



al-Burhān

JOURNAL OF QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH STUDIES

VOLUME 6, SPECIAL ISSUE 1, JUNE 2022



INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

eISSN: 2600-8386

al-Burhān Journal of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kuliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia
Volume 6, Special Issue 1, 2022

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e-ISSN 2600-8386

Published Online by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University
Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia.
Phone (+603) 6421 5014
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Indexing and Abstracting: al-Burhān is currently indexed in and abstracted by MyJurnal and Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ).

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The Principles of *Tabayyun* According to the Qur'an: Solutions to the Challenges and Strife of the Social-Media

Nor Musfirah binti Mohamad *, Nurul Husna binti Mat Isa**

ABSTRACT: The epidemic of fake news i.e., the dissemination of unrestricted information has been an intrinsic component within the life of present-day society since the advent of sophistication in technology in the globalisation era. In addition, a handful of people engage in incessant gossiping and backbiting among one another in perpetuating issues that have gone viral. The information or news are accessible from the internet, particularly via smartphone applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others. The issue at stake is to what extent the easily obtained information is scrutinised to determine its truth. If the information is valid, it might be beneficial for the receiver; however, on the contrary, it is fake, the information could potentially generate discord and hostility. The issue this paper intends to address is the applicability of the principles of *tabayyun* in the face of challenges and conflict in the current era of globalisation. In so doing, this study aims to first understand the concept of *tabayyun* from the Islamic perspective and analyse the guidelines of the principles as prescribed by the al-Quran as a tool in dealing with the challenges and strife of social media. The research adopted a qualitative approach through exploration of various library sources. The data collected were analysed and discussed to arrive to achieve the objectives of this study. This study found that the principles of *tabayyun* is emphasised in Islamic teachings to safeguard human beings from falling prey into the traps of slander as well as preventing them from accepting and disseminating questionable and inaccurate information. The principles of *tabayyun* require that the authenticity of information be established as it undergoes prior filtration and investigation. Thus, *tabayyun* is an indispensable tool that the public may apply when receiving and disseminating information in their daily lives and thereby not hasten in deriving conclusions upon any particular information received.

Keywords & Phrases: *Principles of tabayyun; Quranic studies; social media; fake news; slander.*

* Department of Shariah Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs). Email: musfirah@kuiips.edu.my

** Department of Usuluddin Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis (KUIPs). Email: nurul.husna@kuiips.edu.my

Introduction

The vast use of social media has its own downturn that is the spread of fake news within society, particularly so in the dissemination of borderless and unrestricted information. Today's society virtually interact to obtain and broadcast information by way of countless platforms. The culture of copy and paste aggravates the situation, making it impossible to eradicate save for individuals' own self-awareness of how decadent the culture is. This scenario is increasingly worrying given the drastic development of social-media applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Line, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that are not only capable of spreading messages but also photos, videos, recordings, and fake documents, all of which are capable to be easily tempered with.¹

Thus, it signifies that it is not impossible and in fact, effortless for individuals to receive information and exponentially broadcast the same to convey it to larger masses. This effortless broadcast contributes to the dissemination of fake news; impact of which generates the formation of wrong perception against the underlying truth of the reported news. Allah almighty has laid down guidelines in the al-Quran of the obligation to exercise *tabayyun*, so Muslims exercise caution, scrutinise and seek for evidence pertaining to any information. Therefore, this article intends to extrapolate the concept of *tabayyun* from the Islamic perspective and analyse its guidelines as per described in the Quran as solutions in facing the challenges and contention of social media.

1.0 Literature Review

1.1 The Concept of *Tabayyun* According to The Islamic Perspective

1.1.1 Definition of *Tabayyun*

Tabayyun from linguistic point of view means seeking for verification and truth of something. From the point of terminology, *tabayyun* means researching and re-evaluating, not being hasty in deciding an issue be it related to legal matters, policy and so on until the issue becomes clear.²

al-Shawkānī argues that *tabayyun* means to examine carefully while *tathabbut* is being careful and not hasty, weighing with deep knowledge of an event or received news until the truth becomes clear.³ *Tabayyun* also means to scrutinize meticulously while *tathabbut* means being careful and not rushing to classify news or event until the truth is

¹ Roslan Umar et al., 'Pendekatan Konsep *Tabayyun* Dalam Isu Falak Kontemporari', *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2018): 36–43.

