally. With its long history in journalism, we can say today that fake news is much more easily produced and disseminated with the help of

technology. Various manipulations may be done by amateurs to manipulate information in many forms. Deception and fabrication become easier and faster to produce, increasing the possibility of more fake news produced in the future. In terms of dissemination, social media can be one of the most popular culprits for this, making information sharing free and easy, regardless of whether it is genuine or fake. In Islam, the production and dissemination of fake news suggests arrogance in one's heart. Here, a genuine act seems to damage the doer's pride and ego. It is here that the concept of *wasatiyyah* is pertinent to be practiced by the Muslims, so that our acts are guided by moderate and sensible decisions.

Works Cited

1. James Edwin Mahon, (Mar 2003) 'Kant on lies, candor and reticence,' *Kantian Review*, 7:101–133, Accessed: 07 July 2019
2. Junaid Qadir and Muhammad Suleman, (2018) 'Teaching ethics, (Islamic) values and technology: Musings on course design and experience,' 7th International Conference on Computer and Communication Engineering (ICCCE): 486–491.
3. Quandt, T., Frischlich, L., Boberg, S., & Schatto Eckrodt, T. (2019). *Fake News. The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, 1–6. Doi: 10.1002/9781118841570. iejs0128
4. Jorgensen, K.W., Williams, A., & Hintz, A. (2018). *Changing relationships between news organizations and audiences. Digital Journalism*, 6(8), 945-950.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1505439>
5. Lasorsa D. L. & Dai. J. (2001). *Newsroom's Normal Accident? An Exploratory Study of 10 Cases of Journalistic Deception*. *Journalism Practice*, 1 (2), 159-174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780701275473>
 6. Tandoc, E.C., Lim, Z.W., & Ling. R. (2018). *Defining "Fake News": A Typology of Scholarly Definitions*. *Digital Journalism*, 6 (2), 137- 153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1360143>
 7. Newman, N., Fletcher. R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D.A.L, & Nielsen, R. K. (2017). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017*. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf
 8. Johnson, B. G., & Kelling, K. (2017). *Placing Facebook: "Trending", "Napalm Girl", "Fake News" and journalistic boundary work*. *Journalism Practice*, 12(7), 817-833. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1349546>
 9. Bhaskaran et al. (2017). *Contextualizing Fake News in Post-truth Era: Journalism Education in India*. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 27 (1), 41-50. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1326365X17702277>
 10. Tambini, D. (2017). *Fake News: Public Policy Responses*. *Media Policy Brief 20*. London: *Media Policy Project, London School of Economics and Political Science*.
 11. Humprecht, E. (2018). *Where 'fake news' flourishes: a comparison across four Western democracies*. *Journal of Information, Communication and Society*, 22 (13),1973-1988. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1474241>
 12. Carson, A. & Farhall. K. (2018). *Understanding Collaborative Investigative Journalism in "Post-Truth" Age*. *Journalism Studies*, 19 (13),1899-1911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1494515>
 13. Lazer, D., Baum, M., Grinberg, N., Friedland, L., Joseph, K., Hobbs, W. & Mattsson, C. (May 2,2017). *Combating fake news: An agenda for research and action*. <https://shorensteincenter.org/combating-fakenews-agenda-for-research>
 14. Gu, L., Kropotov, V. & Yarochkin, F. (2017). *The fake news machine: How propagandists abuse the internet and manipulate the public*. Retrieved January 25, 2019 from https://documents.trendmicro.com/assets/white_papers/wp-fake-newsmachine-how-propagandists-abuse-theinternet. Pdf
 15. Greg, S. (2018). *Fake News: As the Problem or a Symptom of a Deeper Problem?* <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1181745/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
 16. Gelfert, A. (2018). *Fake news: a definition*. *Informal Logic*, 38(1), 84–117. doi: 10.22329/il.v38i1.5068
 17. Posetti, J., & Matthews, A. (July 23, 2018). *A short guide to the history of 'fake news' and disinformation: A learning module for journalists and journalism educators*. International Center for

- Journalists. <https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2018-S>
18. Turk, Z. (2018). *Technology as enabler of fake news and a potential tool to combat it*. Brussels: European Union. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2018/619008/IPOL_IDA\(2018\)619008_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2018/619008/IPOL_IDA(2018)619008_EN.pdf)
19. Turk, Z. (2018). *Technology as enabler of fake news and a potential tool to combat it*. Brussels: European Union.....
20. Shu, K., Sliva, A., Wang, S., Tang, J. & Liu, H. (2017, September 3). *Fake news detection on social media: A data mining perspective*. ACM SIGKDD Explorations Newsletter. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1708.01967>
21. Mohale, P., & Leung, W. S. (2019). *Fake news detection using ensemble machine learning*. Reading: Academic Conferences International Limited. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2261026696?accountid=33993>
22. Bakowicz, K. (2019). Introduction to the definition and classification of the fake news. *Studia Medioznawcze*, 20(3), 280-289.
23. Nagi, Kuldeep, *New Social Media and Impact of Fake News on Society (June 6, 2018)*. ICSSM Proceedings, July 2018, Chaing Mai, Thailand, pp. 77-96. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3258350>
24. Martens, B., Aguiar, L., Ggmez, E. & Mueller-Langer, F. (2018). *The Digital Transformation of News Media and the Rise of Disinformation and Fake News*. The European Commission's science and knowledge service <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientificand-technical-research-reports/digital-transformation-news-media-and-risedisinformation-and-fake-news>
25. Nagi, Kuldeep, *New Social Media and Impact of Fake News on Society (June 6, 2018)*. ICSSM Proceedings, July 2018, Chaing Mai, Thailand, pp. 77-96. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3258350>
26. Jang, S.M., Geng, T., Queenie Li, J.Y., Xia, R., Huang, C.T., Kim, H. & Tang, J. (2018). *A computational approach for examining the roots and spreading patterns of fake news: Evolution tree analysis*. Computers and Human Behavior, 84, 103-113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.032>
27. *Ibid*
28. Zubiaga, A., Liakata, M., Procter, R., Hoi, G. W. S., & Tolmie, P. (2016). *Analysing How People Orient to and Spread Rumours in Social Media by Looking at Conversational Threads*. Plos One, 11(3). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0150989
29. Lazer, D., Baum, M., Grinberg, N., Friedland, L., Joseph, K., Hobbs, W. & Mattsson, C. (May 2, 2017). *Combating fake news: An agenda for research and action*.....
30. Vasu, N., Ang, B., Teo, T.A., Jayakumar, S., Raizal, M. & Ahuja, J. (2018). *Fake news: National security in the post-truth era*. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PR180313_Fake-News_WEB.pdf
31. Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2018). *Fake news and the economy of*

