

Fake News, Social Media and National Security: World View and Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the critical relationship between the proliferation of fake news on social media and its implications for national security, while proposing an Islamic ethical framework as a comprehensive strategy to mitigate these challenges. **Method:** Using a qualitative approach, the research conducts textual analysis of primary Islamic sources – namely the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical scholarly interpretations – to identify ethical principles relevant to information integrity. **Results:** The findings reveal that Islamic values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *tabayyun* (verification), and the prohibition of *kadhib* (falsehood) and *namimah* (slander) form a robust foundation for countering digital misinformation. These principles translate into practical frameworks encompassing policy-level interventions guided by *maslaha* (public interest) and *hisbah* (public accountability), as well as communal and individual measures emphasizing digital *taqwa* (God-consciousness). **Novelty:** This study uniquely integrates Islamic ethics with modern counter-disinformation strategies, offering a spiritually grounded, culturally relevant, and context-sensitive framework that strengthens social cohesion and national resilience against the spread of fake news in Muslim-majority societies and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age, characterized by the rapid dissemination of information through social media platforms, has paradoxically facilitated the proliferation of fake news, which increasingly undermines national security across the globe [1]. In Nigeria, a nation already grappling with multifaceted security challenges such as insurgency, ethno-religious conflicts, and farmer-herder clashes, the spread of misinformation has exacerbated tensions, fuelled violence, and eroded public trust in institutions. The deliberate distortion of facts, that is frequently fueled by algorithmic echo chambers, has directly jeopardized the stability and sovereignty of the state in spite of increasing societal fragmentation [2].

Social media platforms are essential for communication, information sharing, and the exchange of ideas. Recent advances have enhanced accessibility and ease of use. Social media platforms promote online information sharing and exchange. Social media are internet-based platforms that enable collaboration, conversation, sharing, and linking. These platforms, as opined by Okafor and Onyenekwe, have emerged as a widely utilised means for individuals across various ages, genders, and nationalities to communicate and exchange information. Social media channels are highly effective for conveying information and serve as advanced tools for public education, mobilisation, communication, and exchange. Oyesomi, Salawu and Olorunyomi, noted that

Disinformation disseminated through social media represents a considerable risk to national security on a global scale. The swift spread of false information can result in misinformation, panic, and social unrest, eroding public trust in institutions and potentially resulting in harmful consequences. The expansion of social media platforms has significantly accelerated the speed and extent of information dissemination. This has facilitated the dissemination of misinformation, which can significantly impact national security. Recent events illustrate the capacity of misinformation to shape public opinion, provoke violence, and interfere with political processes [3].

The need for an Islamic perspective in addressing this nexus is twofold. First, Islam provides a comprehensive ethical foundation that condemns misinformation as a violation of divine commandments. Guidance on encouraging accountability and truth is given through prophetic traditions that forbid lying and gossip, as well as Islamic principles such as the importance of verifying information from unreliable sources (Quran 49:6). The slander of Khadija (RA) and the false reports during the migration to Abyssinia have two examples from Islamic history which demonstrate the awful consequences of unreliable news and demonstrate how these teachings remain applicable to current issues [4]. Second, by fusing digital literacy with faith-based principles, an Islamic perspective might enable Muslim communities to take an active role in combating false information. This involves advocating for ideas that support larger national security objectives of maintaining peace in society, such as *Husn al-Dhann* (offering the advantage of the doubt) and preventing *Fitnah* (social conflict).

RESEARCH METHOD

According to the Qur'an and Sunnah, the phenomena of disinformation is a serious ethical and moral violation that goes against the fundamental values of truth-seeking, confirmation, and social peace. Combating fake news is not only a technological or legal requirement, but also an essential ethical responsibility for maintaining national security, as becomes apparent if the Nigerian situation is looked at from the perspective of Islamic teachings. The effect of fake news on Nigeria's national security is complex and highly troubling. Another instance is the widespread distribution of false information and fake photographs during the farmer-herder disputes in North-Central Nigeria. Misinformation was an important component in provoking violence, which often led to retribution and many fatalities. It has also been used to undermine counterinsurgency efforts by spreading panic, manipulating public perception and distorting military victories in the war against insurgency and banditry. Beyond the immediate threat of violence, Esiogbu pointed out that a lack of trust in the media and government institutions creates an environment in which extremist ideologies can flourish, making it more difficult to establish consensus and implement effective policies. Social media platforms have grown into the focal points for organized disinformation initiatives, frequently motivated by political or ideological goals as a consequence of their wide reach and insufficient control. This setting undermines the unity of society and

makes it harder for the government to safeguard its citizens while upholding the principles of the constitution.