² Brian Rafsanjani, 'Sikap *Tabayyun* Dalam al-Qur'an Menurut Mufassir Dan Kontekstualisasi Pada Problematika Pemberitaan Media Sosial' (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, 2018), 20–21.

³ Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī, *Fath al-Qadīr al-Jāmi' Bayna Fannay al-Riwāyah Wa al-Dirāyah Min 'Ilm al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 65.

clear.⁴ Any information or news received must first be examined and its truth and accuracy verified to avoid any ill-agenda and uncalled for matters such as slander, deceit and denigration of individual based on malevolence from taking place. The command for “*tabayyun*” is of paramount significance to safeguard individuals from prejudice.⁵

In implementing *tabayyun*, the information to be conveyed needs to undergo verification from its primary source or any other sources which are certified as valid.⁶ This is in light of the sciences of knowledge or information itself where it intends to seek data and facts of an event that occur to be understood and be of use, in other words seeking for in-depth information until truth surfaces.⁷

1.1.2 The Principles of *Tabayyun* According to Islam

Islam emphasizes *tabayyun* in daily life and it is compulsory upon all Muslim individuals. Thus, the obligation to implement *tabayyun* (investigate any news) before disseminating it or believing in it is enshrined in verse 6 of Surah al-Hujurat, where Allah almighty says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحِرُوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ
تَذِمِينَ﴾

“O believers, if an evildoer (wicked) brings you any news, investigate (to determine) the truth so that you do not inflict on people something undesirable because of your ignorance (about it), becoming regretful for what you have done [al-Hujurat 49: 6].”

Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsir* views that “Allah almighty commands that everyone should investigate tidings from a wicked man with vigilance so that there would be no deception and confusion. Most commentators mention that this verse was revealed in relation to al-Walīd bin ‘Uqbah bin Abī Mu’īth who was the messenger of the Prophet PBUH tasked to collect alms from Banī Muṣṭaliq.⁸ While al-Marāghī in interpreting this verse states that Allah almighty teaches his servant to be civilized in matters of religion and in worldly affairs. Hence, when a wicked person comes to convey a news contrary to religious teachings, do not believe in the news unless proper research and scrutiny had been done.⁹

⁴ Zulkifli Mohamad al-Bakri, ‘Tabayyun Dalam Penerimaan Dan Penyampaian Berita’, Bayan Linnas, 13 June 2019, <https://muftiwp.gov.my/artikel/bayan-linnas/3485-bayan-linnas-siri-ke-184-tabayyun-dalam-penerimaan-dan-penyampaian-berita>.

⁵ al-Bakri.

⁶ Shelly Sholatan Kamilah et al., ‘Tabayyun Dengan Analisis Real’, in *Prosiding Konferensi Integrasi Interkoneksi Islam Dan Sains*, 2018, 186.

⁷ Gusnar Zain, ‘Konsep Tabayyun Dalam Islam Dan Kaitannya Dengan Informasi’, *Shaut al-Maktabah: Jurnal Perpustakaan, Arsip Dan Dokumentasi* 9, no. 1 (2017): 57.

⁸ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-‘Azīm* (Beirut: Dār Maktabah al-Hilāl, 1986), 476.

⁹ Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (Cairo: Maṭba‘ah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1946), 127.

Quraish Shihab interprets this verse as a primary proof for the obligation of Muslims to exercise *tabayyun* or investigate a particular news which its authenticity is still unverified.¹⁰ The word *tabayyun* therein is in the form of *lafz 'amr* (command verb); *fatabayyanu* which means examine meticulously and firmly requires seriousness to re-examine in order to obtain clarity of information.¹¹ Syed Mohd Hafiz Syed Omar quotes Fakhr al-Rāzī who interprets that *fatabayyanu* means to commit to a specific certainty and inspection before speaking or doing something. Synonymously it means clear and descriptive.¹²

In conclusion, the above verse is the proof for the compulsion in ensuring that any news that is brought in is first investigated (*tabayyun*) to verify its truth. This serves as a precautionary measure from persecuting others with false accusations or publicising false news, both of which are mistakes that could harm others as well as harming the doer himself.