- emotions: problems, causes, solutions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 154-175, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1345645>
32. Justin Parrott, (2018). 'Finding truth in the age of misinformation: Information literacy in Islam,' Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research
 33. Benham Mintz, (2012). *Web of Deceit: Misinformation and Manipulation in the Age of Social Media*. Cyberage Books,
 34. Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 10, Hadith 2317.
 35. Sunan an-Nasa'i, Vol. 6, Book 47, Hadith 4998.
 36. Sahih Muslim, Book 18, Hadith 1511.
 37. Nurhaya Muchtar et al., (2017): 'Journalism and the Islamic worldview: Journalistic roles in Muslim-majority countries,' *Journalism studies*, 18(5) 555–575.
 38. Lawrence Pintak, (2014): 'Islam, identity and professional values: A study of journalists in three Muslim-majority regions,' *Journalism*, 15(4) 482–503.
 39. Khalid Baig, 'The News Protocol - Towards an Islamic Framework', *IlmGate: A Digital Archive of Islamic Knowledge*. Available at: <http://www.ilmgate.org/the-news-protocol-towards-an-islamic-framework/>. (Accessed: 01 July 2019).
 40. Sunan an-Nasa'i, Vol. 6, Book 47, Hadith 5011
 41. Mohammed Isah Shehu, Muhammad Fuad Bin Othman and Nazariah Binti Osman, 'The social media and Islam,' *Sahel Analyst: Journal of Management Sciences*, 15(4) (2017): 67–80.
 42. Mohammad Shafi Ahsan Siddiqi. (2012). "Ethics and responsibility in journalism: An Islamic perspective."
 43. Zohora Azmin Shompa et al., (2018). "Guiding Social Media Use: Proposed Values and the Role of Maqasid Al-Shariah", International Conference on Information and Communication Technology for the Muslim World (ICT4M),
 44. Kulsanofer Syed Thajudeen, 'Maqasid al shariah is an important shariah aspect in finance,' *INCEIF - The Global University in Islamic finance*, (2012).
 45. Zohora Azmin Shompa et al., (2019). 'A descriptive analysis of values and maqasid al-shariah in social media use among students of iium,' *Journal of Information Systems and Digital Technologies* 1(1),
 46. Jonathan A.C. Brown, (2017) *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world* (London: Oneworld Publications,).
 47. Muhammad Mustafa Al-A'zami, (1978) *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (American Trust Publications,).
 48. Ahmad Ghiyats Fawwaz. (2018) 'The fabrication of hadith,' *University of Jordan*,.
 49. Imaad 'Alee Jum'ah, 'Mustalah al-hadeeth (July 2019) made easy,' *Imaam Syed Nazeer Husain Dehlawi University-Dept of Hadeeth & Islamic Sciences, Bangalore-India: Revival of Hadeeth Sciences in India*. Available at: [https:// kulliyatul](https://kulliyatul)



- [hadeeth .files. wordpress. com/2011/06/mustalah-hadeeth final1. pdf.](https://hadeeth.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/mustalah-hadeeth-final1.pdf) (Accessed: 2019).
50. Mohd. Akil Muhamed Ali et al., (2015): '*Al-jarh wa al-ta'dil (criticism and praise): It's significant in the science of hadith,*' *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(2S1) 284–292.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Shaykh Mansour Leghaei, (July 2019) '*Sciences of hadith,*' *Al-Islam.org: Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project.* Available at: [https://www.al-islam.org/ print pdf/book/export/html/45018.](https://www.al-islam.org/print-pdf/book/export/html/45018) (Accessed: 2021).
54. Ibid
55. Ibid
56. Ibid.
57. Ikram Hawramani, (July 2019). '*Mathematical hadith verification,*' *The Hawramani Institute.* Available at: [hawramani .com/mathematical-hadith- verification.](http://hawramani.com/mathematical-hadith-verification) (Accessed, 2021)
58. Ibid.
59. Scott C Lucas, (2006): '*Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature, and the Articulation of Sunni Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Sad, Ibn Ma'in, and Ibn Hanbal,*' *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 40 (1) 94-95.
60. Gregor Schoeler. (2016) '*Oral torah and Hadith: Transmission, prohibition of writing, redaction In Hadith,*' *Routledge:* 67–108.