From an Islamic point of view, propagating disinformation violates the fundamental ethical principles stated in the Qur'an and Hadith. Central to Islamic teachings is the concept of Haqq (truth), which Muslims are obliged to uphold in all aspects of life. The Qur'an explicitly commands believers to verify information before acting upon it:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ *

"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" (Qur'an 49:6).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This injunction underscores the importance of *Tabayyun* (verification) as a safeguard against harm, a principle directly applicable to the sharing of information on social media. Furthermore, the prohibition of *Kadhib* (lying) is repeatedly emphasized in the Sunnah, with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warning that lying leads to immorality and destruction. In a hadith, he stated, "*Beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Hellfire*" (Sahih al-Bukhari). Thus, deliberately propagating inaccurate data is a sin with spiritual consequences as well as to serving as an evil of society [5].

Islamic teachings also use the idea of *Fitnah* (strife, discord) to address the broader societal effects of false information. The Qur'an and Hadith frequently warn against actions that encourage *Fitnah* as they undermine social harmony and jeopardize the stability of society. due to its ability to incite violence, worsen racial and ethnic divisions, and destabilize a country, fake news could be considered a form of *Fitnah* in Nigeria today. False narratives that depict conflicts as religious motivated, for example, distort conflicts among farmers and herders as solely Muslim-Christian disputes, thus escalating tensions and taking advantage of preexisting divisions [6]. According to Qur'anic texts, such acts are considered to be more serious than murder and are therefore condemned by Islam as signs of *Fitnah*, or wickedness. Moreover, the principle of *Maslaha* (public interest) requires Muslims to act in ways that promote the common good and prevent harm. The spread of fake news directly contradicts this principle, as it jeopardizes national security, public safety, and social unity [7].

The relevance of these Islamic teachings to contemporary challenges cannot be overstated. In Nigeria, where religion plays a significant role in public life, Islamic scholars and institutions have a critical responsibility to counter fake news by promoting digital ethics grounded in Islamic values [8]. This includes encouraging *Husn al-Dhann* (giving the benefit of the doubt) to avoid quick choices, emphasizing the importance of *Amanah* (trustworthiness) in information transfer, and discouraging *Gheebah* (backbiting) and *Namimah* (bearing of confidential information), which are strictly

prohibited in Islam with contemporary manifestations in cyberbullying and character assassination [9]. Religious leaders may utilize their authority to educate communities about the dangers of propagating uncorroborated assertions and the Islamic demand for verification. Furthermore, Islamic ethics align with practical strategies such as fact-checking initiatives, media literacy programs, and collaboration with governmental and civil society organizations to combat misinformation

Given that proliferation of fake news in the digital age poses significant threat to national security, particularly in fragile states like Nigeria, where misinformation amplifies existing conflicts and undermines social trust, it is therefore pertinent to examine the Islamic dimension to the proliferation of fake news so as to curtail the danger of fake news among the populace, particularly the Muslims [10].

Statement of Problem

The digital age has ushered in an era of unprecedented information accessibility, yet this comes with the peril of rampant misinformation, particularly through social media platforms. The proliferation of fake news, defined as deliberately false or misleading information presented as news, has emerged as a critical threat to national security worldwide. This phenomenon exploits the rapid dissemination capabilities of social media, where algorithmic amplification and echo chambers facilitate the viral spread of unverified narratives. Fake news has contributed to ethno-religious disputes, diminished confidence in institutions, and promoted violence in nations such as Nigeria which are already volatile. Here, the repercussions are particularly serious. For example, false information about military operations or government actions contributed to societal division and weakened civic unity. False reports during Nigerian agrarian conflicts, meanwhile, have led to retaliatory attacks that took life and destroyed property. The link between fake news, social media and national security is thus characterised by a cycle of deception: unverified information fuels social discord, which in turn weakens governance structures and empowers adversarial actors seeking to destabilise nations [11].