1.1.3 The Significance of *Tabayyun*

Wahbah al-Zuhaylī in interpreting verse 6 of *sūrah al-Hujurat* opines that: “Allah almighty calls on his believers that when an evil doer or wicked man come to deliver a news, it is better to seek the truth concerning the news and not hurried to judge and disseminate it for fear of undesirable things happening due to mistaken decision.”¹³

This clearly illustrates that the application of the principles of *tabayyun* in accepting and circulating information and news is of utmost importance and has many advantages and significance. This principle is further reinforced by the prohibition of Allah almighty in saying things that are unknown and accusing someone with unfounded/unverified allegation. Allah says:

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

“And do not follow that of which you have no knowledge; indeed, hearing and sight and heart, each of those ones will be asked about what they do [al-Isrā’ 17:36].”

The above verse speaks about Allah almighty’s prohibition to speak without knowledge because all things will be accounted for in the hereafter.¹⁴ Arguably, the same can be expected of accusations and testimonies that need to be examined much so there

¹⁰ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian al-Qur’an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2009).

¹¹ Romli Pasrah, ‘Kode Etikjurnalistik Dan Kebebasan Pen Daian Perspektif Islam’, *Jurnal Dakwah* 9, no. 2 (2008): 117–36.

¹² Umar et al., ‘Pendekatan Konsep Tabayyun Dalam Isu Falak Kontemporari’.

¹³ Wahbah ibn Muṣṭafā al-Zuhaylī, *al-Tafsir al-Munir Fi al-‘Aqidah Wa al-Shari’ah Wa al-Manhaj* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1997), 227.

¹⁴ Ismail ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 2000), 75.

would be no baseless allegations levelled against someone.¹⁵ Therefore, the tongue should not utter a word, narrate an event, nor accept any narratives; the intellect should not pass judgment, and one should not make a decision unless after ascertaining its truth so that the matter is devoid of doubts.¹⁶

The importance of *tabayyun* among Muslims in particular and the society at large can be concluded by the following:

1. Ensure that information and news received is accurate, true and not false.
2. Avoid receiving a news or information in a hurry.
3. Avoid accepting information from unauthorized sources.
4. Prevent spreading news of unknown origin.
5. Avoid spreading information and news recklessly.
6. Prevent from spreading news which truth is unknown.
7. Prevent from doing something beyond one's knowledge or expertise.
8. Avoid making accusations by malice and slander.
9. Encourage caution in receiving and disseminating news and cautious of every behaviour.
10. Avoid making unilateral accusations without any evidence and truth.
11. Avoid causing damage and harm.
12. Avoid misunderstanding and hostility and disgrace the dignity of others.
13. Prevent from persecuting others with false accusations or spreading false news.
14. Avoid making mistakes that bring harm to others and bring destruction to oneself.
15. Being cognisant that every deed will be recorded and accounted for in the hereafter.¹⁷

2.0 Methodology

The research method applied in this study is qualitative. Data collection for the principles of *tabayyun* according to Quran; solution to facing the challenges and strife of

¹⁵ Muḥammad Abū Jaʿfar Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān Fī Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Muʾassasah al-Risālah, 2000), 30.

¹⁶ Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qurʾān*, ed. Dār al-Shurūq (Beirut, 2003), 2227.

¹⁷ Sri Roijah, 'Tabayyun Terhadap Berita Ditinjau Dari Al Quran Dan Kode Etik Jurnalistik (Studi Atas Surat Al Hujurat Ayat 6 Dalam Tafsir al-Misbah, Tafsir al-Azhardan Tafsir An-Nur)' (Fakultas Dakwah, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Purwokerto, 2020), 27–28.

social media was conducted through library research where various library sources were explored such as by examining books, articles, journals, and reports submitted by bodies relevant to the issues of discord on social media. Additionally, data collection was also conducted via random observation techniques on the Malaysian community.

