

Sharing/Spreading Non-Verified Information on Social Media in The Light Of Quran and Sunnah

***Sheikh Adnan Ahmed Usmani**

Lecturer Computer Science, Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Karachi

****Dr. Muhammad Shahzad**

Assistant Professor Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Abstract:

Use of social media has been abundant in our society hence it becomes a common source of sharing news today and one could share any type of news through social media. Since the user could be self-creator of news that's why many of the news can be fake. Society face a lot of problems because of such fake news. This paper shows the effects of sharing such news. It also includes Islamic rules to follow while sharing any news to society and the order of Sharia for those who don't follow these rules and spread fake news. This is a qualitative paper and it has library research. It has some of fake news which made drastic effects on society and then it provides instructions of Islam about it.

Keywords: *social media, fake news, facebook, quran*

Introduction:

In today's time world is progressing day by day and modern technology is taking over the world. Social media is used very much in this era. Through social media people share anything that happens to them in their daily lives. Like if someone has bought new stuff, someone has cooked new dish, someone checked-in a new restaurant, someone got a new hairstyle, someone tried something new or out of the box etc. Social media has become a part of daily life in the modern world where people can meet each other easily and get to know what is happening in one's life. Along with that it can also be used to get and share news. In America, 62% people use social media as a platform for news [1]. Nowadays mainstream media is not needed to spread a common news instead it gets spread by social media and then gets coverage from mainstream media.

Social media is very powerful as the movement of revolution in the Arabs was also initiated by a video shared on social media. Social media is also used for business and political activities as it makes marketing and advertisement easy for business and political activities simple.

Like every other thing, social media too has its own advantages and disadvantages. Like any gossip or fake news can easily be spread here, people can share news made by their

own selves [2] the most important example of it happened during the US elections 2016 when 156 fake news were shared. In the opposition of Clinton, fake news about Trump was shared 3 times more than that of Clinton [1]. These news got very famous and US elections got hijacked by Russia which caused the win of Trump [3]. Which caused an extreme reaction from the whole world. In Islam, it is very important to contradict a news. Therefore, two witnesses are mandatory for the moon of any month. Similarly, if someone is charged to commit adultery, four witnesses are mandatory, if the person that is charging does not provide witnesses, he should be punished with lashes [4]. In the same manner, to verify a hadith, a complete field of hadith sciences is made.

Objective:

Numerous fake news revolve on the social media platform. The main cause of which, is people who share things without any verification. The objective of this discussion is to advise people that they should verify news before sharing it and to acknowledge people about how to verify a news before sharing.

Literature Review:

Till 2016 Facebook had 1.74 billion users, which is even higher than the population of China and India. 41% people use it as a news platform. Facebook and twitter are the most used platforms to acquire news [5]. As news on social media are user generated therefore, it contains much of rumours and lies in it [2]. News that circulate on social media are not the true ones but the ones which are considered to be true by people. A common news can be made famous by social media without the involvement of mainstream media [6]. About sharing any news, Islam preaches not to share anything without affirming and to avoid rumours, lies and propaganda. Only people who have the authority and the ability of excogitation have right to spread a news [7].

Power of anything can be maximized or minimized through social media and it is widely used for political activities. The wave of revolution in Arabs is an important example [8]. A 26 years old Tunisian boy committed suicide in Dec 2010, whose video got viral through Facebook and reached news channels which gave rise to protest and gradually many Arab countries got under protest, countries include Egypt, Libya etc [24]. Many fake news were passed on in the US presidential elections 2016. Fake news about Trump were 3 times than that about Clinton. These news were in the favour of Trump which effected elections [1].

ISIS is the first terrorist organization to use social media finely. By propagating hashtags their objective is to convey the message that they are very powerful and no one can do anything to them. They are using social media to involve their supporters with them and build terror in people by spreading fake stuff about occupying may places [3]. Social

media is also being used for marketing, by the help of it organizations get feedback from people with ease [10].

Methodology:

The research will be qualitative work with a review of Quran and Sunnah's books as basic resources. The verses and hadiths which confess about the research topic will be analysed and reviewed. Fake news that are spread on social media are divided into four categories. Libel, bid'ah, mozu hadiths and fake rumours. Two examples of every category are given and then explained in the light of Quran and Sunnah and the instructions given in Quran and Sunnah are mentioned. There could be more categories of it but only these four are focused in this paper.