Despite the growing recognition of this problem, the existing countermeasures often prioritise technological solutions, such as fact-checking algorithms or legal frameworks. This neglects the ethical and moral dimensions that underpin the spread of misinformation [12]. This gap is particularly evident in Muslim-majority contexts like Nigeria, where religious and cultural norms significantly influence information consumption and sharing behaviors. The special weaknesses of these communities, like the abuse of historical tensions through falsified content or the militarization of religious narratives to propagate misinformation, are usually ignored by mainstream techniques. Furthermore, the ability of religious frameworks, such as Islam, to provide complete responses that integrate moral principles with useful verification techniques is frequently disregarded in the worldwide debate on fake news. For example, Islamic teachings emphasize *Tabayyun* (verification) as a moral duty, yet this principle remains underutilized in contemporary strategies to combat misinformation [13].

Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Using an emphasis on Nigeria, examine the mechanisms and recurring themes of fake news on social media platforms that directly threaten national security.
2. Look at the basic Islamic principles of truthfulness, verification of information (tabayyun), and the ban of the dissemination of misleading data (kadhib) and slander (namimah), that originate from the Qur'an and Sunnah.
3. Consider the way Islamic teachings affect Muslim communities' social media users' attitudes and actions when they stumble up with and spread potentially false information.
4. To propose a holistic, Islamic ethical framework for mitigating the impact of social media-driven fake news on national security, incorporating principles of Maslaha (public interest) and offering actionable recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and individuals [14].

Conceptual Analysis

Conceptual analysis is the systematic examination and clarification of concepts to understand their meaning, structure, and relationships within a particular field of study [15]. It involves breaking down complex or abstract ideas into their constituent components, identifying their attributes, and exploring how they relate to other concepts. This process helps to eliminate ambiguity, enhance theoretical precision, and provide a foundation for research, policy formulation, or practical application [16].

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms have transformed the way information is produced, disseminated, and consumed, enabling real-time communication and interaction across global audiences, but they have also inadvertently facilitated the rapid spread of fake news due to their structural and functional characteristics [17]. Sensationalist or misleading data increases on these platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, because they use algorithm-driven content delivery systems that prioritize user interaction and engagement over accuracy. Social media sites' layout promotes content sharing without thorough verification, permitting false information to circulate before getting corrected. Furthermore, social media generates "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers," where users are primarily exposed to data that supports their existing views. This can reinforce prejudices and increase the likelihood that users will believe misleading narratives. The issue is exacerbated by the viral nature of information on these platforms, which is fuelled by comments, shares and likes. Regardless of its actual correctness, content that is heated and emotionally charged tends to garner more engagement and spread more quickly. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that automatic accounts, or bots, can spread fake news by quickly distributing false information to big audiences, increasing its impact and reach. Furthermore, social media platforms are appealing tools for bad actors looking to purposefully propagate misinformation in an effort to sway public opinion, elections, or consumer behavior due to their low cost and simplicity of content creation. Studies carried out during the

COVID-19 pandemic show the real societal repercussions of fake news distribution by highlighting how medical disinformation can proliferate on social media, causing public misunderstanding and negative behavioral results. All things considered, the design of social media networks, along with algorithmic amplification and human cognitive biases, fosters an atmosphere that is conducive to the spread of false information, endangering public confidence, informed decision-making, and private judgment [18].