The data collected were analysed and discussed using inductive, deductive, and comparative methods in order to procure results in line with the objectives of this study namely to understand the concept of *tabayyun* according to the Islamic perspective and analyse the guidelines of *tabayyun* principles in facing challenges and strife of social media. Data analysis demonstrates that the implementation of the *tabayyun* principles is the best solution in dealing with the challenges and tribulations due to social media. These principles need to be inculcated in every individual, society and country and incorporated into their ethics, attributes, and manners. *Tabayyun* is the solution for the dissemination of unrestricted news which would negatively impact against the influx of fake news and information in the realm of social media.

3.0 Discussions and Findings

3.1 Analysis of the Guidelines of the Principles of *Tabayyun* According to the Quran as Solutions to Facing the Challenges and Discord of Social Media

Social media emerges as the most popular media platform equipped with unique and extensive features allowing everyone to not only share information via text, but it extends to accessing and downloading videos, photos, audios, and games that there is no denying the importance and efficiency of social media in the daily affairs of the society. It is only necessary to inculcate methods and guidelines based on the principles of *tabayyun* to prevent the society from taking social media per se as their bible without first verifying the basis of truth in facing the challenges of information waves which together with legitimate information, almost always also contain defamatory elements, half-truths and outright lies. *Tabayyun* is a virtue which principles serve to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings and harmony amongst fellow humans. It is also a God-given solution in facing the issues arising from the receipt and the dissemination of news.¹⁸ The principles of *tabayyun* in receiving and broadcasting news need to be indoctrinated into the lives of the society, impact of which, one would be saved from misunderstandings or enmity amongst individuals in the society.¹⁹

3.1.1 Guidelines for Accepting Information or News Based on the Principles of *Tabayyun*

¹⁸ Jamal Mildad, 'KOMUNIKASI MASSA DALAM PERSPEKTIF ISLAM (Kajian Terhadap Alquran Pada Ayat-Ayat *Tabayyun*)', *SOURCE : Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 2, no. 2 (26 October 2018): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.35308/SOURCE.V2I2.300>.

¹⁹ Abdul Hadi, 'Arti *Tabayyun* Dan Tawakal Menurut Agama Islam Serta Maknanya', *tirto.id*, 2021, <https://tirto.id/arti-tabayyun-dan-tawakal-menurut-agama-islam-serta-maknanya-gbq1>.

i. Sources are of Authority

The first guideline to be observed is from the aspect of the source of the information or news received. The public needs to ensure that the information they received are sourced from accurate and reliable authoritative bodies such as government agencies, ministries, and the mainstream media. In receiving some news, a person of faith must first seek for its truth. *Tabayyun* itself is an attribute of a good Muslim who strives to always seek for clarity or truth of a news or information he receives by way of consulting an expert and a trusted source. This means not accepting information from a wicked person and unauthorized news sources. In receiving information, look to those in authority so that the information provided is true and accurate. This is to educate the public to refer and only accept news that has been verified by an authoritative source. This is in line with verse 6 of *sūrah al-Ḥujūrāt* which calls for knowing the bearer of the news, that is whether it is conveyed by a *fāsiq* (evil doer or commits a lot of sins). If indeed the news comes from a *fāsiq*, it necessitates *tabayyun*.

In putting the above verse into practice, *tabayyun* may be manifested in two ways, namely *tabayyun* performed on the bearer of the news and upon the content of the news. First, examine the reliability of the news bearer. *Tabayyun* as presented in the Quran is tied to the characteristics of the bearer of information, by which, he must be a credible individual for the receipt of such information.²⁰ Secondly, *tabayyun* on the content of the news by which whether or not the news or information is true.²¹ Similarly, in light of Wahyuni's opinion, *tabayyun* can be performed by asking a trusted person who is an expert in his field or alternatively, seeking the truth of the information from sources that have been guaranteed to be true.

ii. Reviewing the Information or News Received

The first principle of *tabayyun* is verifying or inspecting a particular matter; the practice of which needs to be incorporated into one's ethic when receiving a particular information or news from social media. Any information or news received needs to be scrutinised and its truth and accuracy ascertained. This is a preventive measure meant to prevent unwanted consequences or harm such as slandering, deceit and denigration of the dignity of others.²² Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* asserts: "Allah almighty commands that every individual diligently investigate the news coming from a wicked by being vigilant so that

²⁰ Ali Salman, 'Tabayyun Bendung Maklumat Negatif', MyMetro, 16 July 2018, <https://www.hmetro.com.my/addin/2019/07/475915/tabayyun-bendung-maklumat-negatif>.

