

CONSTRUCT OF CREDIBILITY TOOLS AS VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE QUR'ANIC AND HADITH

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ABSTRACT

The credibility of the sources of information is important in two folds: it ensures the information fulfils the objectives; and the information is credible and readily accepted as trusted sources. As far as divinity is concerned, credibility has been discussed based on two primary sources for Muslims laws and regulations, namely the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith (traditions) of the prophet. The elaboration and discussions based from the Qur'an and Hadith were further provided in the writings by the prominent Ulama' and Muslim jurists. This paper discusses some underpinning concepts of the credibility of information as retrieved from the holy Qur'an and the Hadith. It is clear from this exploratory exercise that the basic aspect of credibility of information sources is based on verse VI of Surah al-Hujurati.e: "O you who believe! If a wicked person come to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done." These underpinning keys from the Qur'an as well as from related literature were further discussed in interviews with experts. The interviews were to open new perspectives of the subject, which are reflected in daily life. Experts chosen in this exercise were five prominent Muslim Scholars who were highly respected in Malaysia. Findings from the interview indicated three categories of the credibility information sources i.e. 1) Presenter; 2) Receiver and; 3) The information. These categories stand on their own guiding principles i.e. 15 criteria for 'Informer' or 'presenter', 8 for the 'receiver' and 4 for the 'information'. All 27 criteria from these three categories match all the divine underpinning keys, which were discussed earlier. The initial findings for this research indicated that the divine teachings are of vital importance whether or not to put trust on any information or when information is going to be delivered.

Keywords: Divine, Islamic Information Credibility, Dakwah

INTRODUCTION

Information is one of the largest commodities openly and widely distributed via web. The dependency on the Internet as a source of information is growing exponentially for products, services and various information (Ibrahim, Noor, & Mehad, 2008, Peter & Valkenburg, 2006). Currently, web users show high tendency to surf information on health, politics, financial, legal and, religion (McKnight & Kacmar, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies about religion on the Internet have been examined seriously in the end of 1999. At that time, the term online religion and religion online have been used to distinguish between the act to use web interactively (online religion) and web as a medium to disseminate information (religion online) (Helland, 2000, 2005). As religion continues to foster and expand its role in the lives of the vast majority of the world's population, and the increasingly accesses to Internet and make use of Computer mediated Communication (CMC) technologies, and as the majority of the world's religious traditions continue their migration online, religion on the Internet has become an increasingly important dimension of CMC research (Campbell, 2005; Ess, Kawabata, & Kurosaki, 2007). A study on Islam and Internet is still at infancy stage compared with other religion especially Christian (Campbell, 2005). In Southeast Asia, how Islam, for example, manifests itself online in such multicultural states are markedly different from its manifestations in other Islamic countries. Demographics also play a critical role among older and less Internet-savvy generations than younger and more Internet-savvy generations (Ess et al., 2007). Therefore, by understanding the needs of Internet users and being able to capture their opinions towards the information provided in Islamic oriented web sites are essential for Islamic oriented web success.

INFORMATION CREDIBILITY FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

Religion is the essence of Muslim identity. This applies to all Muslims whether they are devoutly religious believers or live in large secular societies (Hassan, 2007). Islamic knowledge derived from two important sources – Al-Quran and Al-Hadith. Both are guidance to every Muslims in leading to the right path (Al-Qardhawi, 2000). About information credibility, Allah have stated clearly in Al-Quran: “O believers! If a wicked person brings you a piece of news, inquire first into its truth, lest you should wrong others unwittingly and repent of what you have done.” (Al-Hujurat: 6). This verse provided a clear guidance to promote the harmonious relations among mankind. All Muslim should think and be careful before take any action after received any news or information. They should act based on the true information because wrongly action taken might harm innocent people in ignorance and later come to make us regret. From Hadith knowledge, Islamic scholars have taken action in order to ensure the authenticity of Hadith that we received from Rasulullah (s.a.w) by invent the area of studying Hadith called ‘*Ulumaf-Hadith*’ or science of Hadith which is based on narrator’s factor to categorized Hadith into four categories – Sahih, Hasan, Da’if, and Maudu’ (Nor Shahriza&NorzelatunRodhiah, 2005).