Definitions:

Fake news: Literal meaning of fake is not genuine, appearing to be something it is not [11] and of news is new information about something that has happened recently, reports of recent events that appear on media. So, the literal meaning of fake news becomes any information that is not real but made up completely. It is hard to define fake news. Fake news is made to get benefits in the matter of business and politics and to seek peoples' attention [12].

Social Media: A platform of communication where people can chat with each other, they can be known or unknown to each other and they can belong to different areas [13]

Prohibition of lying in Islam:

Lying or spreading a lie is strictly prohibited in Islam. Any form of creating, making and sharing false information is prohibited in Islam. Quran mentioned following about lies:

“So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement” (Ch:22, V:30)

This verse is explained as saying a lie, being a false statement, sacrifice animals made by Allah not in the name of Allah comes under the category of 'Qaul al Zor' and the massiveness of this sin could be measured by the fact that it is mentioned with shirk in Quran [4].

Exchanging information without verification is also a form of lie. We should be very careful about the things we share to others. Sharing without verification makes us one of the liars without even lying technically and it can create even problems to the person whom you're sharing the information.

Negative Effects of Rumours:

Hijrat-e-Habsha:

After five years of declaration of prophet hood, first migration was to Habsha in the month of Rajjab. At a later time they got the news of people of Makkah accepting Islam, so some people started their journey back to Makkah but before reaching Makkah they found that this was a rumour, therefore they entered in Makkah surreptitiously [14].

Fake rumours during battle of Ahad:

Hazrat Mussab Bin Umair, who resembled Prophet (PBUH), got martyrdom on the battle of Ahad and the rumours were spread that Prophet (PBUH) was martyred. Which caused chaos in the army itself and Muslims started killing Muslims in the disorder. Hazrat Umar left his sword and said there is no meaning of this if Prophet (PBUH) is no more. Then Hazrat Kaub Bin Malik first saw Prophet (PBUH), Muslims regained their morale and competed kufars [15].

Misunderstanding in the collection of Zakat:

Prophet (PBUH) sent Walid Bin Uqba Bin Abu Mueet to tribe Banu Mustalaq to collect zakat. He returned after reaching halfway as he was frightened and according to some narratives when he reached Banu Mustalaq, citizens there gathered to him but he thought that they were planning to kill him, so he returned and told Prophet (PBUH) that they refused to pay zakat. Prophet (PBUH) showed displeasure on this and formed a troop. Hazrat Haris from Banu Mustalaq visited Prophet (PBUH) in the following days and heard this scenario, he contradicted [16].

Examples of Fake News and its instruction under the guidance of Islam:

Libel:

It is narrated by Hazrat Abu Hurera that Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do you know what libel is?” Companions said: “*Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) know better.*” He said: “*when you discuss those things about your brother which is hated by him.*” “*What if my brother has those things which I’m saying*”, companions asked. “*If he has those things then you back bitten your brother and if not then you libelled him*”, answered Prophet (PBUH) [15].

This hadith shows that libel means something written or published that makes false or unfair statements about an individual which is prohibited in Islam. Its example could be taken from a recent incident. Farooq Bandhba, who was convicted in the shabnam daquety case, joined PTI. He was largely criticized on social media by people and then was discarded from the party. The same night a tweet from account named shabnam

thanked Imran Khan and people of country for this deed. Then after two days it was found that it was a fake account and shabnam did not even had a twitter account [17]. There are many fake accounts found on social media in the same manner, which are made by the names of famous personalities. Through this anything which is not said by the person is said under the name of that person. Libel is strictly prohibited in Islam, **hadith says:**

“Allah will make the person who accuses his fellow Muslim of something that is not to be found in him, stay in the place where the blood and pus of the dwellers of hell gathers. He will remain in this place until he gives up this accusation and makes taubcih.” [18]

Passing on these kind of things about someone is a big sin too. Its example is the incident happened in Qasur during this January. Where a 7 years old girl named Zainab, who got missing on 4th of January while going to Madrasah. Her search was in process when her dead body was found from the litter, on account of which protests were started throughout the city [19]. It was condemned by the whole country. After two to three days, CCTV footage was aired, a person shared a picture of a person who resembled the killer in the CCTV footage. This post propagated over the social media and after one day the person himself shared a video on social media telling that he was a member of PAT and visited Qusur just to attend the funeral of the girl. If we observe this incident there are two categories of people. Firstly, the person who made this up and posted it. He libelled a person. Quran says: “And those who accuse honourable women but bring not four witnesses, scourge them (with) eighty stripes and never (afterward) accept their testimony. They indeed are evil-doers.” (Ch:24, V:4).