²¹ Hadi, 'Arti Tabayyun Dan Tawakal Menurut Agama Islam Serta Maknanya'.

²² Jati Wahyuni, 'Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Dari Kisah Haditsul Ifki Dalam Q.S. An-Nur Ayat 11-20 Tentang Sikap Tabayyun Dan Kehati-Hatian Menerima Berita Di Era Teknologi Informasi', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (15 October 2019): 66–73, <https://doi.org/10.35316/JPII.V4I1.171>.

there be no lying and confusion.²³ By virtue of verse 6 *sūrah al-Hujurāt*, the word *fatabayyanu* calls for people to procure clarification on the information and news they received.

iii. Cautious in Seeking Explanation or News Received

Based on the principles of *tabayyun* a receiver of news is required to be cautious when seeking for explanation until the truth surfaces. This ethic of *tabayyun* must be present in every Muslim in their efforts to counter fallacious news.²⁴ In so doing, finding accurate proof is one of the precautionary steps in seeking clarification of information or of any actual accusation.²⁵ For example, in the event of an allegation of baby swapping, the first thing to look for is the evidence that clearly establishes proof of lineage such as DNA tests.

iv. Testimony Upon a Particular Information

The prerequisite of *tabayyun* is testimony. To qualify as a witness, one must be *ʿādil*, by which his *ʿādālah* is confirmed from various angles.²⁶ In the event of a receipt of an allegation, or defamatory news, the recipient must obtain a witness to verify the validity of the allegation. Therefore, it is the duty of the witness to appear and give his testimony. Those who hide their testimonies are committing a great sin by virtue of the following verse where Allah almighty says:

﴿وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ﴾

“And do not you (the witnesses) hide the testimony. And whoever conceals it then surely, he is a sinner in his heart; and Allah is aware of what you do”. [al-Baqarah 2:283]

In the opinion of Ibn Kathīr, the above verse elucidates the prohibition of concealing testimony, not exaggerating it and not ignoring the duty to tender the testimony. False testimony and the concealing of testimony constitute one of the great sins.²⁷ Witnesses may not refuse to be witnesses or refuse to testify before a judge. With the presence of evidence of confession or testimony, the rights of others will be upheld and simultaneously this prevents oppression against the weak.²⁸

3.1.2 Guidelines for Disseminating Information or News Based on Tabayyun Principles

²³ al-Bakri, ‘Tabayyun Dalam Penerimaan Dan Penyampaian Berita’.

²⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, 476.

²⁵ Wahyuni, ‘Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Dari Kisah Haditsul Ifki Dalam Q.S. An-Nur Ayat 11-20 Tentang Sikap Tabayyun Dan Kehati-Hatian Menerima Berita Di Era Teknologi Informasi’.

²⁶ Mohd Akmal Kamarudin, ‘Empat Garis Panduan Tabayyun Menurut Syarak’, *Harakahdaily*, 12 June 2020, <https://harakahdaily.net/index.php/2020/06/13/empat-garis-panduan-tabayyun-menurut-syarak/>.

²⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, 728.

²⁸ al-Zuhaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr Fī al-ʿAqidah Wa al-Sharīʿah Wa al-Manhaj*, 3:122-123.

i. Delivery of Information or News Not in a Haste

The next guideline in disseminating information is not to rush without first knowing the intricacies and certainty of the news.²⁹ The prohibition of hasty conveyance of news is frowned upon as haste comes from the devil as evidenced by the following *ḥadīth* narrated by Ḥafṣ ibn 'Āṣim that the Prophet PBUH said:

كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ كَذِبًا أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعَ

“It is enough for a person to be called a liar when he talks about everything he hears.”³⁰

On authority of al-Nawāwī, the above *ḥadīth* serves as a warning to a Muslim from conveying every news he hears, as the news is likely to be true and possibly false. When each news heard is conveyed, a lie has been made due to conveying something which is uncertain.³¹