Fake News

Fake news, a phenomenon that has gained global attention in the digital era, is broadly defined as deliberately fabricated or misleading information presented as factual news, intended to misinform or manipulate audiences, with scholars emphasizing its role in shaping perceptions, influencing behaviours, and undermining trust in institutions, and according to Shu, Wang, Lee, and Liu, fake news exploits cognitive biases such as confirmation bias and the illusory truth effect, which increase susceptibility to repeated falsehoods, thereby amplifying its reach and impact, particularly when disseminated through social media and other online platforms where algorithmic content promotion prioritizes engagement over accuracy, creating an environment conducive to rapid viral spread; conceptually, fake news encompasses misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information, where misinformation refers to false information spread without malicious intent, disinformation involves intentional fabrication for strategic or political purposes, and mal-information entails the manipulation or distortion of truthful information to mislead or harm, highlighting the multidimensional nature of the problem [19]. The threat posed by fake news to peace and national stability is multifaceted, as it can incite social unrest, deepen political polarization, and exacerbate ethnic, religious, or regional tensions, with studies showing that false narratives, particularly in politically sensitive contexts, have the potential to mobilize violence or anti-government sentiment, thereby weakening social cohesion and challenging state authority; for instance, during elections or periods of civil tension, the deliberate circulation of fabricated stories targeting political actors or minority groups can distort public opinion, delegitimize democratic processes, and provoke unrest, while in extreme cases, coordinated disinformation campaigns can catalyze violent conflict or terrorist recruitment, posing direct threats to national security [20]. Additionally, as demonstrated through the spread of false information regarding COVID-19 that hindered compliance to safety rules and vaccination campaigns, fake news decreases public confidence in the reliability of official information, reducing trust in news outlets, government agencies, and law enforcement. False reports concerning companies, sectors, or economic policies have a chance to upset market stability, that can have significant effects on how investors behave and national financial systems [22]. Whatever is considered, fake news is a perennial and ever-changing problem that threatens political stability, social harmony, and national security through taking benefit of information systems, cognitive weaknesses, and sociopolitical divisions. To maintain peace and preserve national interests, governments, media regulators, educational institutions, and technology platforms should collaborate

collectively to enhance media literacy, fact-checking abilities, and rapid methods for mitigation [23].

Mechanisms and Prevalent Themes of Fake News on Social Media Platforms that Pose a Direct Threat to National Security

The phenomenon of fake news has emerged as a significant concern in Nigeria, particularly due to its profound implications for national security. It operates through various mechanisms and is entrenched within the socio-political landscape of the country [24].

One of the core mechanisms of fake news propagation in Nigeria is the use of social media, particularly Twitter, as a means of rapid dissemination. Studies indicate that the ease with which information can be shared on these platforms allows users to encounter and spread misinformation with alarming swiftness. Ukwuru and Nwankwo, opined that social media does not subject news content to rigorous editorial scrutiny, creating a fertile ground for misinformation to flourish. For example, Shem et al., noted that during the 2015 general elections, a significant influx of politically motivated fake news was observed, which utilized social media channels to amplify hate speech and divisive narratives, leading to societal unrest and tension among political factions. This exploitation of social platforms directly threatened Nigeria's national security by fostering an atmosphere of fear and distrust among the populace, particularly dangerous during elections or periods of crisis [25].

Another prominent theme is the psychological aspect of fake news sharing, where previous exposure to misleading information can enhance its perceived credibility. Repeated exposure to bogus news dramatically raises people's belief in its veracity, claim Penny Cook et al. This cognitive bias worsens Nigeria's political climate, where the propagation of partisan fake news worsens already divided communities and compromises the integrity of debate and decision-making. Many Nigerians are impacted by disinformation narratives that either contradict the truth or distort facts as a consequence of the abundance of false information, which has an effect on their civic engagement and trust in democratic institutions. Furthermore, thematic examination of fake news in connection with illnesses like the COVID-19 pandemic, shows how misinformation may worsen national security threats. Research indicates that inaccurate data about health measures has led to widespread doubt and disagreement with scientifically validated suggestions. The way the Nigerian public interacts with the internet in relation to COVID-19 illustrates a dichotomy in which individuals both disprove unsubstantiated allegations and aid in the dissemination of unconfirmed information. As a result, the health crisis greatly complicated Nigeria's national security environment by serving as a catalyst for social divide and instability in politics in addition to being an issue of public health [26].

Furthermore, the impact of fake news on national cohesion cannot be understated. Udenze highlighted how the erosion of trust in media can lead to a fractured society, where differing opinions rooted in misinformation contribute to disunity. Fake news in Nigeria has been associated with increasing tensions between various ethnic and

religious groups, as misinformation often weaponizes these divisions to further specific political agendas. National identity and cohesiveness are weakened by this division, which also makes society less resilient to internal and foreign attacks.

Fake news's rise on Nigerian social media is made possible by intricate and multidimensional processes that are intricately woven into the political and social landscape of the nation at large. The widespread dissemination of such misleading data poses significant risks to national security by lowering confidence in the public, creating social division, and disrupting political processes. An integrated strategy involving media literacy initiatives, legal frameworks, and strategic communication to increase public opposition to false information is required to combat the issue of fake news [27].