This method is the best guidelines in order to evaluate other information in our daily life. Al-Shafi’e stated the following requirement in order for Hadith to be acceptable: “Each reporter should be trustworthy in his religion; he should be known to be truthful in his narrating, to understand what he narrates, to know how a different expression can alter the meaning, and report the wording of the Hadith verbatim, not only its meaning. Moreover, he should be a good memorizer if he happens to report from his memory or a good preserver of his writings if he happens to report from them. He should not be a *mudallis*, who narrates from someone he met something he did not hear, nor should he report from the Prophet contrary to what reliable sources have reported from him. In addition, the one who is above him should be in the same quality, until the Hadith goes back uninterrupted to the Prophet or any authority below him” (Hasan, 1994, pp.44-45). In addition Siddiqi (1996, pp. 72-73) stated: “In order to check the *isnad* (the chain of transmitters), it is necessary to know the life and the career as well as the character of the various persons who constitute the various links in the chains of the different *isnads*. And in order to understand the exact significance of the *matan* (text), and to test its genuineness, it is necessary to know the meaning of the various expressions used (some of which are rare and out of common use), and also to learn its relation to the text of the other traditions (some of which may be either corroborated or contradicted by it)”. Since Islam is promoting the global perspective as a way of living, the Al-Quran verse (Al-Hujurat: 6) and the rules in assessing the quality of a Hadith, it is viable to develop scale to investigate the information credibility on Internet from Islamic scholars perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as an initial stage in developing the information credibility scale. The scale development use qualitative oriented method to capture the underlying concepts of information credibility measures from Islamic perspective. Five Islamic scholars were included in the semi structured in-depth interviewed to generate a comprehensive definition of information credibility. The selection of these experts was based on their willingness to participate during the period of this study. The used of qualitative data from Islamic scholars is important because the majority of existing religiosity measurements are from other religious, developed based on the ideas, and work of psychologist and sociologist (of religion) compared to religious scholars. The current study, therefore, aimed to bring a new dimension in Islamic religiosity research by developing the concept from the root of Islamic principles from those whose expertise lies firstly in religion itself.

The panel of Islamic scholars selected for the purpose of developing the concept of information credibility was based of overall reputation, particularly in among well-known scholars in Islamic community in Malaysia, especially in Kedah. The panel of scholars comprised the following members:

Syeikh Muhammad Nuruddin Marbu Al-Banjari, A well-known ulama in archipelago, especially in Malaysia.

Dr. Zulkifli Al-Bakri, A member of Negeri Sembilan and Terengganu Fatwa Committee.

Dato' Syeikh Fadzil Bin Haji Awang, A member of Kedah's Fatwa Committee.

Tuan Guru Abdul Hamid (Pak Su Mid), A famous *Sufis* in Kedah.

Dato' Paduka Syeikh Muhamad Baderudin Bin Haji Ahmad, Mufti of Kedah.

The findings of in-depth interviewed were than incorporated with the Islamic principles from Al-Quran and Hadith in order to determine the precise categories of the concept. The thematic analysis performed using coding method to look for the relationship between categories. To ensure the internal validity, this study incorporated the use of research team as ‘multiple investigators’. It means that the all research team participate in all level of study from the data collection process and data collection and the review of data analysis process fulfils the internal validity check procedure of ‘peer examination (Merriam, 1998). The current study ensured reliability of data by incorporating an audit trail or a transcribed account of each interview based on audio recordings and backed up with researchers notes. The external validity, which referred to as transferability the findings to other context (Trochim, 2002) was employed in this study. It means that the knowledge and understanding on Islamic principles of information credibility from the Islamic scholars. Inherent within scholarship is that different scholars have different levels of expertise in different areas. Knowing this, readers can apply the findings accordingly and with full knowledge of the source of the data and his level of expertise or scholarly rank.

THE FINDINGS

The analysis of the divine sources of Al-Quran and Hadith yielded several excerpts and Hadith related to the information credibility. These findings were then used as foundation in the interviews with Islamic scholars. Three categories of information credibility were formed, namely information sender (presenter), information receiver and the information itself.

Sender (Presenter) Credibility Construct

For Information Sender, 15 concepts were found which are trust, meticulous, *mahmudah*, being own mould, personality, being careful, logical, evident, how the information is formed, accurate and knowledge, just, relationship with Allah, ignore unbeneficial things to ummah, honest and responsible. The categories and elements were shown in Table 1. These elements which were found from Al-Quran and Hadith were supported by the interviewed Islamic scholars. The supports from Al-Quran verses were shown in the third column, and supports from Hadith were shown in fourth column. Results from the interviews with Islamic scholars which were shown in five consecutive columns also supported the elements.