A Muslim who practices the method of *tabayyun* shall not be in a haste when disseminating information which truth is yet to be ascertained. He on the contrary would find out from various sources relating to the information; otherwise, he would remain silent so as not to fall into the circle of information with dubious truth.³² Fake news can threaten the security of the people and the country. Investigating the news' validity as well as ensuring the source from which the news comes is held to be authentic is of utmost importance before disseminating it³³ based on the command of Allah almighty by using the word *fatabayyanu*. This fact illustrates that the believer should personify the attribute of not being in a hurry to spread the news he hears, let alone receive the news from a person known to be a *fāsiq*.³⁴

ii. Delivery of News is not with Malicious Intent

The subsequent guideline in conveying news is to not be motivated by intention to incite enmity (*al-Namimah*). *al-Namimah* is conveying words of someone to another with the intention of damaging the relationship between them.³⁵ This act of *al-Namimah* is highly condemned by Islam as it can divide society as evidenced by the prohibition of the Prophet

²⁹ al-Bakri, 'Tabayyun Dalam Penerimaan Dan Penyalpaian Berita'.

³⁰ Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī Muslim, *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar Min al-Sunan Bi Naql al-ʿadl ʿan al-ʿAdl Ilā Rasūl Allah*, ed. Naṣar Muḥammad al-Fāriyābī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 2006), ḥadīth no. 5.

³¹ Yahyā ibn Sharaf Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1972), 1:115.

³² Hadi, 'Arti Tabayyun Dan Tawakal Menurut Agama Islam Serta Maknanya'.

³³ Nozina Yahaya, 'Tabayyun Kongsi Maklumat Di Media Sosial', *Sinar Harian*, 14 January 2021, <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/119019/KHAS/Wacana/Tabayyun-kongsi-maklumat-di-media-sosial>.

³⁴ Kamarudin, 'Empat Garis Panduan Tabayyun Menurut Syarak'.

³⁵ Kamarudin.

PBUH in the following *ḥadīth*, transmitted by ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd RA in which the Prophet PBUH said:

«أَلَا أُنبِئُكُمْ مَا الْعَصَةُ؟ هِيَ النَّيْمَةُ الْقَالَةُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ»

“Shall I tell you what is *al-‘aḍhu*? That is *namīmah*, the act of disseminating news to damage relationship between human beings.”³⁶

al-Namīmah means to spread malevolence and abomination among people. al-Ghazālī explains that *al-Namīmah* can occur in the form of speech, writing, symbol, or gestures intended to denigrate and disgrace a person. This uncalled-for act is frowned upon by the society at large hence, it is better for a Muslim to only spread beneficial matters.³⁷

iii. Dissemination of Information and News does not Disgrace the Honours of Others

The following guideline for dissemination of news is that it should not expose others to shame. It is not easy to arbitrarily spread news one receives particularly if it involves the honour and dignity of others; precisely if the news bearer heeds the following *ḥadīth*. From Abū Hurayrah RA, the Prophet PBUH said:

«لَا يَسْرُ عَبْدٌ عَبْدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا، إِلَّا سَرَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

“It is not a servant who covers the shame of another servant, but Allah covers the shame of the first servant on the day of judgment”³⁸

The above *ḥadīth* discusses two views pertaining to concealment of shame. The first view states that Allah almighty conceals the sins committed and protects the humiliation of the servant from spreading, while the second view speaks that Allah abandons the mention of the sin committed. al-Nawāwī argues that the first view is clearer by the presence of other *ḥadīth* which corroborates it.³⁹ The act of broadcasting fake news to others and the fabrication that grows exponentially would cause the initial spreader to bear 1 sins in multiple folds inclusive of that of other spreaders after him.

iv. Dissemination of Accurate and True Information

The guideline for dissemination of information and news requires that the information be accurate and true. If the authenticity is uncertain, a good Muslim should refrain from sharing the news. To ensure the authenticity of the information, a Muslim needs knowledge to evaluate the news. The act of spreading news based on ignorance is detestable in Islam, thus the spreading of news which truth is uncertain is an act that is

³⁶ Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī Muslim, *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar Min al-Sunan Bi Naql al-‘Adl ‘an al-‘Adl Ilā Rasul Allah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ta’ṣīl, 2014), hadith no. 2606.

³⁷ Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah, 1982).

³⁸ Muslim, *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2006, hadith no. 2509.