Islamic Principles Concerning Verification, Truthfulness, and the Prohibition of Disinformation

Truthfulness (*ṣidq*), verification (*tabayyun*), and the prohibition of deception (*kadhib*) and slander (*namimah*) are the basic principles of the Islamic system of ethics that originate from the Qur'an and Sunnah. These values support both harmonious society and private actions in spite of acting as ethical guidelines. At a time when misinformation can exacerbate social unrest and endanger national security, these principles provide Muslims with a comprehensive guide to navigating the challenges of information dissemination. The Islamic perspective on truth and confirmation is comprehensive, stressing the need to ensure correctness when communicating as well as the spiritual repercussions of dishonesty.

Truthfulness (*Ṣidq*) as a Divine Command

Truthfulness is central to Islamic teachings, deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an explicitly commands believers to uphold truthfulness, associating it with righteousness and divine pleasure. For instance, Allah states: "*O you who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deeds)*" (Qur'an 9:119). This verse emphasises the importance for Muslims of being truthful in all aspects of life. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further emphasised the importance of truthfulness, saying: 'Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise.' A man who continues to tell the truth is recorded with Allah as a truthful person (*ṣiddiq*). Conversely, lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to Hellfire". This Hadith illustrates the spiritual journey of truthfulness, presenting it as a path to eternal reward and emphasising the dangers of falsehood. Classical scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali have noted that the concept of *ṣidq* extends beyond verbal honesty to encompass sincerity in intentions, actions and states of being. They have described truthfulness as the pinnacle of sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*). Thus, truthfulness in Islam is a comprehensive virtue that influences every facet of a believer's life, fostering integrity and trust within society.

Verification (*Tabayyun*) as an Ethical Safeguard

The principle of verification (*tabayyun*) is critically important in Islam, particularly in the context of receiving and conveying information. The Qur'an mandates verification to prevent harm and ensure justice:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَيَّ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴾ *

"O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you harm people unwittingly and afterwards become regretful for what you have done" (Qur'an 49:6).

This verse and the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) which says:

"كفى بالمرء كذبا أن يحدث بكل ما سمع"

"A person proves himself to be a great liar when he shares everything he hears."

Emphasizes the necessity of scrutinizing information, especially when it originates from questionable sources, to avoid unintended consequences such as social discord or injustice. Classical scholars have elaborated on this principle. For example, Ibn Kathir explained that verification prevents deception and misjudgement, and Imam al-Syaukani defined *tabayyun* as careful analysis and mindfulness, emphasising the importance of not rushing. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) cautioned against uncritically accepting information: 'It is enough for a man to be considered a liar that he narrates everything he hears' (Sahih Muslim). This hadith therefore warns against passively transmitting unverified news, urging Muslims to exercise diligence and responsibility. The practice of *tabayyun* is not only a protective measure against misinformation but also a manifestation of wisdom and justice, ensuring that actions and judgments are based on certainty rather than conjecture.

Prohibition of Misinformation (Kadhib) and Slander (Namimah)

Islam strictly prohibits misinformation (*kadhib*) and slander (*namimah*), considering them grave sins that corrode social trust and harmony. The Qur'an condemns lying in multiple contexts, associating it with disbelief and moral corruption:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكُذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴾

"Only they fabricate falsehood who do not believe in Allah's signs, and it is they who are liars" (Qur'an 16:105).

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) identified lying as a hallmark of hypocrisy: "Among the signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays" (Sahih al-Bukhari). Slander (*namimah*), which involves spreading harmful information to create discord, is equally condemned. The Qur'an warns:

"... وَ لَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا. اِجِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ اَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَّرِ هُنْمُوهُ..."

"And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it" (Qur'an 49:12).