People who blame any individual, man or woman, of committing adultery and do not provide any proof. 80 lashes are declared as the punishment of such person and due to this deed he is declared as corrupt and then his credibility as a witness is never considered [16].

Secondly, people who shared this post without verifying. Quran has this to say about it:

“When you brought such talk on your tongues hearing from one another, and uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it light, while it was great in the sight of Allah.” (Ch:24, V:15)

The tafseer of this verse is in a way that when Hazrat Ayesha got libelled, many people shared this news without verification. This verse shows that libelling without verification is a great sin [4]. Sometimes people say things which are not big deal for them but are big deal for Allah and therefore that contains great punishment [16].

Thus, before sharing anything it should be verified properly because a single post can destroy a person's life. And news from such pages should be considered which do not have this kind of history.

False Hadith

Fabricated hadith is termed as 'Mozu' in the terminology of hadith science, which literally means made up and terminologically means anything false made up relating to Prophet (PBUH) [20]. Many examples of it could be found on social media, a large number of people share and forward hadiths on social media in which mostly do not have the name of narrator or any reference of the book. Some of them are true some of them are not. A famous example is: "get education whether you have to visit china for it". Other than that there are fabricated hadiths on drinking water while standing that if you get to know how disastrous it is to drink water while standing, you will grab that water out of your throat by your hands and if you get to see that how terrible satan is drinking that water with you, you will stop drinking water. Similarly, there are many fabricated things on social media related to prophet (PBUH). Prophet (PBUH) said about this:

"Whoever refers a lie towards me knowingly, so he is one of the liar among the liars."
[20].

It is a very big sin to lie in Islam, which can be understood by the fact that in Surah Al Haj, lying is mentioned along with shirk.

"So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement." (Ch.22:V.30)

Ulma e Karam be very careful in the matter of hadith. The study of hadith sciences was also developed to prevent false things made relating to Prophet (PBUH). This science involves overhaul. From the character and mentality of narrators to the words of hadiths are overhauled and then a hadith is declared to be true. Hadiths are categorized differently, among those 'Mozu' is the lowest category and some ulma believe that even 'Mozu' hadiths are wrong, as 'Mozu' is not a hadith but a false statement.

Fake Rumours:

Social media is a platform to read and share news nowadays and it contains user generated news in great extent which causes the propagation of fake rumours. For instance, during Eid a fake video related to a newly opened park in Karachi got spread. The video contained some people falling from a fun ride with the caption that it was a fun ride from Askari Park. But that video was actually made in India. In the recent days, news of the death Dr. Afia Siddiqui, who is a captive in an American jail, was revolving over the social media and many people shared it. Afterwards it was made clear by her family members that the news was fake. It is mentioned in Quran that:

“And when there comes to them information about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. And if not for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few.” (Ch:4, V:83)

The one defect in Muslims and Hypocrites is that whenever they get a news, good or bad, they share it without any verification, on account of which numerous Muslims get effected. Instead of sharing news to others they should share it to the rulers and when they declare it true or false, share it accordingly [4]. Whether there is a news related to health, sports or current affairs or sometimes there is news related to Islam which is mostly quoted wrongly with respect to Quran and Hadith. These holy verses or quotes should be verified first before sharing. There are many quotes which cannot be counted as Hadith are shared without any authenticity. There are many videos on YouTube on Prophetic Medicine [21] which are shared without any research or authenticity and the audience believes the content due to attractive and religious nature of the content.

Misinformation VS Disinformation

Either misinformation or disinformation, both terms are used for incorrect information however the motivation and factors behind sharing the data and content specifically the actors who share these fake news vary. Misinformation can be referred to an honest mistake. For example an article written by an active blogger or a journalist can have an error and it is shared. On the contrary Disinformation is the deliberate spreading of news for negative perception with an aim to confuse and mislead the audience and to believe that it's the truth or a lie.