³⁹ al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, 16:216.

detestable.⁴⁰ If the news received carries negative content, a Muslim should refrain from sharing it, whether the news is false, it has no benefit or even if the news is true after all.⁴¹

v. The News or Information Bearer Should Not be a *Fāsiq*

Guidelines for disseminating information and news ensure that the party who delivers it does not belong to the category of *fāsiq* (wicked) or unauthorised person. The party who conveys information but conceals his true identity also falls under the category of an act of a *fāsiq*. Beside involving in sins and vices, *fāsiq* category extends to those who disseminate information with damaging purpose. They often create abominations such as enmity amongst humans, spreading slander and unveiling the dishonour of others.⁴²

Henceforth, Muslims must take it upon themselves to refrain from falling into the category of *fāsiq*. This is in line with verse 6 of *sūrah al-Ḥujurāt* as previously discussed. Muhammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī in *Ṣafwah al-Tafāsīr* mentions that if a person is approached by a *fāsiq* who is unreliable in terms of truth and 'adl ethic, then the message he brings must be inspected for authenticity. Therefore, every individual should investigate the news brought by a *fāsiq* so as to not regret later on as a consequence of believing in false news. This confirms the requirement that a news bearer must not be from the category of a *fāsiq*.

Conclusion

The sophistication of the communication technology to date which has facilitated the society in their insatiable quest for easy, quick, time and energy saving information cannot be denied. The rise in the use of internet among the society exposes them to myriad of news that are accessible through the ubiquitous smartphone which supports various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others. Innumerable information can easily be accessible and that includes fake news, slanderous news, immoral images, and private stories of others. Often, this dissolute news does not need to be sought, they instead arrive uninvited through news transmission devoid of authority. Such contagious news or popularly known as viral news has easy access into the accounts of every user because of the high amount of access to the news. Therefore, to manage the challenges and strife that come with the information explosion through social media, every Muslims must be vigilant in taking advantage of the facilities offered by the communication technology. The Muslim community cannot be backward in this modern world by rejecting the acceleration of communication technology, but every embracing

⁴⁰ al-Nawawī, 16:216.

⁴¹ Wahyuni, 'Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Dari Kisah Haditsul Ifki Dalam Q.S. An-Nur Ayat 11-20 Tentang Sikap Tabayyun Dan Kehati-Hatian Menerima Berita Di Era Teknologi Informasi'.

⁴² Mohd Shahrizal Nasir, 'Kawal Keterujaan Menyebarkan Maklumat Pada Zaman Tular - Dewan Tamadun Islam', *Dewan Tamadun Islam*, 30 June 2021, <https://dewantamadunislam.jendeladbp.my/2021/06/30/kawal-keterujaan-menyebarkan-maklumat-pada-zaman-tular/>.

action should be subjected to the provisions of Islamic teachings, which is based on the principles of *tabayyun*.

The principles of *tabayyun* must be applied and inculcated into the life of everyone, community and country and be translated into practices, attributes, and conscience. The application of the principles of *tabayyun* is a solution to the dissemination of false news on social media. Islam highly emphasises *tabayyun* in life. As such, the obligation to practise *tabayyun* can be found in the Quran, specifically in the sixth verse of surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:6). Islam encourages its adherents to investigate any news before it is disseminated since reckless dissemination without proper clarification of its truth may result in harm and mar the dignity of others. In the concept of accepting and distributing any news, it is imperative upon each Muslim to follow the guidelines based on the principles of *tabayyun* to refine and examine the news which may be in the form of writing, speech, or action, thereby ensuring the truth and validity of the news.

In manifesting the guidelines in the receiving and dissemination of information and news, a Muslim must be careful in conveying a news item, ensuring that there will be no misunderstandings and errors in the facts that could lead to defamation. In addition, ensure the authenticity and truth of the news received or to be delivered, not rushing into conclusion, instil good faith and avoid bad faith among fellow human beings, preserving solidarity and not breaking friendship among fellow community as well as certifying the credibility of the people who convey the news. Therefore, the application of the principles of *tabayyun* can create a generation of first-class digital-minded citizens who embody the ethics of using the internet safely, cautiously, and responsibly.

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