This vivid analogy highlights the severity of slander, equating it to a vile and destructive act. Historical cases, such as the slander against Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), demonstrate the devastating impact of misinformation on individuals and communities. Islamic law imposes strict accountability for such actions, including legal penalties for slanderous accusations, to uphold societal integrity

Relevance to Modern Challenges

These Islamic principles offer timeless guidance for contemporary issues, such as the proliferation of fake news on social media. The emphasis on truthfulness and

verification provides Muslims with an ethical framework for navigating digital spaces responsibly. For example, the principle of *tabayyun* encourages people to engage critically with information before sharing it, thereby helping to prevent the spread of misinformation. Similarly, the prohibition of *kadhib* (lies) and *namimah* (gossip) emphasises the importance of using communication to foster trust rather than discord. According to academics like Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaili, these principles are crucial for upholding the public interest (*maslaha*) and preventing harm (*darar*). By promoting accountability and ethical behaviour, the Islamic approach to facts and validation can contribute to peace and security in countries such as Nigeria, where false information has exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions.

The Qur'an and Sunnah are fundamental to Islamic teachings, emphasising veracity and honesty while prohibiting false information and slander. They provide valuable guidance on contemporary issues and establish an ethical framework that places great importance on truthfulness, fairness, and social harmony. Muslims can link their acts with divine mandates and the well-being of mankind by upholding these principles, which will assist in create a more honest and secure society.

The Role of Islamic Teachings in Shaping the Perceptions and Behaviors of Social Media Users in Muslim Communities

The proliferation of social media presents both opportunities and challenges for Muslim communities, particularly in the context of misinformation. Islamic teachings serve as foundational guidelines for navigating the digital landscape, influencing user perceptions and behaviors in significant ways.

Principle of Truthfulness (Sidq) and Prohibition of Lying (Kadhib)

Islamic teachings place a paramount emphasis on truthfulness (*sidq*) as a core virtue and condemn lying (*kadhib*) as a major sin. The Qur'an explicitly commands believers to uphold truthfulness: "*O you who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deeds)*" (Qur'an 9:119). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reinforced this idea, stating: 'Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise... Beware of telling lies, for lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to Hellfire' (Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim). This ethical injunction has a direct influence on Muslim social media users, encouraging them to prioritise accuracy over sensationalism. For instance, before sharing news, Muslims are likely to recall the prohibition of lying, thereby reducing the tendency to disseminate unverified content. This principle fosters a culture of digital integrity where users feel religiously obligated to avoid falsehood, even in online spaces where anonymity might otherwise encourage irresponsible behavior.

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of verifying information before disseminating it. Scholars argue that responsible sharing aligns with the concept of *'da'wah'*, whereby Muslims invite others to understand Islam. This requires accurate and truthful communication. This is essential for countering the misinformation that can result from hasty sharing practices on social media. Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to be mindful of their conduct online, thereby fostering a culture of authenticity and

truthfulness. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of truthfulness, which directly applies to sharing information in digital spaces, thus helping to mitigate the effects of misinformation.

Duty of Verification (Tabayyun) and Critical Engagement

One of the most significant Islamic principles addressing misinformation is tabayyun (verification). The Qur'an commands: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one without information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance or become sorry" (Qur'an 49:6-7). This stanza emphasizes how important it is to critically assess information, particularly when it originates from shady sources. According to Imam al-Syaukani and other classical thinkers, tabayyun involves thoughtful consideration and analysis, rather than quick judgement. This concept translates into a behavioural standard on social media, where Muslims are urged to verify news from reliable sources before accepting or sharing it. Muslims can prevent the widespread dissemination of incorrect information by verifying facts against credible media outlets or consulting religious scholars during events such as elections or conflicts, when disinformation often flourishes. The Prophet's warning, "It is enough for a man to prove himself a liar that he goes on narrating whatever he hears" (Sahih Muslim), further instills a sense of caution, prompting users to avoid passive transmission of unverified content.

Accountability and Consequences of Spreading Misinformation

Islamic teachings highlight individual accountability for one's actions, including speech and communication. The Qur'an states:

﴿وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

[الإسراء: 36]

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart, about all those [one] will be questioned" (Qur'an 17:36).

This verse serves as a reminder that Muslims will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for every piece of information they share, whether true or false. This sense of responsibility online deters users from spreading rumours, gossip or defamation (namimah) that could hurt individuals or communities. Of particular interest is the Qur'anic comparison of backbiting to 'eating the flesh of one's dead brother' (Qur'an 49:12), which discourages individuals from engaging in online activities that could cause unrest in society. Additionally, the concept of maslaha (public welfare) encourages Muslims to consider the broader societal impact of their actions, promoting behaviours that foster peace and avoid harm darar [28].