Fake News and Cyber Propaganda

Another issue arise with the spreading to fake news is cyber propaganda. The term propaganda is coined for past many centuries. It has been used in various forms positively and negatively both. Now a days the main source for fake news and its propaganda is the Internet. When a fake news is spread the main components required for it are Tools and Services, Motivation and Social Networks. These components when used can help in spreading a fake news more effectively. Also studies have shown that those people who engage is social media actively are the main source of sharing fake news. Users donot authenticate the news and instantly share the news which causes sudden spread of fake news. [22]

Countermeasures from the Authorities/Government

Now the authorities and government organization are all awake and taking these fake news seriously. They have realized that fake news is a thing that should be fought

actively. Regulatory authorities are setting rules and punishment for spreading misinformation as well as government agencies are also actively working on this. This combat should be a joint effort of both the companies and the government.

Bid'ah

Literal meaning of bid'ah is innovation, adapt a new thing. Terminologically it means things that are innovated or adapted in religion after Prophet (PBUH) and his companions [20]. Many things could be found on social media which have no origin but are adapted in religion without any verification and reference. For instance, congratulate on a new moon is a virtue, a wish would be granted by sharing a particular message to ten people or by narrating something specific. These things are counted as bid'ah as these things are not proven by the preaching of Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. Without no doubt Quran is truly the literal word of ALLAH. [23]For those who innovate in religious matters, Quran says:

“This is my path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.” (Ch:6,V:153).

Sirat-e-Mustaqeem is the way of Allah and on which we are instructed to be and if we follow any other path than this we will be misled [4]. Therefore, those who share these things without verification can be misled. Narrated by Hazrat Ayesha that Prophet (PBUH) said:

“The one who innovated something in the religion which do not belong to it, is accursed.” [15]

Thus, anything related to religion should not be passed on without verification because it is disapproved by Islam. And it is very important to avoid it as it is a big sin.

Islamic ways to verify any news:

Do not focus on the headline:

Judgement should not be made by just reading the headline of the news but rather the whole content should be focused because mostly news in social media is in a manner that the content of a news blog is completely different from the main headline written on the top of the link. Therefore, we should not share such thing without reading the complete news.

Examine the origin of news:

“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.” (Ch:49, V:6)

Tafseer of the given verse includes one of the incident mentioned above in which in the matter of Zakat a companion of Prophet (PBUH) on the basis of misunderstanding said that the tribe is not paying zakat and Prophet (PBUH) ordered to prepare for a battle but later they were acknowledged that the news is false and then this verse was revealed. Hence, before sharing a news the source or origin of that news should be examined.

Contradiction before sharing:

“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.” (Ch:17, V:36)

The things about which we have no knowledge should not be discussed. Finding flaws in one and being a false witness are sins. Say no to think too much and on the dooms day eyes, ears and heart would be answerable [16].

Non-contradicted statements should be avoided rather contradict it from your eyes, ears and heart. Non-Islamic customs followed by ancestors should not be believed without verification. Not to talk about things that are not heard or seen and the body parts would be answerable on the dooms day.

Question the authoritarians:

“And when there comes to them information about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it (Ch:4, V:83).”

Therefore, when you hear any news, you must question the expert or must not share it. Every statement is answerable:

“Man does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].” (Ch:50, V:18)

We should be very careful before writing a statement as every statement we make is answerable on the dooms day. Whenever we share something on social media we are passing that thing to others therefore, before sharing anything we must think about the questions we would be asked about it. As lying is a big sin in Islam and it is also not considered a good thing in the world, it makes our own character suspicious therefore, before sharing any news we should contradict it.

Conclusion:

Social media is the best medium to share and read news. After the US election the fact that social media could be used to generate news as there is no authentic way of verifying the news that comes from social media. If we analyse, the fake news problem, there are

two types of people. One who create and post on social and the other who share these news without verification. Quantity of first type people is greater than that of second type. The cause of propagation of any fake news are the common people, who share these news without contradiction. Due to this fact a general fake news gets spread very easily which cause negative effects on the society.

Contradiction of every news is emphasized in Islam and lie is declared as a very big sin. When someone tells you something you must contradict it and ask the authority from the teller. Sharing something by confusing a false statement to a true one, causes libel, bid'ah and rumors. Thus, whenever you come across a news on social media, before sharing it you must verify it and must not give your own review to those which cannot be contradicted. Those news which you have found, are lies, should be reported. And the information of that news to be false should be passed on.

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