Table 1: Initial Findings Of Sender Credibility Construct From Devine Sources and Islamic Scholars View

No.	Categories	Divine Sources		Islamic Scholars View (Informant)				
		Al-Quran	Al-Hadith	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Trustworthy	Al-Ahzab (72), Al-Mukminun (8), Al-Maidah (67), An-Nisa (58), Al-Anfal (27), Asy-Syu'ara (107), Ad-Dukhan (18), Al-Ma'arij (32), Asy-Syu'ara (125), Asy-Syu'ara (143), Asy-Syu'ara (162), Asy-Syu'ara (178), Asy-Syu'ara (193), Al-Naml (39)	Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah, Rasulullah SAW told about the sender of information ((SunanAbiDaud (Chapter 37, Juz 4, pg. 418), Narrated AbiSamrahfromRasullullah SAW (Riwayat Imam Ahmad), SunanAbiDaud,	6,30, 77	54, 104 ,11 4	30, 412 ,41 8	56	34
2.	Precise	Al-Taubah (113)		100, 128, 126, 128	73, 84	182	26	305
3.	Praiseworthy	Al-Qalam (4)	Al-jam'ubainassahihhai n Al-Bukhariwa Muslim	31,7 1,40 6,41 8,	151	45	67	32
4.	Our own 'mold', Islamic way	Al-Baqarah (138)		124		112		85
5.	Good Personality	Al-Hasyr (9)	Al-Tarmizi, Muslim	145	90			223
6.	Caution (Be on alert)	Al-Qalam (10)	Sunan at-tarmizi	112		186		267
7.	Acceptable (Logic)	Al-Haj (45), Al-Ahqaf (26)			179			56
8.	With evidence	Al-Naml (64)						
9.	The way information is produced	Ali' Imran (159), As-Syura (38)		77	127			119
10.	Accuracy and Knowledgeable	Al-Israk (36), Al-Ankabut (50)	Sunan Abu Daud	15	256			
11.	Fair	Al-Maidah (8), Al-A'raf (29), Al-Maidah (106), Al-Anfal (58), Yusuf (8), An-Nahl (90),	Sunan Abu Daud		219		242	157
12.	Relationship with God	Ali' Imran (102), Al-Haj (32)	IbnHibban	312	221	116	45	354
13.	Ignore what does not related to the interest of ummah	Al-Baqarah (213), Ali' Imran (110), An Nisa' (170), Al Maidah (48)	IbnMajah	69				229
14.	Honest	Al-Ghafir (19),		12	247	43	313	346

No.	Categories	Divine Sources		Islamic Scholars View (Informant)				
		Al-Quran	Al-Hadith	1	2	3	4	5
		Muhammad (21)						
15.	Responsible	An-Nahl (82), An Nur (54), Saba (25), Al- Baqarah (119)	Al-jam'ubainassahihhai n Al-Bukhariwal Muslim	34	87	321	113	386

Receiver Credibility Construct

Results from analysis onto Al-Quran and Hadith sources found eight elements which formed the Receiver Credibility construct, namely meticulous, being own mould, trustworthiness, surveillance and originality of source of origin, evidence and certainty, information comparison which was found (including research and assessment), confirmation and conformity, and top management decision to accept (at the organisational level). All these elements have clear supportive bases from the divine source of Al-Quran (third column) and Hadith (fourth column). Interview results from the Islamic scholars also supported this finding based on the marked line numbers in the interview transcription texts. Summary of the observation from the divine sources of Al-Quran and Hadith, plus the interviews is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Initial Findings Of Receiver Credibility Construct From Devine Sources and Islamic Scholars View

No.	Categories	Divine Sources		Islamic Scholars View (Informant)				
		Al-Quran	Al-Hadith	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Carefully selected	Al-Hujurat(6), As-Shad (29),		4	10	5	12	20
2.	Own 'mold', Islamic way,	Al-Baqarah (138),	Qatadah (TafseerIbnHatim)	14	72	33		
3.	Reliable (Tsiqah)	Al-Baqarah (283), Ali' Imran (118), Yusuf (54), An Nisa' (65), Al Baqarah (44)		89	99		60	111
4.	Supervision, The originality of the information	An Nisa' (59)		265	312	216		
5.	Evidence, Certainty	Al-Baqarah (23), An Nisa' (65),				67		353
6.	The need for comparision, research, comparison	Al-Isra' (81), Al-Maidah (101)			290			369
7.	Conformity, certification	An-Nahl (43)			288			
8.	Top management decision		Narrated At Tarmizi		244			380

Information Credibility Construct

Besides developing credibility constructs for sender and receiver, this research also found five credibility elements for information itself. Among the elements are the information that is asked for and information that is received, screening information received from non-believers (non-Muslims), information received from non-Muslims is not 100% wrong, information received from non-Muslims is not 100% right, and suitability of information (depending on person and situation). All these elements have sources of divine in Al-Quran and Hadith, and supported by Islamic scholars being interviewed. Summary of the research findings is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Initial Findings Of Information Credibility Construct From Devine Sources and Islamic Scholars View

No.	Categories	Divine Sources		Islamic Scholars View (Informant)				
		Al-Quran	Al-Hadith	1	2	3	4	5
1.	The given facts: 1) insya'i – information that we ask for; and 2) Khabari – information that	Insya'I (Al-Baqarah, 186); Khabari (Hijr ,75)	TafseerIbnuKathir, Ibnu Abbas, SunanDarimi	250	104	328		477