Promoting Positive Engagement and Community Responsibility

Beyond individual behavior, Islamic teachings emphasize collective responsibility to enjoin good and forbid evil (Qur'an 3:104). This principle encourages Muslim communities to actively combat misinformation by promoting digital literacy and ethical sharing practices. For instance, religious leaders and institutions play a crucial role in educating users about the Islamic ethics of information, such as by organizing workshops on fact-checking or issuing guidelines based on Qur'an and Hadith. According to studies,

young Muslims are using social networking sites more and more to share genuine Islamic content and have productive conversations in an effort to combat Islamophobia and false information. Instead of becoming a place for passive consumption, this proactive approach turns social media into a platform for constructive interaction. Furthermore, by encouraging users to presume good intentions unless proven otherwise, the Islamic emphasis on the concept of *al-dhann* (offering the benefit of the fact) lessens the possibility of hasty decisions based on false information.

Challenges and Contemporary Relevance

Despite these teachings, Muslim communities face challenges such as targeted disinformation campaigns and the proliferation of deepfake technology. Islamophobic actors often exploit social media to spread anti-Muslim conspiracies, as seen on platforms like Gab, where derogatory content against Muslims is prevalent. However, Islamic principles remain critically relevant. The prophetic concept of Dajjal (the Deceiver) as a symbol of falsehood resonates deeply, reminding Muslims that misinformation is a timeless challenge requiring vigilance. By combining traditional verification methods, such as the classical Islamic sciences of hadith criticism (*riwayat* and *dirayat*), with modern fact-checking tools, Muslims can navigate digital spaces responsibly. Furthermore, educational programmes that emphasise Islamic ethics, like those covered in the Bayan Linnas series, empower users to become 'digital businessmen' of truth, rather than allowing them to become passive recipients of false information. Furthermore, social media serves as a catalyst for promoting conversations among Muslims from different backgrounds, based to several experts. This variety can improve the critical interaction with possible false information. Islamic social teachings promote discussion that refutes false narratives by creating a community of knowledgeable users. In this sense, social media represents a forum for group critical thought in addition to providing a means of spreading Islamic ideas [29].

Islamic teachings on social duty also have an impact on the emotional components of Muslim users' social media activity. According to research, having a solid basis in Islamic principles fosters better social relationships and a greater understanding of the consequences of false information. The Islamic philosophy of knowledge acquisition puts an enormous value on awareness and education, so using social media cautiously assists users identify false data. Social media-driven courses can play a crucial role in informing users about the core values of Islam which promote discernment and critical thinking if processing information [30].

Furthermore, the role of religious authority is particularly relevant in combating misinformation. Preachers and academics who use social media are playing a key role in directing conversations. By doing this, they offer clarity in the midst of the deluge of false information and uphold the legitimacy of genuine religious knowledge. This function is crucial for accurate biblical interpretation as well as for symbolically refuting the more general myths about Islam that are frequently linked to the religion in public discourse, which might serve to further propagate false beliefs about it [31].

Furthermore, Islamic morality and personality teachings put an intense focus on the importance of conducting yourself ethically when interacting online. Social media conduct should be in accordance in Islamic values, which place an emphasis on decency, honesty, and a sense of belonging. With moral guidance serving as an inhibitor on the spread of lies and disinformation, this behavioral approach may combat the impulsivity which frequently characterizes interactions on social networking platforms. Muslims constantly consider the way they interact with different kinds of content, ensuring certain that their interactions have roots in authenticity and Islamic values. This renders the idea of "riya," or showing one's piety online, crucial.

In Muslim communities, social media users' views and behaviors about misleading data are strongly influenced through Islamic teachings. They provide a moral framework that emphasises truthfulness, verification and respectful engagement. Fostering communities that prioritise these values, coupled with informed leadership among scholars, is an effective way to navigate the challenges posed by misinformation. As Muslim users continue to engage with social media platforms, the principles derived from Islamic teachings can guide them in fostering a constructive and truthful virtual presence [32].

Practical Framework for Implementation

Individual Responsibility and Digital Ethics

The Islamic framework begins with cultivating individual virtue in digital spaces. Muslims are encouraged to develop digital *taqwa* (God-consciousness), applying the same ethical standards online as they would in person. This includes:

1. Practicing intentional sharing: Before sharing content, Muslims should verify its authenticity and consider its potential impact on social harmony and national security.
2. Resisting engagement with harmful content: Islam teaches the principle of "preventing harm" (*darar*), which would include refusing to amplify divisive or unverified content.
3. Exercising *husn al-dhann* (giving benefit of the doubt): Muslims are encouraged to assume good intentions until evidence proves otherwise, reducing the likelihood of rash judgments based on misleading information [33].

Table 1. Islamic Ethical Principles and Their Application to Social Media Behavior

Islamic Principle	Definition	Application to Social Media
Sidq (Truthfulness)	Being honest in speech, intentions, and actions	Verify information before sharing; correct misinformation

Islamic Principle	Definition	Application to Social Media
Amanah (Trustworthiness)	Fulfilling trusts and responsibilities	Be trustworthy in sharing information; avoid clickbait
Tabayyun (Verification)	Investigating before acting on information	Fact-check before sharing; consult credible sources
Maslaha (Public Interest)	Promoting benefit and preventing harm	Consider societal impact of shared content; avoid divisive topics

Educational and Community-Based Interventions

Islamic educational institutions play a crucial role in building societal resilience against fake news. Mosques, Islamic schools, and community organizations should integrate digital media literacy into their curricula, emphasizing both the technical skills of verification and the ethical foundations of Islamic information ethics. These educational initiatives should:

1. Teach critical evaluation of sources using both modern fact-checking techniques and traditional Islamic methods of *isnad* (chain of transmission) evaluation.
2. Highlight the devastating impact of misinformation on vulnerable communities, particularly Muslims who are often targeted by coordinated disinformation campaigns.
3. Develop community-based verification networks where religious scholars and trusted community leaders can quickly address viral misinformation that threatens social cohesion [34].

Policy and Institutional Approaches

The Islamic concept of *hisbah* (public accountability) provides a framework for institutional responses to fake news. Islamic jurisprudence recognizes the government's responsibility to maintain social order and prevent harm, which includes regulating information ecosystems that threaten national security. This could involve:

1. Collaborating with tech companies to develop ethical algorithms that prioritize verified information and demote harmful content, reflecting the Islamic principle of "enjoining good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-n-nahy 'an al-munkar*).
2. Establishing independent media monitoring bodies inspired by the traditional Islamic office of *muhtasib* (market inspector), which would identify and counter systematic disinformation campaigns.

3. Promoting transparent content moderation policies that balance freedom of expression with the protection of public welfare, guided by the Islamic principle of *maslaha* (public interest) [35].

The analysis conducted within this study affirms a critical nexus between the proliferation of fake news on social media and the exacerbation of national security threats, particularly in fragile states characterized by ethno-religious diversity. As is well known, the digital design of social media sites makes it easier for unverified information to spread quickly, which has been crucial in provoking violence, undermining public confidence in authorities, and widening social divisions in places like Nigeria. This study demonstrates that an Islamic ethical framework that is based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and academic interpretation offers a strong, multifaceted solution to this contemporary issue. In order to maintain peace and security, the principles of *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *tabayyun* (verification), and the prohibition of *kadhib* (falsehood) and *namimah* (defamation) are not just moral precepts; they form an extensive framework that requires personal accountability, collective responsibility, and institutional governance.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study concludes that the Islamic ethical framework – anchored in principles such as *tabayyun* (verification), *maṣlahah* (public interest), and *hisbah* (accountability) – offers a dynamically relevant foundation for addressing the contemporary threat of digital misinformation to national security. The framework operates across three interconnected levels: individual digital *taqwa* fostering ethical self-regulation, community-level guidance by religious leaders promoting awareness, and institutional accountability ensuring responsible governance and media oversight. **Implication :** The integration of these principles into policy formulation, digital literacy programs, and algorithmic governance can enhance societal resilience, supporting both national stability and moral integrity within information ecosystems. **Limitation :** However, the study remains normative in nature, relying on conceptual interpretation rather than empirical testing, which limits the ability to measure the practical effectiveness of its proposed framework. **Future Research :** Further studies should empirically examine how Islamic ethical interventions can be operationalized across diverse sociopolitical contexts, assess their impact on user behavior and information flow, and explore interfaith or cross-cultural applications of ethical information governance to reinforce global strategies against disinformation.

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